

University of Pittsburgh
School of Education-Health and Human Development
Middle Childhood to Adolescence (HHD 1003)
Spring 2025

Instructor: Christina Frasher, Ph.D (she/her/hers)

Meeting Time & Place: Tues and Thurs, 5601 Posvar Hall

Office Hours: by appointment (see our Canvas course for guidance)

Contact: cmf141@pitt.edu (this is the best way to contact me)

Most children are amazing critical thinkers before we silence them.

-bell hooks

True terror is to wake up one morning and discover that your high school class is running the country.

-Kurt Vonnegut

In adolescence, fantasies can seem quite real.

-Ravi Ranjan Goswami

Welcome:

Dear students,

Welcome to our Middle Childhood to Adolescence Course! I am excited to begin this journey with you all. Below you will find our syllabus, which charts the course for our time together this semester. The plan is to introduce you to a variety of theories around how we develop from middle childhood up to and including the whole of the adolescence stage and engage in experiential activities that will encourage you to connect meaningfully to the ideas and content.

Many of the assignments will encourage you to reflect on your own experiences, values, and understanding of this period in life. I encourage you to have an open mind and an open heart as you engage in these practices, dialogue with the content and connect with each other.

Warmly,

Dr Frasher

Course Description:

(from the catalogue): *Adolescence is studied from a developmental perspective. Discussion begins with the history and cultural varieties of adolescence and proceeds to cover psychological accompaniments to puberty. Lectures and readings deal with cognitive growth, identity formation, moral development, family and peer relationships, psychological disturbance and education through the adolescent years.*

Building on this description, the course aims to develop a broad understanding of middle childhood to adolescence and the range of developmental paths for individuals. Note that this is a significant developmental stage in which the individual moves from the family/individual unit to the community/world systems and as such we will look at perspectives that fall under both the medical/biological and social perspectives of development. Topics to be covered include changing relationships with parents, self and identity development, the role of peers, environmental and socio-economic factors, adolescent trials and initiations, and various cultural perspectives. The course will give an overview of both traditional and critical theories to assess the development of the adolescent over this dynamic growth period including historical context, biological and cognitive approaches, attachment, object relations, psychodynamic and stage theories, identity and positive youth development, moral development during youth and critical and liberatory perspectives among others.

Assignments are structured to challenge students to think critically and dynamically about the nature of humanity, and how an individual develops mentally, internally and within the social realm during this stage of life. Students will be introduced to and will be asked to participate in various experiential learning activities. This experiential inquiry will be complemented by theoretical inquiry based on readings, films, guest speakers, podcasts, lectures, discussions, and individual projects. We will engage in explorations of the lived experiences of others who have lived through these stages and reflect on how these experiences connect (or not) to the theories and frameworks offered and to our own personal experiences.

Learning Objectives:

- Define theoretical concepts in psychology pertinent to the period of middle childhood through adolescence, including (but not limited to) cognitive, depth psychological, attachment-based, humanistic, biological, critical and restorative approaches.
- Engage in self-reflection regarding one's own assumptions on psychological health during middle childhood and adolescence, reflect on critical and global approaches and be able to express these opinions in an informed manner.
- Articulate the value of an equity-minded, culturally-responsive and strengths-based approach to human development, specific to this period of middle childhood through adolescence
- Understand the importance of family, peers, and relationships in the development of the adolescent psyche as well as how these interplay within society's expectations.

Course overview:

This will be a multi-faceted approach but also an opportunity to examine your own experience of this developmental period as well as the society, culture, and times we live in. I encourage you to open your minds and your hearts to the content and to the experiential offerings. Be prepared to address meaningful questions, hopes, desires, dreams, and more, and be open to the possibility of fun and engaging with those past

“selves”. This will be supported in the activities we engage in and the fiction pieces we will read throughout the course as well.

