

**SYLLABUS**  
**PSYCHOLOGY 3AG3: PSYCHOLOGY of AGING**  
 Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour  
 McMaster University  
 Winter Term 2012

Course time: MR 9:30am; T 10:30am  
 Course location: MDCL 1105

**Professor**

Dr. J. M. Ostovich

Email: Use *Avenue* email system (emails must originate from your own *Avenue* account).

Phone: *Do not phone me.*

Office: PC-415A

Office hours: TBA; monitor announcements section of website for cancellations, changes, and extra hours.

**Teaching Assistants:**

Jordan Lass: [lassjw@mcmaster.ca](mailto:lassjw@mcmaster.ca)

Vivian Lee: [leev9@mcmaster.ca](mailto:leev9@mcmaster.ca)

Faria Sana: [sanaf@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sanaf@mcmaster.ca)

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**Course Description:** What does or does not change with age? Most of us view the process of aging in terms of losses: loss of looks, health, cognitive efficacy, perceptual ability, and, eventually, of life. In this course, however, we will consider research and theory on what stays the same, and on what is gained, as well. Topics will include, but are not limited to, perception, cognition, personality, mental and physical health, social relationships.

**Textbook** (required): Lemme, B. H. *Development in Adulthood*. Custom edition for McMaster University, available exclusively at the McMaster bookstore.

**Please note:** This syllabus – including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, and assessment strategy – is subject to change if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

**E-mail Policy:** E-mails regarding course content must originate from your *Avenue to Learn* account, and must be sent to my *Avenue* account. Note that *Avenue* and *mcmaster.ca* cannot yet “talk” to one another. Emails not sent to me exactly as described here *will not get to me!!!*

If for some reason you cannot get onto *Avenue*, then emails to me must be sent from your *designated McMaster e-mail account* (and, obviously, must go to mine, since *Avenue* will reject *mcmaster.ca* emails; my Mac address is [jmostovich@mcmaster.ca](mailto:jmostovich@mcmaster.ca)).

Email sent from third-party providers (e.g., hotmail, cogeco, google) will be ignored. McMaster has this policy for *two important reasons*: (1) to ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; and (2) to teach the professional use of e-mail. *Remember*: E-mails to your professors are professional communications. They should (1) include correct spelling and punctuation, (2) have an *informative subject line*, and (3) be brief.

**Website Policy**: You are expected to check our course website on *Avenue to Learn* regularly for announcements, updates, discussion board postings, and other valuable information. It is *your responsibility* to keep up with the information provided on this site.

Use of the website's **discussion boards** is strongly encouraged, and, in the case of non-private inquiries (e.g., questions about course content and the running of this course, but *not* emails reporting illness or other private matters) is *preferred to email communication*, due to my high volume of email from 700+ students per term. Questions asked on the discussion boards allow other students with the same questions the chance to see the answer (and therefore not have to ask the question themselves). Discussion board questions also provide a learning experience for students who wish to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the top of each discussion board for *directions on how to use the board*. Posts that ignore these directions will be deleted. The professor reserves the right to *ban* students from the course website if they use the board inappropriately (e.g., posting inappropriate comments). This will involve lost access to slides and other important course information.

Finally, students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Policy re. the Recording of Lectures**: No student is permitted to record lectures, unless they have CSD documentation that they require this service due to disability (e.g., dyslexia). Those with permission to record lectures *may not share* their recording with others. Any infraction of this policy will be severely dealt with.

Why? You will have difficulties in your post-graduate, real-world job if you are not able to listen effectively to, and take note of, the right things. Note-taking gives you practice in this very important skill.

**Participation**: In-class and discussion board participation are strongly encouraged. If you have a question, your colleagues probably have one, too, and will appreciate it if you speak up. Don't be shy about asking questions!

**Assessment**: Your final mark will be based on your performance on two midterms (MT1@25%; MT2@35%) and one final exam (@40%). The midterms will be non-cumulative (*exception*: research methods), and will cover lecture material *and* assigned readings – even readings on topics not discussed in class. The final exam will be cumulative, but otherwise the same as the midterms.

All tests will be comprised of multiple choice (MC) and short answer (SA) questions. See below, under "How to do well..." for details.

**NB**: The instructor reserves the right to alter the evaluation scheme if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

**Test-Taking Policy:** Midterms will be run like final examinations. You may bring writing instruments, an eraser (or similar), and essentials like kleenex and water to your desk. You must also bring your student ID card. All other materials, especially electronics (e.g., your cell phone), must stay in your bag. Note that *if your cell phone rings or buzzes during a midterm, then you will be docked 5%* on that midterm. TURN IT OFF!

**Missed Tests:** McMaster has adopted a self-report tool, the McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF), to be used to report some (but not all) absences. Please make yourself familiar with the ins and outs of using this form by going to <http://www.mcmaster.ca/health/> and <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>.

The MSAF *cannot* be used in the following situations:

- (1) when the request for relief of missed work is for non-medical reasons (e.g. religious holidays, personal reasons, athletic events as a student athlete, etc)
- (2) for a medical situation that lasts for more than 5 days, or
- (3) for a second or subsequent time in a term, or
- (4) for a major piece of work (worth 30% or more; *note that Mac has allowed MSAF's for assessments worth 30%, despite this rule, so you may use MSAF for psych2C03 midterms*)
- (5) for the final exam.

The MSAF can be used, once per term, if you are absent from the university for a medical reason lasting fewer than 5 days. Longer absences or absences due to non-medical reasons must be reported to your Faculty or Program office, with documentation. Note that relief from term work may not necessarily be granted.

