

SYLLABUS
PSYCHOLOGY 2S03E: PSYCHOLOGY of AGING
Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour
McMaster University
Fall Term 2009

Course time: T 7-10pm
Course location: TSH B128

Professor:

Dr. Jennifer M Ostovich
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Office: PC 415A
Office hours: TBA on course website

Teaching Assistants:

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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. (2006). *Development in Adulthood*, 4th Ed. I cannot vouch for previous editions' suitability as substitutes.

E-mail Policy: E-mail *must* originate from your *designated McMaster e-mail account*. If we (your professor or TA) need to contact you, we will send the e-mail to your mcmaster.ca account. You should *monitor this account regularly*. E-mails sent from third-party providers (yahoo, hotmail, cogeco, sympatico, etc.) will be ignored. We have this policy for three reasons: (1) to reduce the amount of incoming spam to our accounts; (2) to ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; and (3) to teach the professional use of e-mail. *Remember:* E-mails to your professors are *professional communications*. They should include correct spelling and punctuation, and should be polite and to the point.

Website Policy: This course has a Blackboard website. You are expected to check this website with regularity 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 communications*. I have 850 students this term and cannot possibly answer all emails.

Questions asked on the discussion board 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 attempt to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the *first post* on each discussion board for *directions on how to use the board*. Inappropriate posts will be deleted from the board. The professor reserves the right to *ban* students from the course website if they use the board inappropriately (e.g., posting mean or other 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.

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*. This is available below. Do exactly as this policy asks if you miss a test, or you may be in for a nasty surprise.

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 trouble taking effective notes, then please visit CSD, or see me or one of your TA’s, for advice.

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. I expect you to be able to discuss both theory *and* research on tests, so try to figure out

- (1) what's the story? (i.e., the theory), and
- (2) what does the research we learned about tell us about that story?

If you study with these questions in mind, then you should do well on the midterm and final. If you find that you're not sure what the story is or how the research fits in with or supports the story, then please make use of the discussion board and any office hours offered by me or by your TA's!

Participation: In-class and discussion board participation are *strongly encouraged*. If you have a question, your colleagues probably have a similar one, 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 (a) several short quizzes, (b) a midterm, and (c) a non-cumulative final exam. All material is fair game for all tests (i.e., both lectures and readings are fair game).

Quizzes: I will give 5 "pop" quizzes this term. These will not be announced ahead of time; therefore, you should plan to attend all lectures, and to *bring a pencil to all lectures* as well. The quizzes will consist of several multiple-choice items, chosen to reflect readings and lecture material. Your 4 best quiz marks will be worth 20% of your final mark.

Midterm and Final: The midterm and final will be worth a combined 80% of your final mark. The value of each test will depend on your performance on that test, such that your better performance will be worth 45% of your final mark, and your worse performance will be worth 35% of your final mark.

The midterm and final will consist of some combination of multiple choice, definitions, and short essays, to be announced before each test. The midterm is set for **20 October**. The final exam will be held during the **examination period**.

Please note that the instructor reserves the right to alter the evaluation scheme if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

Missed Tests: It is your responsibility to submit all excuses for missed tests to the office of the Associate Dean of your faculty *within one week* of the original test date. It is *also* your responsibility to *speak with your professor as soon as possible*. Senate regulations for petitions for special consideration have always required that: "40. The student shall make a prompt and timely request for special consideration." No requests for special consideration will be accepted after one month.

If you miss the midterm, a makeup test will be provided during class time a week to the

day after the original test (yes, this means that you will miss a lecture if you miss the midterm). *If you miss this make-up*, then you must once again supply an excuse to your Associate Dean; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero (0) on the midterm. If you can provide an acceptable excuse to your Associate Dean for having missed the make-up, then an alternate make-up assignment will be designed for you. *This make-up assignment could take the form of a long research paper, essay examination, or oral examination. Therefore, please consider the consequences of missing a test carefully!*

Final Mark Calculations: Your final mark will be converted to a letter, according to the following scheme:

<u>Percentage (Grade)</u> 90-100 (A+)	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u> 77-79 (B+)	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u> 67-69 (C+)	<u>Percentage (Grade)</u> 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)

Please Note: The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up *or down*, on a individual basis, in the light of special circumstances.

Please Note as Well: I do *not* do special favours for one student that I have not offered (or would not offer) to the class as a whole. For example, I will not, under normal circumstances, bump up your final mark (e.g., 69.2% is a C+ for *all* students; it is *not* a B- for you, but a C+ for the rest of the class). Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. I live by this rule because special favours to one student are *unfair* to the multitude of students who neither ask for nor receive those same favours. If you are concerned about your final mark, therefore, it is your responsibility to visit with me or with one of your TA's for guidance.

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 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 or test, 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 dishonestly. For information about academic dishonesty, please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

This schedule is subject to change.

Changes will be announced on Blackboard.

The most likely change is the timing of the section on *Personality Development*.

This topic may move to before the midterm if time permits.

Below is a list of topics (with associated readings listed in [blue](#)) that I expect to cover this term, divided into two halves: pre-midterm and post-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.

Pop Quizzes: Dates unannounced

Midterm: 20 October

Final Exam: To be scheduled by the Registrar

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 McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

A note on the readings: I will not be deleting any of the readings listed below. Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself “cramming” the readings at the last minute. Please do not email me asking whether I plan to delete any of your readings! This is rather high up on my “top ten most annoying emails” list!

Extra readings *may* be assigned as we go. These will be announced in class and on Blackboard; links to extra readings will be posted on Blackboard; it is your responsibility to keep track of extra materials.

SECTION 1: 15 SEPT TO 20 OCT

Introduction and Research Methods.

[Read Ch's 1 and 2](#)

Physical Changes.

[Read Ch 9](#)

Health.

[Read Ch 10](#)

Cognition.

[Read Ch's 4 and 5](#)

SECTION 2: 27 OCT TO 1 DEC

Personality.

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

Mental Health.

[Read Ch 11](#)

Social Roles Throughout the Lifespan: Family, Marriage, Friendship, & Caregiving.

[Read Ch's 6 and Ch 7](#)

Successful Aging.

[Read pages 209-211; other readings TBA.](#)

Death, Dying, and Bereavement.

[Read Ch 12](#)