Course Topics:

- Socio-historical and Cultural Approaches
- "The Big Dream" and perspectives from the Global South
- Physical and Cognitive Development
- Sexuality and Intimacy
- Attachment and Depth Psychological Approaches
- Family and Peer Relationships-supports and barriers
- Mental Health Conditions and Trauma
- Whole Identity Development
- Positive Youth Development and Societal Institutions
- Liberatory and Humanistic-based perspectives in schools and communities
- Purpose, Joy and Moral Development
- Transitioning to Adulthood and Considering Tech’s Impact

Classroom Culture

- Respect: Please respect each other’s ideas and give each individual space to speak, we all come from varied environments and it is important to allow each individual their own unique opinion. Many of the topics covered have the potential to stimulate deep and engaging class discussions so please be respectful and keep in mind that this is an academic setting.
- Compassion: Please be considerate of your peers, your instructor (me), and most importantly yourself during this semester. This is a new class experience for everyone and there is space for mistakes when engaging in new experiences. By practicing self-compassion and compassion towards others, we will all help make this a safer space for learning.
- Communication: My primary form of communication, outside of our class meetings, will be direct email and Canvas announcements. You can reach me with questions via cmf141@pitt.edu and I will be available for Office Hours by appointment as well. It is especially important that you take advantage of all opportunities for communication that are available to you.
- Technology: Canvas, email, and Microsoft applications are the primary points of engagement for our class and you should expect to log into Canvas a few times a week to check for new content, assignments, and announcements. Please review the resources on Canvas for more information and tutorials.

Course Policies and Considerations

Attendance: Each student is allowed up to 3 absences per semester, no questions asked. If you find that you will have more than 3 please reach out to me as soon as possible. Absences also include leaving early or arriving late to class.

Academic Integrity and AI: Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are

essential aspects of this course, all assignments should be prepared by the student. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace and also finding your own writing, research and creative style will be one of the strongest assets you can offer professionally. Finding this style usually happens in a zone that Brian Eno terms, "happy accidents." Utilizing AI to generate your own work prevents you from making those accidental connections and ultimately slows your progress professionally. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

A Note on Content: Please note that some of the material may cause you to reflect on your past experiences or, the material may coincide with what you are experiencing now. The general field of psychology and human development is a study of life and experience so it's natural that you will connect the material to your own lives. In addition, the stresses of being a college student on top of any other responsibilities you may have can be overwhelming. Please seek me out in person, phone or via email, if you are struggling with anything presented and I will do my best to support you, offer requested accommodations and connect you with resources.

A note on grading and course structure: Please note that throughout the course I participate in alternative grading practices whenever feasible. Meaning that there is an encouragement to focus on the process of creating, etc the assignment and not the outcome (grades). This is done through the use of complete/incomplete assignments and the ability to revise assignments if they do not meet the specifications outlined. Please also note that this is a "living syllabus" and as such will be modified from time to time to

Teaching style: I hope that you will enjoy a variety of instructors during your time at Pitt and I hope that you have also had a variety of experiences of past teachers in how you approach learning. I utilize a variety of methods in my teaching that evidence-based research and inclusive theories show will improve your learning outcome. My teaching style combines traditional lectures, experiential and active learning practices, and embodiment and contemplative activities. This means that while I will sometime offer a lecture on the content, many more times I will be encouraging each of you to not only share your ideas, but also sound out your insights and encourage your peers to sound out their ideas as well. I also focus on building connections and relationships in our course through the use of games and experiential activities, meaning that we will get to know each other and also have some fun! I look forward to connecting with you and learning more about you and hope you will always feel comfortable reaching out to me, during our course time together and after as well. There will be multiple opportunities throughout the course to offer anonymous feedback and you can also contact me for individual meetings to address concerns.

