COURSE DESCRIPTION AND EMPHASIS

This course introduces the sociological literature on status attainment and transition to adulthood. Status attainment refers to a process in which people become placed in the status hierarchy. Sociologists have measured a person’s success in status attainment by educational qualification, occupational status, and income. Transition to adulthood is a critical period for status attainment because people enter the status hierarchy as they become adults. Thus, traditional markers of the transition to adulthood—completing education and training, entering the labor market, getting married, and having a first child—are closely tied to status attainment outcomes. Status attainment and transition to adulthood have important implications for occupational, economic, and health trajectories throughout adulthood. Studying this topic is particularly important in the current historical context characterized by demographic, technological, and institutional changes, which affects the meaning and processes of status attainment and transition to adulthood.

We will use the life course perspective as a guiding theoretical framework for the course. The perspective will help us understand status attainment and transition to adulthood in four ways. First, the perspective will allow us to systematically examine continuities and changes in behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs across life stages. Our main focus in this course is on the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. We will discuss patterns, antecedents, and consequences of these continuities and changes. Second, the life course perspective underscores how people exercise their agencies as they take advantage of opportunities and negotiate constraints created by social structure. Regarding status attainment specifically, people make plans and work toward them as they draw on available resources and cope with challenges that are unique to their social locations. Third, the life course perspective highlights how people are linked to each other in their life experiences. In the course, we will discuss how life circumstances of family members, friends, and romantic partners impact one’s transition to adulthood. Fourth, the life course perspective sheds light on the importance of historical contexts. We will learn how the meaning and the processes of status attainment and transition to adulthood have changed across generations.

The course also emphasizes inequality as the central aspect of status attainment and transition to adulthood. The status attainment process creates inequality by placing people into a hierarchy and by increasing or decreasing one’s life chances. The success in status attainment strongly depends on one’s social locations in childhood and adolescence, and in that sense, status attainment operates as a key mechanism of inequality reproduction across generations. For some people, however, the transition to adulthood serves as their “turning point” and helps them break away from their disadvantages or take away their advantages (i.e., intergenerational mobility).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading Assignments (3 to 4 articles or book chapters each week)
Read the assigned articles before you come to each session. The articles will be made available as PDF files saved in a CD. Several copies of the CD will be circulated in the first week, so you can copy the files to your computer, flash memory, etc.
Weekly Discussion Questions
Submit two questions for each article assigned for the week. You are required to submit questions through the course Blackboard site by the midnight before the class session. No or only partial credit will be given for poor questions and those submitted late. Please write questions that will motivate class discussions. They can take forms of criticisms, ideas for future studies, and comparison/contrast with other articles we have read in the course. Questions can address any aspect of articles including literature review, theoretical framework, methods, interpretations of the results, and discussions. Please be concise in your questions (a few sentences each); you can elaborate on your questions in class.

Review Presentation
Once during the semester, you are required to make a brief presentation. Come prepared to talk for 15 minutes and spend 10 minutes on class discussions. Select one of the following topics:

1. Review of a non-US or historical study. The existing literature in the area tends to concentrate on the contemporary US as the cultural and historical contexts. For your presentation, find a study conducted in a non-US society or for a previous time period. Cross-cultural research and longitudinal research are even better. For your presentation, please prepare to compare and contrast the study to other articles we have read in the course and to speak about how the article helps us understand the impact of cultural or historical contexts.

2. Review of a documentary film or TV show. Review a documentary film or TV show that addresses status attainment or transition to adulthood. It has to be non-fiction. In your presentation, provide a very brief description of the overall story and show a segment in class if possible. Discuss specific scenes that focus on status attainment or transition to adulthood. Apply the concepts and theories we have covered in class to the film and also think about how the film may inform back to those concepts and theories.

3. Review of public media articles on a recent event or phenomenon that relates to status attainment or transition to adulthood. Discuss sociological implications by drawing on concepts and theories covered in the course and by bringing any sociological literature you are familiar with. In addition to providing basic facts about the event or phenomenon, explain how the public media portray it by using one or more articles from newspapers, magazines, or online news sites.

Research Proposal
You will write a proposal for empirical research that focuses on status attainment or transition to adulthood. As you write the proposal, demonstrate the ability you have developed in this course to apply existing theories, find gaps in the literature, and lay out methods appropriate for your research questions. Your proposal should include the following components: (1) introduction and literature review (identify unexplored questions in the literature, which your study will seek to answer; and for a quantitative study, present your hypotheses and arguments for them); (2) methods (plans for sampling procedure, measurement, and analysis); (3) potential contributions to the literature (and any policy implications); and (4) limitations (identify any anticipated limitations of the study and discuss how you overcome them or why they do not necessarily undermine the study contributions). If you are not familiar with the format of research proposals, please refer to example articles.

One-page outline is due on February 23, and the final proposal (12-15 pages) is due on April 22. They should be submitted through Blackboard. Double space your outline and final proposal and use a 12-point font.

GRADING
- Discussion questions (10% of the final grade)
- Discussion participation (10%)
• Review presentation (30%)
• Project outline (10%)
• Project presentation (10%)
• Project proposal (30%)

UNIVERSITY ATTENDANCE POLICY
Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY
Students are expected to abide by the Academic Honor Policy of the Florida State University, including the statement on Values and Moral Standards published in The Florida State University General Bulletin. The Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of these expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty throughout the process. Please see the following website for a complete explanation of the Academic Honor Policy: http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/honorpolicy.htm.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Your request should be made during the first week of semester. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:
   Student Disability Resource Center, 108 Student Services Bldg., Florida State University
   Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167. Tel: (850)644-9566 (voice), (850)644-8504 (TDD).
   E-mail: SDRC@admin.fsu.edu. Website: http://www.fsu.edu/~staffair/dean/StudentDisability/.

SYLLABUS CHANGE POLICY
Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS
January 12: Overview and Theoretical Background

January 19: Historical Contexts
Fan, Pi-Ling and Margaret M. Marini. 2000. "Influences on Gender-Role Attitudes during the Transition to Adulthood." Social Science Research 29:258-283.

January 26: Markers, Meaning, and Subjective Experience of the Transition

Review Presentation

February 2: Educational Attainment

February 9: School to Work, Occupational Attainment

February 16: Career Trajectory and Intergenerational Mobility

Review Presentation

February 23: Romantic and Sexual Relationships and Union Formation


**Project Proposal Outline Due (Blackboard submission)**

**March 1: Childbearing and Parenting**


**Review Presentation**

**March 8: Spring Break (no class)**

**March 15: Relationships with Parents, Leaving Family Home, and Foster Care Youth**


**Review Presentation**

**March 22: Internal and External Migration, Second Generation Immigrants**


**Review Presentation**

**March 29: Delinquency, Crime, Substance Use**


**Review Presentation**
April 5: Health and Disability

April 12: Social Networks and Social Engagement

Review Presentation

April 19: Project Presentations

April 22: Project Proposal Due at 5:00PM (Blackboard submission).