

PSY 788: Adulthood and Aging: Cognitive and Intellectual Change
Fall 2008

Instructor:	Thomas M. Hess	Meeting time:	Tuesday, 1:30 – 4:15
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This course is intended to familiarize the student with major theories, issues, and research associated with the study of changes in intellectual and cognitive processes from young adulthood to old age. The coverage of topics in the course is non-exhaustive, reflecting the instructor's opinions about the importance and quality of research in each area, as well as his interests. For each topic that is covered, the readings are designed both to provide some general background knowledge and to illustrate representative research in the area. In addition, a major focus of the class will be on developing critical thinking skills through the reading and critique of primary source materials. Much of the course will deal with aging simply because the majority of research and theory has concentrated on the latter part of the lifespan. An attempt will be made, however, to address concerns at all stages of adulthood.

Readings are available through electronic reserve. Go to <http://reserves.lib.ncsu.edu/> and look for PSY 788 under classes you are enrolled in.

Expectations and Requirements.

(1) *In class.* Attendance at each class meeting is expected. It is also expected that all readings will be completed prior to the class meeting for which they are assigned. This is important because the course will be conducted as a seminar and most of the class will revolve around your participation in class discussions. Such participation involves asking thoughtful questions, contributing to the ideas that other students present, and actively thinking about in-class activities. Within this context, every student should take some responsibility for speaking up, and everyone should take some responsibility for listening and engaging other students in the discussion.

The readings are designed to provide some general background and review in a specific topic area along with representative empirical samples, in the form of primary source readings. To facilitate class discussion, you are to generate one or two discussion questions for each reading. You should circulate these to the rest of the class by 9:00 AM on Tuesday morning, but the earlier the better. (This will also give me a chance to examine them before class.) The questions can refer to points of confusion, issues for further consideration, follow-up research ideas, and so on. These discussion questions will play a major role in structuring each class. I would also like to encourage you to think at the conceptual level rather than getting mired down in the specifics of procedures and results associated with individual studies. Good research is issue-oriented in that it is designed to test the validity of hypotheses and theories within a particular topic domain. To encourage you to think about research in this manner, I would also like you to identify at least one theoretical or methodological issue relevant to each week's set of readings (e.g., what are the major questions of importance? What are major measurement issues?). This should be circulated along with your discussion questions.

Finally, each student will also be expected to be a seminar leader at one class meeting. This role will involve leading the discussion for approximately half the class period on a specific aspect of the topic matter assigned for that week. As part of this role, the leader will identify, read, and discuss research articles in addition to those assigned in class. He or she will also utilize the student-generated questions and issues on the class topic in organizing discussion. The leader should meet with the instructor at least one week prior to class to discuss plans. The instructor will provide some guidance in identifying appropriate additional

readings, but primary responsibility will be placed on the student. Assignments for this duty will be made during the first class period.

(2) *Project*. Students will also prepare a major paper (due December 9) and give a class presentation relating to this assignment. For this paper, each student will identify a specific problem area associated with aging and cognition/intelligence and then write an interpretive review of the literature as it relates to this problem. (A one-page prospectus for the paper is due around the middle of the semester.) The problem that is addressed can be either theory driven (e.g., does cognitive slowing account for age differences in memory), measurement/methodology oriented (e.g., how do our conclusions about aging and cognition vary depending upon the use of cross-sectional vs. longitudinal designs) or practical in nature (e.g., how does aging affect driving performance). The paper should (a) elaborate upon the problem by developing one or more hypotheses, (b) provide evidence from the literature on cognition and aging that is relevant to the hypotheses, and (c) state conclusions based upon the review. Naturally, the review should be a critical one, noting problems and/or deficiencies in research addressing the topic. Although there are no page requirements, given the weight assigned to this project in determining your grade, it is anticipated that the typical paper would include about 20 pages of text. During the last three class sessions, each student will have 50 minutes for an in-class presentation relating to his or her project, which should include discussion of the important issues related to the topic plus representative research findings.

(3) *Short paper*. Finally, one short paper will be assigned during the semester. The goal of the paper will be to encourage the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of ideas covered in class. So that you can think about the paper throughout the course of our discussions and readings, here is the assignment:

The topic coverage of this course has been intentionally broad in order to expose you to the diversity of theory and research that exists in the field and to stimulate your own thinking about the nature of cognitive change in adulthood. Your project is allowing you to focus on a very specific area of research. In contrast, in this paper, I would like you to focus on the "big picture". Specifically, I would like you to identify what you think are dominant themes (minimum of two, no more than four) that have emerged over the course of the semester and that can be used to either characterize the nature of the aging process or the field in general. These themes may be related to—but are not limited to—aging-related trends in behavior, conceptual frameworks, causal mechanisms, or methodological and assessment issues. For each theme, provide examples of research that illustrate it.

