

Syllabus for SOCI 324 100: Sociology of the Life Course

Department/Program:	Sociology
Year:	2017-2018
Course Title:	SOCI 324 100 “Sociology of the Life Course”
Course Schedule:	MWF 2.00-3.00
Location(s):	LASR 104
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Course Description (from calendar): *Individuals and families through the life course.* Life course sociology is largely defined by its attempts to bring together three concepts central to the discipline: individuals, social context, and time. Drawing together some common themes (see Elder, 1994), life course sociology insists that lives are linked together, they take place within historical time, individuals experience and are marked by time, and they compare their passage through time with one another. We'll explore these concepts and themes, and also work toward developing a sense of the contingency and structure characterizing the unfolding of lives. In the process, we'll think through the institutional production of inequality across the life course.

What will I learn?

- 1) key sociological perspectives on the life course
- 2) an introduction to how time complicates and enriches sociology
- 3) an introduction to how inequality becomes revealed and reinforced through time
- 4) an introduction to how policy bears upon life outcomes
- 5) better skills at writing, discussion, small group-work and presentation
- 6) basic risks, their social distribution, and cumulative impact on shaping lives
- 7) a hands-on feel for risks, their social distribution, and cumulative impact

Is this some kind of game? Yes! Each class member will be developing two people through their lives from cradle to casket (birth to death), through a variety of possible transitions and risks keyed to the life course. Students themselves will be responsible for “gamifying” transitions and risks into life course modules based upon their reading of the literature. Nearly one third of the class will be devoted to this game, and it will form the basis for the two short group papers (life course modules) and two short individual papers (birth status and obituary) you'll write for the course.

Format of Course: Interactive Lectures & Group Reading Discussions (mostly Mondays and Wednesdays) mixed with more interactive exercises, including gamification of the life course

(mostly Fridays). A large portion of the class will involve small group discussion and work of some form or another, including discussion leadership and reports based on readings. Active and informed attendance is critical to both your own and the class' success.

Required Reading:

Annette Lareau. 2011. *Unequal Childhoods: Class, Race, and Family Life, Second Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

The readings in this class will include the book above (available for purchase at the UBC book store) as well as both academic articles (especially from Statistics Canada, the journal Contexts and a variety of other scholarly sources) and a selection of personal memoirs. Excepting for Lareau's book, readings will be made available on the web.

Course Assignments, Due Dates, and Grading:

Test:	final	(TBA - finals week)	20%	
	Pop Quizzes		10%	
Group:	Discussion leadership / reports (x2)	(7.5%)	15%	
	Group work – life course modules (x2)	(7.5%)	15%	
	Participation (incl. attendance, peer eval.)		10%	
Papers:	Status at Birth Paper	(Jan 26)	10%	
	Obituary paper	(Mar 28 / Apr 6)	20%	
Total			100%	

General Grading Policies: Please note that my grading reflects an evaluation of your engagement with and understanding of the course materials. It does not reflect an assessment of what I think of you as a person. In general, the grading policies will follow those outlined in the UBC Calendar.

Percentage (%)	Grade	Percentage (%)	Grade	Percentage (%)	Grade
90-100	A+	76-79.9	B+	64-67.9	C+
85-89.9	A	72-75.9	B	60-63.9	C
80-84.9	A-	68-71.9	B-	55-59.9	C-

50-54.9 = D, and a score lower than 50% is considered failing.

Tests: The final will evaluate your engagement with and understanding of the course materials. Class readings, class lectures, and class discussions (including research question presentations – see below) will all be covered in the final. The final exam will be comprehensive, covering the entire range of the course. **Pop quizzes** will be regularly administered throughout the course, addressing knowledge from the readings expected to be completed by the date of the quiz.

Short Papers: *Paper One* (up to 3 pages, or @ 1500 words *total*) will be a short paper involving a careful assessment of the status characteristics, esp. social class (but also consider ethnicity, familial situation, etc.), based on census information retrieved about one of their

parents, for each of the two children assigned to the student. Explain the reasoning behind each assessment, with reference to Lareau and/or other academic understandings of class or ethnicity.

Paper Two (up to 6 pages, or @ 3000 words) will involve writing annotated obituaries for one or both of the two (fully grown) children assigned the student. In the process of writing the obituary, students should identify a primary determinant of the life outcomes of their child, and make a causal argument for its later effects. Supporting materials for the argument should be included in notes (footnotes or endnotes), using at least three academic sources and establishing scholarly support for the validity of the causal claim(s).

Group Work: Students will be divided into teams of no less than seven people per team. Teams will be responsible for regular discussion of readings for fourteen classes.