Knowledge and "Truth" in our course: Please note that in addition to the points above, I do my best to facilitate an environment where knowledge is co-created. Learning is an exciting and at times challenging experience and no two classes are the same. This syllabus charts a journey for our course but it may change and we have no idea what opportunities may lie ahead. This field of development is similarly very dynamic, what may be an understanding of psychological health and well-being may adapt and change in a few years time. We also are continually re-evaluating and broadening research and

this is a very exciting time to learn about concepts and perspectives as more diverse researchers and scholars enter the field. Note also that one of the exciting aspects of learning about a topic is that you get to hear multiple ideas and perspectives. I most likely will offer topics in development that are different than other instructors and you will have other instructors who will teach development in different ways as well, this is part of what makes learning dynamic and which helps to offer you a well-rounded education. Please consider these various “buffet” perspectives I offer and that you and your classmates offer. I hope you will feel free to reflect meaningfully on the material presented and challenge both myself and each other as well.

Take Care of Yourself (adapted from the HHD department):

I and my colleagues encourage you all to do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep (not just enough to survive, but thrive!), and taking time to relax. Despite what you might hear, using your time to take care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying. All of us benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available at Pitt. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that’s available and take advantage of it. Ask for support sooner rather than later – this always helps. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

Please reach out to me as soon as possible if you are experiencing distress, struggling in the course, or having difficulty keeping up with the assignments and I will do my best to support you or connect to you with our many services at Pitt. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly encouraged to seek support.

The University Counseling Center is here for you: call 412-648-7930 and visit their website. If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, call someone immediately, day or night:

For emergencies:

Call Re:Solve Crisis Network 24/7: 1.888.796.8226

Text the ResSolve 24/7 Crisis Text Line: 741741

University Counseling Center (UCC): 412 648-7930

University Counseling Center Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930 x1

Suicide and Crisis Hotline: 988

IN EXTREME EMERGENCIES: Immediately call 911 or the University Police or proceed to the closest hospital emergency room.

Assessment and Assignments:

- **Course participation (70pts):** This component includes your attendance (being present in an engaged way, not just physically present-see participation rubric); timely completion of all assignments; quality and consistency of engaged participation in class; use of Canvas for various course activities. Assessment of participation will be based on adhering to our classroom culture listed above (including any additions we make as a class) and the participation rubric listed below as well as our weekly Questions/Quotes/Notes work.
 - **Questions/Quotes/Notes** (adapted from Dr Sera Mathew's idea) : To support your engagement with ideas in the class, we will have weekly Questions/Quotes/Notes. You will be asked to review/read/listen to the weekly materials on Canvas and then come to class with 1 Question, 2 quotes, 3 notes (3 bullet pts of notes) to share with your peers in small groups (such as you might do in future professional work). This will not only connect you with your peers but also support you on future assignments. There will be an open doc for you to share and engage with as well.
 - **Quizzes:** There will be a few short quizzes (3-5) in the course that are connected to recorded lectures.
 - **Attendance:** As offered above, each student is allowed up to 3 absences per semester, no questions asked. After these 3, your participation grade will be affected. Please note that I offer a virtual option by request and that to receive credit for this you need to participate in the chat.
- **Scholarly Research Mini-presentation (25pts):** You will be asked to find a relevant scholarly peer-reviewed research article (similar to those that have been offered in the course) that connects with a reading, film, etc or overall unit topic. This is an opportunity for you to delve into a topic of interest and share relevant research with the class. This will involve small group sharing with your peers and offering peer feedback. More information will be provided after the second week of the term.
- **Midterm and Final Reflections (take home/open book) (30pts):** These are opportunities for you to show me what you know, in which you will both intellectually process the content and also thoughtfully reflect on your understanding of ideas in the class and your overall learning process. This will be in small essay formats. More information about this will be shared in class.
- **Creative Youth Advocacy Project (75pts):** This will be a culminating scaffolded project due towards the end of the term. It will encourage you to reflect meaningfully on the course content and connect it with your own journey in understanding this developmental stage. It will also be an

opportunity for you to apply the traditional and critical theories offered in the class to a “need or problem” in society/the world around this developmental stage. You will have the opportunity to tailor this project to your major, etc. and individual professional interests. There will be 3 components including an individual creation portion, collaborative portion and written advocacy-based portion. More information will be provided in class.

University Policies and Support

Academic Integrity: Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh’s Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands- on practice, complete the [Academic Integrity Modules](#).

