

Department: Human Development and Family Studies

Course No: 1070 [190]

Credits: 3

Title: Individual and Family Development

Contact: Jane Goldman

Content Area: CA2-Social Sciences

Catalog Copy: 190. Individual and Family Development (Formerly offered as HDFS 190.) Either semester. Three credits.

Human development throughout the life span, with emphasis upon the family as a primary context.

Course Information: a. The course is designed as an introduction to the field of Human Development and Family Studies. The course provides students with an understanding of individual and family development over the life span.

Students taking the course become familiar with both life-span and developmental theories focusing on individual development as well as theories that focus on family systems and how these systems help to shape the trajectory of individual development over time.

b. Three exams are given over the course of the semester. The exams typically employ a multiple-choice format and are based equally on lecture and reading materials. Weekly readings are assigned from the text book(s) used.

c. Students become familiar with family system theory and how this theory helps to account for the diversity and levels of functioning/effectiveness found within families (as examined from a multigenerational and developmental perspective). Students also become familiar with several major life-span/developmental theories (c.f., the works of Bronfenbrenner, Piaget, Erikson, Bandura). Because the course relies heavily on contextual perspectives on life-span development, students come to understand how individual development over time is shaped by biological, ecological and historical factors. Hence, students develop an understanding of how family, cultural, economic, political and other social institutions all function to shape the trajectory of individual development.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed: HDFS 190 is totally consistent with the stated goals for general education within the social sciences. For example, relevant to goals 5 and 6 the course exams how individuals are influenced by family, cultural and other ecological factors (e.g., neighborhoods, schools and communities, educational, social, economic, political and religious institutions). Through this course students are taught to understand how biological and contextual/ecological factors influence how individuals develop over time. Students also develop an understanding of how family, cultural, socioeconomic and historical factors, as examples, help to shape the patterns of development and adjustment that is observed within individuals as they develop. In addition, the course introduces students to topical issues that require them to think about the complexity of understanding and

addressing contemporary social/family problems (cf. child abuse, teen sexuality when looked at from a cross-cultural perspective, divorce, etc).

CA2 Criteria: 1. Introduce students to theories and concepts of the social sciences.

Students are introduced to the major assumptions and concepts of several human development and life-span development theories. They become familiar with family system theory and how this theory helps to account for the diversity and levels of functioning/effectiveness found within families (as examined from a multigenerational and developmental perspective). Students also become familiar with several major life-span/developmental theories (c.f., the works of Bronfenbrenner, Piaget, Erikson, Bandura).

2. Introduce students to methods used in the social sciences, including consideration of the ethical problems social scientists face.

Students are introduced to research methods used in studying life-span development: experimental and non-experimental designs, sampling, methods of data collection, etc. Emphasis is placed on helping students understand ethical and political issues related to interpreting research results. For example, students compare conclusions reached when interpreting data on social “problems” from the perspective of class and socioeconomic status versus from the perspective of race.

3. Introduce students to ways in which individuals, groups, institutions, or societies behave and influence one another and the natural environment.

Students are exposed to contextual/ecological life-span developmental perspectives. These perspectives call attention to the biological, historical and ecological/environmental factors that all contribute in dynamic ways to shape the trajectory of development. More specifically, students are exposed to the various ways in which cultural and socio-economic factors play into the unique ways in which individuals develop over time. In addition, cultural and economic differences within families are further analyzed as these play a role in shaping how families and individuals reciprocally influence one another.

4. Provide students with tools to analyze social, political, or economic groups/organizations (such as families, communities, or governments), and to examine social issues and problems at the individual, cultural, societal, national, or international level. Social issues that might be addressed include gender, race, social class, political power, economic power, and cross-cultural interaction.

Social problems on the individual level are examined through a contextual or ecological lens. In this regard, families, educational, social, political, economic institutions might all be analyzed as these contribute to development and adjustment. Class and race are examined as these influence patterns of development. Students are also exposed to the trajectory implications of gendered patterns of development

Role of Grad Students: This course does not have lab or discussion sections. Typically at Storrs there is one graduate assistant who works for the course. This assistant is responsible for: attending lectures, holding office hours to answer student questions, addressing student concerns regarding text and lecture materials, and assisting students with their preparations for exams. The assistant is supervised by the instructor and meets regularly with the instructor to discuss student and course related concerns. There are no graduate assistants at the regional campuses.