Discussion Leadership: Each team member will lead discussion, shared with another team member, for two (2) of those classes. Discussion leaders will prepare a **short summary** of the readings for the day, ending with a set of questions raised by the readings for other group members to answer. After discussion, discussion leaders will be expected to divide up, with each member writing *either* a **majority report** and a **minority report**. In no more than two pages, the majority reporter will a) summarize the reading, b) summarize the discussion, and c) provide an analytical reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the argument. The minority reporter will be provided with the majority report, and in no more than two pages, develop a critique, including arguments about what is missing from the majority report and what else might be learned from an analytical reflection upon the reading and discussion. Discussion leaders will turn in their majority/minority reports together one week after discussion, and each will be worth 7.5% of their class marks.

Life Course Modules: Each class team will be responsible, as a group, for writing up and presenting two (2) life course modules. These will be spread out across life course game days. On the first life course game day, each class member will be entrusted with two babies, selected at random from Vancouver's census data. Working within their groups, class members will age their babies through each subsequent life course game day, creating artificial lives. At the beginning of each life course game day, a subset of class teams will **briefly present** their reports (<5 minutes) upon the risks corresponding to particular events likely to occur during the day's aging period. In addition to the presentation, a **written version of their reports** (< 4 pages, excluding references) will be provided to each class team. The content of the report will summarize: **1**) a best guess at the basic probability of the event occurring during the time period at hand (with sources appropriately cited), **2**) a discussion of the heterogeneity in risks (with sources cited), and **3**) a discussion of uncertainty and critique of sources. After teams have listened to all reports for the day, they will discuss and work out appropriate modifiers for the base risks of events occurring for each artificial life belonging to their team members. After discussing and agreeing upon appropriate modifiers to basic risks, ideally drawn from broader literature as well as the well thought-out experiences of team members, dice will be rolled to see what happens to each life. Team members will keep track of what's happened to their own artificial lives, developing narratives accounting for events. At the end of the class, team members will be asked to write up brief obituaries for their artificial lives.

Participation: Due to the heavily interactive nature of the class, participation in group discussions and life course exercises is especially important. Unexcused absences will count against participation marks. In addition, team members will have the opportunity & obligation to evaluate one another's contributions: as team members contributing to transition reports; as discussion leaders; and as generally knowledgeable and helpful contributors to discussion. As a result, it's important to note that peer evaluations may modify not only participation marks, but other group-work marks as well. I will frequently drop in on group meetings, and will develop independent observations of participation to complement peer evaluations. If, for some reason, group dynamics make group work difficult for any team member, please feel free to discuss the problem with me.

Plagiarism: Do not plagiarize. Plagiarism cases will be passed on to the Dean of Liberal Arts. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, feel free to ask or consult the following: <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/?tree=3,54,111,959>

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to change!)

Week	Day	Subject	Readings & Notes
1	J3 W	Intro	
	J5 F	Concepts	Dominus 2015
2	J8 M	Time / Age & Risk	McFalls 2007
	J10 W	Time / Age & Structure	Treas 2009; Galarneau, et al 2013
	J12 F	Time / Age & Norms	Townsend 2002; Lareau 1
3	J15 M	Time / History	Satrapi 2007; Otie & Kunwu 2012 *Groups*
	J17 W	Time / Experience	Hango 2017; Lareau 2
	J19 F	BABIES & Agency	Milan 2006
4	J22 M	Social Reproduction	Solomon 2012
	J24 W	Home & School	Lareau 3-5
	J26 F	Gamification Workshop	Birth Status Paper Due
5	J29 M	Home & School	Lareau 6-8
	J31 W	Home & School	Lareau 9-12
	F2 F	AGE 0-10	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
6	F5 M	Teen Hazards	Elliott & Aseltine 2013
	F7 W	Work-School	Lareau 13-15
	F9 F	AGE 10-18	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
7	F12 M	*Family Day*	*No Class*
	F14 W	Work-School	Uppal & LaRochelle-Cote 2014
	F16 F	MOVIE: 21-Up	
	F19-23	*SPRING BREAK*	
8	F26 M	AGE 18-25	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
	F28 W	Marrying	Gillis 2004; CIC 2007
	M2 F	AGE 25-35	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
9	M5 M	Parenting	Simon 2008
	M7 W	Immigration	Lauster & Zhao 2017
	M9 F	AGE 35-45	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
10	M12 M	Housing	Lauster 2010
	M14 W	Disruptions	Mason, et al 2002
	M16 F	AGE 45-65	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
11	M19 M	Care	Pyke 2000
	M21 W	Loss	Carr 2006
	M23 F	AGE 65+	<i>Ind. Readings</i>
12	M26 M	DEATH & Dying	Pinault, et al 2016
	M28 W	Paper Workshop	*Obit Draft Due*
	M30 F	*Holiday*	*No Class*
13	A2 M	*Holiday*	*No Class*
	A4 W	MOVIE: 56-Up	
	A6 F	REVIEW	*Obit Paper Due*