Disability Services: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Accessible Technology: The Canvas LMS platform was built using the most modern HTML and CSS technologies, and is committed to W3C’s Web Accessibility Initiative and [Section 508](#) guidelines. Specific details regarding individual [feature compliance](#) are documented and updated regularly.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University’s Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University’s mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the [Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page](#).

I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860,

or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be [filed online](#). You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Sexual Misconduct, Required Reporting, and Title IX

If you are experiencing sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking, please report it to me and I will connect you to University resources to support you. University faculty and staff members are required to report all instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence to the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. When a report is made, individuals can expect to be contacted by the Title IX Office with information about support resources and options related to safety, accommodations, process, and policy. I encourage you to use the services and resources that may be most helpful to you.

As your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me. You can also report directly to Office of Civil Rights and Title IX: 412-648-7860 (M-F; 8:30am-5:00pm) or via the Pitt Concern Connection at: [Make A Report](#)

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as a relevant part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you wish to make a confidential report, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- The University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)
- Pittsburgh Action Against Rape (community resource): 1-866-363-7273 (24/7)

If you have an immediate safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121 Any form of sexual harassment or violence will not be excused or tolerated at the University of Pittsburgh. For additional information, please visit the [full syllabus statement](#) on the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion webpage.

Gender-Inclusive Language Statement: Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Just as sexist language excludes women's experiences, non-gender-inclusive language excludes the experiences of individuals whose identities may not fit the gender binary, and/or who may not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. Identities including trans, intersex, and genderqueer reflect personal descriptions, expressions, and experiences. Gender-inclusive/non-sexist language acknowledges people of any gender (for example, first-year student versus freshman, chair versus chairman, humankind versus mankind, etc.). It also affirms non-binary gender identifications and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students, faculty, and staff may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Email Communication: Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read emails sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their email via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students who choose to forward their email from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If email is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address.

Statement on Classroom Recording: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussions, and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

Copyright Notice: These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials.

See [Library of Congress Copyright Office](#) and the [University Copyright Policy](#).

Writing Center: *We have an excellent Writing Center here at Pitt that undergraduate, graduate, staff and faculty utilize. Writing is a journey and as you learn more complex ideas your writing will need to accompany that complexity.*

The Writing Center, located at 317B O'Hara Student Center, is an excellent resource for working with an experienced consultant on your writing. You can choose to work with a faculty consultant or a trained undergraduate peer tutor. Although you should not expect consultants or peer tutors to "correct" your paper for you, they can assist you in learning to organize, revise, and edit your work. They can also help you get started! Consultants can work with you on a one-time basis or throughout the term. Their services are free. You can browse the services they offer or make an appointment by visiting www.writingcenter.pitt.edu

Religious Observances: The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructor, I am committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, exams, or other required attendance. If at all possible, please contact me (your course coordinator/s) within the first two weeks of the first class meeting to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks.

GRADING/RUBRIC:

The following is the criteria and assigned points for the total possible points you can earn.

| | | | |
|-----------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| A | 93 to 100 % | C+ | 78 to 79 % |
| A- | 90 to 92 % | C | 73 to 77 % |
| B+ | 88 to 89 % | C- | 70 to 72 % |
| B | 83 to 87 % | D | 60 to 69 % |
| B- | 80 to 82 % | F | below 60 % |

Participation Rubric:

Throughout our class meetings, I will invite you to engage in discussions, group activities, and other forms of participation. I will be looking for your meaningful participation via discussions in our class or and marking this each class meeting. Note that I conduct this class through a professional lens and encourage professionalism in our interactions. These assessment practices are aimed to support the professional culture in the class and not to “police” you. Please see the participation rubric below for how I will assess your participation.

Excellent– leading discussions, bringing in new and original ideas and thoughts, challenging ideas in a way that is thought and discussion-provoking, and showing an ability to listen to the ideas of others. Using technology to support your learning.

