

**HNRS 130 Conceptions of Self:
Society and the Self in the Transition to Adulthood**

Instructor

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Class Hours/Location

Tuesday/Thursday: 12:00 - 1:15 p.m.

Planetary Hall 124

Office Hours

Tuesday/Thursday: 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Friday: by appointment

Location: Mason Hall D205

Description

Drawing from appropriate works in the social sciences, arts, and humanities, Honors 130 examines different conceptions and definitions of the self from diverse cultures and historical contexts.

The special topic for this course is “Society and the Self in the Transition to Adulthood.” In this course we will ask: What does it mean to become an adult in the contemporary United States and how does the transition to adulthood influence our conception of self? In responding to this question, we will consider the social construction of the self during the transition to adulthood. Students will interrogate the cultural significance of emerging adulthood, seeking to understand who has access to the markers of adulthood and who is able to conceive of themselves as an adult. Throughout the course we will consider how conceptions of emerging adulthood vary by race, class, gender, and sexuality. In particular, issues of self-actualization that occur alongside the transition to adulthood will be examined. This course will employ an interdisciplinary perspective at the intersections of sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, and literature.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will:

- Examine the relationship between conceptions of the self and society,
- Develop an understanding of the self in the transition to adulthood,
- Analyze theoretical, empirical, and literary texts,
- Use evidence-based reasoning,
- Understand the role of culture and social construction in influencing conceptions of the self,
- Discuss variation in conceptions of the self by race, class, gender, and sexuality,
- And apply concepts from the course to an understanding of personal experience.

Required Texts

Arnett, Jeffrey Jensen, (2015). *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens Through the Twenties* 2nd Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Chabon, Michael, (1988, 2005). *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott, (1920, 1996). *This Side of Paradise*. Dover Thrift Editions.

Moody, Anne, (1968, 1976). *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. New York, NY: Dell.

Waters, Mary C. et al. (2011). *Coming of Age in America: The Transition to Adulthood in the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Assignments

- Participation (attendance, discussion, in-class activities, etc.): 25%
- Discussion Facilitation: 15% total
 - 10% for the facilitation plan
 - 5% for the in-class facilitation
- Letter to the Editor: 10%
- Analytical Reading Responses (x3): 10% each
- Autoethnography: 20% total
 - 5% for the in-class peer review
 - 15% for the final draft

Grading scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

Submitting Assignments

All assignments should be submitted via Blackboard by the due date listed on the syllabus. Occasionally students find that uploading an assignment to Blackboard takes longer than expected. To avoid having an assignment be marked “late” in the Blackboard submission system, you are encouraged to submit the assignment at least an hour in advance of the deadline. Should you encounter technical difficulties, you may also submit your assignment via e-mail before the listed deadline.

Late Work Policy

Assignments submitted late will receive a 10% deduction in grade with an additional 5% deduction per day afterward.

Participation

The quality of our classroom community and your course grade depend on your active participation. Please come to every class session prepared to contribute to the discussion and share your questions and ideas. Your participation grade will be determined through a combination of attendance, discussion, and class activities. An “A” grade in this category will require (1) attendance at nearly all classes (with the exception of excused absences), (2) active and consistent discussion in both small groups and activities, as well as (3) active and consistent engagement in discussions with the class as a whole.

To prepare for class participation on days where there is a discussion facilitation taking place, please read the questions and/or activities posted by your peers on the discussion board on Blackboard prior to class. Reading these questions in advance will help you to think about the readings as well as contributions you might like to make to the class discussion. If you have concerns about the participation policy, please let me know at the beginning of the semester so that we can develop a strategy for your course participation.

Discussion Facilitation

An important goal of this class will be to create a learning community in which all members have the opportunity to contribute to in-class discussions. Toward this goal, you will be asked to generate content to facilitate a portion of a class discussion. Typically, this content will be in the form of four or five questions about the assigned reading for the day. However, there is some room for creativity here. If you would like to have one or two questions and lead a brief in-class activity (i.e. a debate, thought experiment, or other activity, etc.) that relates to the reading, that is also encouraged.

You will sign up for a discussion date during the second week of class. Detailed instructions on the steps to follow for the discussion facilitation will be posted to Blackboard prior to the sign-up date.

Letter to the Editor

This assignment prompts you to use the readings (both theoretical and empirical) and our work in class to write a scholarly response to an article from popular media about emerging adulthood. Your response should be brief (in the range of 2-3 pages double-spaced), and draw on at least 3 articles, chapters, or books we have read. While the letter to the editor is a unique genre that would not make use of formal style guidelines (i.e. APA or MLA style), you should be sure to credit your sources – especially quoted or paraphrased material – by making note of the author and using quotation marks where appropriate in the text. Detailed instructions for this assignment along with the article you will respond to for your letter will be posted to Blackboard.