Your response should be typed, double-spaced with 1" margins, and about 5 to 8 pages long. **The only identification on your paper should be your Student ID number at the top of the first page. No title page, please.** This assignment is due November 18.

Evaluation. The final grade will be calculated using the following weights:

Short paper	25%
Project & Presentation	50%
Class participation	25%

All assignments are due on the dates indicated in the class schedule. Grades for assignments not turned in on time will be reduced by one letter grade for each week that the assignment is late.

Academic Integrity. It is expected that all students will adhere to the Academic Honor pledge and act in a manner consistent with NCSU policies on academic integrity (http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/academic_regulations/integrity/reg.htm). In addition, the following are helpful to have in mind when it comes time to turn in written products in the class:

1) Plagiarism. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1986)*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster. "plagiarize: to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; use (a created production) without crediting the source; to commit literary theft - present as new and original an idea or product derived

from an existing source" (p. 898). APA Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct 6.22: "Psychologists do not present substantial portions or elements of another's work or data as their own, even if the other work or data source is cited occasionally" (p. 13).

2) Guidelines for Use of Primary Sources. (a) ALWAYS go to the primary source, if available; in other words, don't trust anyone but yourself to interpret an article. If you are going to reference it, you should have read it. (b) Exceptions: reference is in a foreign language; reference is a technical report that is not accessible (may be classified). In these cases, the citation should refer to source within which you encountered it (e.g., Jones, 1919, as cited in Smith, 1998).

3) Use of References. (a) References should be used to support an assertion (ex. "Females are better at solving verbal word problems than are males." What research is this claim based on? A reference must be provided to support it). (b) ALL references cited in the text MUST be listed in the reference list (in APA format - which includes the author(s), year, title, journal or book, volume, page numbers, and for books, the publisher). (c) The ONLY references in the reference list are those which are referenced in the text. It doesn't matter if you read 30 other articles - if you didn't reference them in any way, they don't belong in the reference list. (d) It is the author's responsibility to ensure that the references are complete and ACCURATE; it is therefore irresponsible not to double-check all of your references.

Tentative Class Schedule and Reading Assignments. *Indicates suggested articles.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
8/26	Theoretical/research issues	Baltes, Staudinger, & Lindenberger (1999); Salthouse (2000)
9/2	Speed/Attention	Hartley (2006); Kramer & Kray (2006); Verhaeghen & Cerella (2008); Anstey, Luszcz, & Sanchez (2001)
9/9	Working Memory/Executive control	Braver & West (2008); Oberauer (2005); Hedden & Yoon (2006)
9/16	Memory	Old & Naveh-Benjamin (2008); McDaniel, Einstein, & Jacoby (2008); Rahhal, May, & Hasher (2002); Roediger & Geraci (2007); Hess (2005)*
9/23	Brain/Neuropsychological factors	Raz (2004); Nyberg & Bäckman (2004); Cabeza (2004); Erickson et al. (2007); Dennis et al. (2008)
9/30	Intraindividual variability	Hultsch & MacDonald (2004); Allaire & Marsiske (2005); Dixon et al. (2007); Neupert, Mroczek, & Spiro (2008)
10/7	Intelligence/Moderators of change	Schaie & Willis (1996); Singer et al., (2003); Spiro & Brady (2008); Willis et al. (2006)
10/14	Activity effects	Small & McEvoy, 2008; Schooler, Mulatu, & Oates (1999); Béland, Zunzunegui, Alvarado, Otero, & Teodoro (2006); Colcombe et al. (2006); Salthouse (2006)
10/21	Everyday problem solving	Marsiske & Margrett (2006); Allaire & Marsiske (1999); Blanchard-Fields, Chen, & Norris (1997); Meyer, Talbot, & Ranalli (2007)
10/28	Decision making	Mather (2006); Peters, Hess, Västfjäll, & Auman (2007); Mata, Schooler, & Rieskamp (2007); Löckenhoff & Carstensen (2007); Kim & Hasher (2005)*
11/4	Emotion and cognition	Carstensen, Mikels, & Mather (2006); Mather & Knight (2005); Kensinger, Gutchess, & Schacter (2007); Fung & Carstensen (2003)
11/11	Cognition in social context	Blanchard-Fields, Horhota, & Mienaltowski (2008); Hess, Osowski, & Leclerc (2005); Freund (2006); Lachman & Andreoletti (2006)
11/18	Expertise and skill	Krampe & Charness (2006); Masunaga & Horn (2001); Roring & Charness (2007); Singer, Lindenberger, & Baltes (2003)
11/25	In-class presentations	
12/2	In-class presentations	
12/9	In-class presentation	Semester projects due

References

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