Satisfactory - supportive, follow-up points that are relevant and valuable, bringing ideas but not taking a leadership role in discussions. Using technology to support your learning in a non-disruptive manner.

Minimally Acceptable – present, awake, attentive, but not actively involved, at times using technology that does not support our collective learning environment.

Unsatisfactory –absent, present but not attentive, sleeping, irrelevant contributions that block movement in class discussions, and consistently using technology that distracts or disrupts our collective learning environment.

Selected Learning Materials:

*Course materials are posted on Canvas unless otherwise noted (no books, etc to purchase). Please note that additional selections (usually media-based materials) will be provided on Canvas and that there are additional recorded lectures on Canvas with quizzes. Note that while these materials are offered in the course, at times you will have a choice of which to read, watch, etc. I offer a choice typically because we cover sensitive

topics and I want you to consider your well-being and what will support your learning in the course.

Selections from:

Akiva, T., Carey, R. L., Cross, A. B., Delale-O'Connor, L., & Brown, M. R. (2017). Reasons youth engage in activism programs: Social justice or sanctuary?. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 53, 20-30.

Biederman, Alyssa. *My Rory: A Personal Journey through Teenage Anorexia*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005.

Bryant-Davis, T. E. (2019). *Multicultural feminist therapy: Helping adolescent girls of color to thrive*. American Psychological Association.

Conlin, Sarah E. and Douglass, Richard P. (2023) Feminist Therapy with Gender Questioning Adolescents: Clinical Case Example, *Women & Therapy*, 46:1, 58-75

East River Academy Adults. (2017). *Building Bridges, Crossing to Survival*. Student Press Initiative, Columbia University.

Emdin, C. (2016). *For White folks who teach in the hood... and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education*. Beacon Press.

Flynn, S. S., Touhey, S., Sullivan, T. R., & Mereish, E. H. (2024). Queer and transgender joy: A daily diary qualitative study of positive identity factors among sexual and gender minority adolescents. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.

Frankel, R. (2014). *The adolescent psyche: Jungian and Winnicottian perspectives*. Routledge.

Giedd, J. N. (2015). The amazing teen brain. *Scientific American*, 312(6), 32-37.

Grant, J. R. (2003). The positive psychology of youth and adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 32(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021017421413>

Karina Films. (2017). *Finding the gold within*.

Kipnis, A. (1999). *Angry Young Men: How Parents, Teachers, and Counselors Can Help*. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104.

Lansford, J. E., French, D. C., & Gauvain, M. (2021). *Child and adolescent development in cultural context*. American Psychological Association.

Linesch, D. G. (2013). *Adolescent art therapy*. Routledge.

McHale SM, Updegraff KA, Whiteman SD. *Sibling Relationships and Influences in Childhood and Adolescence*. J Marriage Fam. 2012 Oct 1;74(5):913-930.

Oh, E., & Chapman, E. (2018). *A thousand beginnings and endings: 15 retellings of Asian myths and legends*. Chicago.

Phinney, J. S. (1993). A three-stage model of ethnic identity development in adolescence. *Ethnic identity: Formation and transmission among Hispanics and other minorities*.

Richtel, M., & Flanagan, A. (2022). It's Life or Death': The Mental Health Crisis Among US Teens. *The New York Times*.

Salum Lorís Simón. (2016). *Ensoulment : [exploring the feminine principle in western culture]*. Chiron Publications.

Seymour, M., & Levin, H. M. (2015). Mentoring the Genius of Our Youth: Watering the Seeds of the Future. In *Educating for Humanity* (pp. 58-69). Routledge.

Simmons L. B. (2020). *We the wildflowers*. Spencer Hill Press.

Steinberg, L. D. (2014). *Age of opportunity: Lessons from the new science of adolescence*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (available through PittCat)

Zarobe L, Bungay H. The role of arts activities in developing resilience and mental wellbeing in children and young people a rapid review of the literature. *Perspectives in Public Health*. 2017;137(6):337-347.

Zoboi, I. (2019). *Black enough: Stories of being young & Black in America*. Harper.