Analytical Reading Responses

Over the course of the semester you will write three analytical reading responses. These are brief (2 to 3 pages, double-spaced) essays that analyze the reading for a given day. A strong analytical essay should accomplish three things. First, it should demonstrate that you have read and thought critically about the assigned reading. Second, the response should include an analysis of the author's claims and key points (or themes in the case of a literary text). Finally, a strong essay should also connect the reading to others we have read previously, placing the texts in conversation with one another. In addition to these three elements, you may also want to consider additional strategies such as proposing questions that you would like to raise in relation to the reading, discussing limitations or shortcomings of the reading, outlining possibilities for further research or theorizing, etc. For literary texts, you may want to select a key passage you found to be important for a close reading.

As with the discussion facilitation, you will sign up for days for your analytical reading responses at the beginning of the semester. Please take care not to sign-up for a reading response on the same day as your discussion facilitation. The full instructions for this assignment will be posted to Blackboard.

Autoethnography

Your final assignment for the semester will involve writing an "autoethnography" examining your own life in relation to the theory and empirical research we have encountered over the course of the semester. A strong autoethnography should engage with at least 6 of the texts we have read and discussed over the course of the semester. The final product will be a 6 to 8-page paper. We will discuss the autoethnography genre in advance of this assignment. Detailed instructions for this assignment will be posted to Blackboard.

GMU Honor Code

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated seriously. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt please ask for guidance and clarification.

Because this is a research methods course, it is important that you are familiar with the required procedures for giving credit to your sources. The use of material or information that is not your own without proper citation (i.e. plagiarism) is a serious offense. Plagiarism can result in a grade of "F" for the assignment or even expulsion from the university. For more information on the University's Honor Code and academic integrity, refer to <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>

Accommodations

If you need an accommodation for your academic work, you will need to furnish appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will give you a form detailing appropriate accommodations for your instructor. In addition to providing your instructors with the appropriate form, ODS suggests that students discuss the accommodation with them at the beginning of the semester and as needed during the term. If you have contacted the Office of Disability Services and are waiting to hear from a counselor, please tell me.

Diversity

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study, and personal growth. An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, and ability. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and an environment where diverse perspectives, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach. Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes, and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

The Writing Center

The George Mason University Writing Center staff offers a variety of resources for students who want to improve their writing skills. Tutorial services include graduate and undergraduate tutors, ESL specialist tutors, the opportunity to meet with tutors either face-to-face or via email through the Online Writing Lab, and writing workshops offered throughout the semester. We can all work to improve our writing, so all students are encouraged to make use of these services.

Tentative Course Schedule:

<i>Week and Dates</i>	Below is a tentative schedule of weekly activities and due dates for major assignments. This schedule is subject to change by the instructor as the semester progresses.
Week 1 <i>Introduction to the Transition to Adulthood</i>	<p>Tuesday, January 24: Course introduction and syllabus. Discussion: What is the transition to adulthood?</p> <p>Thursday, January 26: Reading: Arnett, Ch. 1, "A Longer Road to Adulthood." Discussion on psychological perspectives on the transition to adulthood.</p>
Week 2 <i>Perspectives on the Transition to Adulthood</i>	<p>Tuesday, January 31: Readings: Waters et al. <i>Coming of Age in America</i> Ch. 5 "Becoming Adult: Meanings and Markers for Young Americans." Discussion on sociological perspectives on the transition to adulthood. (Recommended reading: Marini "The Order of Events in the Transition to Adulthood," <i>Sociology of Education</i> (especially p. 63-68 & 81-82).</p> <p>Thursday, February 2: Watch: Jeffrey Arnett's TED Talk https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fv8KpQY0m6o AND Meg Jay's TED Talk https://www.ted.com/talks/meg_jay_why_30_is_not_the_new_20 Discussion of multiple perspectives: Arnett & Jay.</p>
Week 3 <i>Social Theories of the Self</i>	<p>Tuesday, February 7: Readings: Giddens, "The Self: Ontological Security and Existential Anxiety" in <i>Modernity and Self-Identity</i> Chapter 2, p. 35-63 (on Blackboard). Discussion of theoretical vs. empirical texts. What is theory?</p> <p>Thursday, February 9: Reading: Read Goffman: "Performances" in <i>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</i> Chapter 1 (read p. 17- top of 56 and 70-76) (on Blackboard). (Recommended reading: Mead, "The 'I' and the 'Me'" in <i>Mind, Self, & Society</i> -- on Blackboard). Discussion of performativity and front-stage/back-stage.</p>

Week 4
***Education & Work in the
 Transition to Adulthood***

Tuesday, February 14:

Reading: Arnett Ch. 6 “The Road Through College: Twists and Turns” (p. 16-27).