*Within 2 working days of a missed test, you must* (1) send your MSAF to [jmostovich@mcmaster.ca](mailto:jmostovich@mcmaster.ca) and (2) email me at Avenue to arrange a make-up test for the work you have missed (make-up tests are held one week after the original test, during class time; watch our website for details). No requests for special consideration will be accepted after two weeks' time has elapsed (i.e., you will receive a mark of zero on the missed midterm).

*If you miss the make-up test, then you must immediately* (within 2 days of the make-up test date) report your absence to your Faculty or Program office, and *immediately* (within 2 days) contact me; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero on the missed work. If you follow these directives and have provided an acceptable excuse for having missed the make-up, then you will receive some reasonable accommodation.

**NB:** If you miss both midterms and their makeups, then you will fail this course (you cannot have a 100% final). You are advised to seek academic counseling if this happens to you.

**Final Grade Calculations:** Your final grade will be converted to a letter grade, according to the following scheme:

<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u>
90-100 (A+)	77-79 (B+)	67-69 (C+)	57-59 (D+)
85-89 (A)	73-76 (B)	63-66 (C)	53-56 (D)
80-84 (A-)	70-72 (B-)	60-62 (C-)	50-52 (D-)
			0-49 (F)

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down, depending on overall performance in the course. Students *who do not pass the cumulative final*, or whose final exam mark is their *lowest mark* in the course, will *not* have their mark adjusted up under any circumstances.

**Note as Well:** I do *not* do favours for one student that I do not also do the whole class. Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. Special favours to one student are unfair to the multitude of students who neither ask for nor get those same favours. Therefore, if you are concerned about your final mark, it is your responsibility to visit with me or with one of your TA's, well in the advance of the final exam, for study help.

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g., a grade of zero (0) on an assignment, loss of course credit with a notation on the transcript (“grade F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. It is *your* responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

### **How To Do Well in this Course.**

First: Read the syllabus *very* carefully!

Second: Read the website carefully as well! Follow the discussions, and read any announcements and files posted there. Check the website *several times per week*.

Third: Know the *missed tests policy*. Do exactly as this policy asks if you miss a test (especially: get in touch with me *immediately* so that I know what’s going on and can take care of you), or you may be in for a nasty surprise (e.g., a grade of zero on the missed test).

Fourth: Attend lectures. You cannot do well in this course if you do not attend lectures. Although the textbook does support the lecture material, lectures often go beyond, or have a different focus than, the textbook. Therefore, if you miss lectures, you will miss important information.

Fifth: Read your textbook and any other assigned readings. You cannot do well in this course if you do not supplement lectures with *independent learning from the textbook*. I do not cover all of the materials in the textbook; there is no time for that in a one-term course. Therefore, I expect you to spend some of your study-time identifying important concepts from the text, and learning them. Independent learning is an important skill. You will be expected to do this in your upper level courses, and – more importantly – in what academics call “the real world”.

Sixth: Learn how to take effective notes. Slides are posted *after* their contents have been lectured on. I post the slides after lectures for several reasons. The most important of these is that no one in the real world is going to give you slides! In order to do well in the real world, you will have to know how to cope with large amounts of incoming information. If you have difficulty taking effective notes, then please visit CSD, or see me or one of your TA’s, for advice.

Seventh: Please note that my slides contain only basic information – bullet points, figures, and pictures. You cannot recreate lectures, and therefore cannot succeed in this course, by depending on them instead of attending lecture.

Finally: Think carefully about the information I’m presenting you in lecture. Two things are usually happening: first, I’m telling you the story of some theory or idea; and second, I’m giving you details on research that helped tell the story. Make sure that you understand the theory and its related concepts, and can define them accurately, and make sure that you know the supporting research very well. Finally, make sure that you can connect research to theory! Do not learn each in isolation – focus on how each informs the other.

## SCHEDULE AND READINGS

This schedule is subject to change.

The most likely changes are the timing of topics before and after midterms.

Any changes will be announced on *Avenue*.

Below is a list of topics (with associated readings listed in [blue](#)) that I expect to cover this term, divided into two halves: pre-SA-midterm and post-SA-midterm. Even though I will not cover the entire contents of any given chapter in lecture, you are expected to read and learn its contents.

**Midterm 1:** Monday 30 January (value: 25%)

**Midterm 2:** Thursday 8 March (value: 35%)

**Final Exam:** To be scheduled by the Registrar (value: 40%)

**A note on dates and deadlines:** The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their email and course website weekly during the term and to note any changes.

**A note on the readings:** Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself “cramming” the readings at the last minute. Extra readings may be assigned as we go. These will be announced in class and on *Avenue*; it is your responsibility to keep track of extra materials.

Reminder: The textbook will discuss ideas not covered in lecture. Read these sections anyway – this is your opportunity to engage in independent learning, which is an incredibly important skill.

Textbooks, lamentably, sometimes interpret data differently from one another, and from how the professor interprets data. If a lecture differs from the textbook *on exactly the same point*, then you should ignore the textbook’s interpretation. Sometimes, what seems like a contradiction, though, is really just the result of the textbook and professor discussing different levels of analysis (e.g., larger vs. smaller picture).

### **SECTION 1: 3 Jan to 30 Jan**

Introduction and Research Methods → [Read Ch’s 1 and 2 \(excluding pages 46-73 on personality development\)](#)

Physical Changes → [Read Ch 8](#)

Health → [Read Ch 9](#)

### **SECTION 2: 31 Jan to 8 Mar**

Cognition → [Read Ch’s 4 and 5](#)

Personality → [Read pages 46-73 and Ch 3](#)

### **SECTION 3: 12 Mar to 3 Apr**

Mental Health → [Read Ch 10](#)

Social Roles Throughout the Lifespan: Family, Marriage, Friendship, & Caregiving → [Read Ch’s 6 and Ch 7](#)

Successful Aging → [Readings TBA](#)

Death, Dying, and Bereavement → [Read Ch 11](#)