Discussion on learning in college and post-college outcomes

Thursday, February 16:

Reading: Danzinger & Ratner. 2010. “Labor Market Outcomes and the Transition to Adulthood.” *The Future of Children* (skim article, read p. 133-137 closely).

Discussion of the “Sociological Imagination.”

Week 5
***F. Scott Fitzgerald
 This Side of Paradise***

Tuesday, February 21:

Reading: Fitzgerald *This Side of Paradise* Book 1 (Ch. 1-4).

Thursday, February 23:

Reading: Finish Fitzgerald *This Side of Paradise* Interlude and Book 2 (through to the end of the book).

Week 6
***Marriage & Family in the
 Transition to Adulthood***

Tuesday, February 28:

Reading: Arnett Ch. 3, “From Conflict to Companionship: A New Relationship with Parents.”

Discussion of the “accordion family.”

Thursday, March 2:

Reading: Furstenberg, Frank “On a New Schedule: Transitions to Adulthood and Family Change.” *The Future of Children* (skim article, read p. 67 & 80-81 closely, pay attention to the charts and figures throughout the article) (on Blackboard).

Week 7
***Gender and Sexuality in
 the Transition to
 Adulthood***

Monday, March 6: Letter to the Editor Due on Black Board by 11:59 p.m.

Tuesday, March 7:

Reading: Arnett Ch. 4, “Love and Sex: New Freedoms, New Problems.”

Bring hard copies of Letter to the Editor assignment to class to reference for a discussion of responses to Henderson’s article.

Thursday, March 9:

Hamilton & Armstrong, “Gendered Sexuality in Young Adulthood.”

Discussion of femininity in the transition to adulthood.

Week 8 Spring Break	Spring Break: March 13-March 19
Week 9 Gender and Sexuality Continued	<p>Tuesday, March 21: Reading: Kimmel “‘What’s the Rush?’ Guyland as a New State of Development.” In <i>Guyland</i> Chapter 2 (on Blackboard). Discussion of masculinity in the transition to adulthood.</p> <p>Thursday, March 23: Reading: Needham & Austin “Sexual Orientation, Parental Support, and Health During the Transition to Young Adulthood” (on Blackboard). Discussion of the transition to adulthood for the LGBT community.</p>
Week 10 Michael Chabon The Mysteries of Pittsburgh	<p>Tuesday, March 28: Reading: Chabon <i>The Mysteries of Pittsburgh</i> (Ch.1-13).</p> <p>Thursday, March 30: Reading: Finish Chabon: <i>The Mysteries of Pittsburgh</i> (Ch. 14 through to the end of the book).</p>
Week 11 Social Class in the Transition to Adulthood	<p>Tuesday, April 4: Arnett Ch. 10 “How Important is Social Class?” Discussion on Bourdieu and the forms of capital.</p> <p>Thursday, April 6: Readings: Silva “Coming of Age in the Risk Society” in <i>Coming up Short</i> Chapter 1 (on Blackboard). Discuss the genre of autoethnography and the final assignment.</p>
Week 12 Social Class Continued/ Race and Ethnicity in the Transition to Adulthood	<p>Tuesday, April 11: Schoeni and Ross. “Material Assistance Received from Families during the Transition to Adulthood.” In Settersten et al, <i>On the Frontier of Adulthood</i>. Ch. 12 (on Blackboard). Discussion on material constraint in the transition to adulthood.</p> <p>Thursday, April 13: Reading: Arnett article, “Conceptions of the Transition to Adulthood Among Emerging Adults in American Ethnic Groups” (on Blackboard). Discussion of sociological perspectives on race and ethnicity.</p>

Week 13
Race and Ethnicity
Continued

Tuesday, April 18:

Reading: Waters et al. *Coming of Age in America* Ch. 4 “Coming of Age in ‘America’s Finest City’: Transitions to Adulthood Among Children of Immigrants in San Diego.”

Discussion of the role of culture in the transition to adulthood.

Thursday, April 20:

Reading: Gonzales “Learning to Be Illegal: Undocumented Youth and Shifting Legal Contexts in the Transition to Adulthood” (on Blackboard).

Bring outline of Autoethnography for peer review.

Week 14
Anne Moody
Coming of Age in
Mississippi

Tuesday, April 25:

Reading: Moody *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Ch. 1 & 18-21 or feel free to read all of Ch. 1-21 if you have time).

Thursday, April 27:

Reading: Moody *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Ch. 22-26).

Week 15
Conclusion

Tuesday, May 2:

Reading: Finish Moody *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (Ch. 27-30).

Bring draft of Autoethnography for peer review.

Thursday, May 4:

Wrap-up. Revisit the debate between Arnett & Jay.

Thursday, May 11: Final Papers are due on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m.