



National Research University-Higher School of Economics
“Social Change and the Life Course”
040100.62, Sociology Bachelor Program

Government of the Russian Federation

**Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution for Higher Professional
Education**

National Research University-Higher School of Sociology

Faculty of Sociology

**Discipline Program
Social Change and the Life Course**

040100.62, Sociology Bachelor Program

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1. Summary

Classical sociological analysis often looked at frozen individuals and frozen structures. Thereafter, there was a development whereby there was increasing recognition of changing structures upon static individuals. The life course approach focuses on changing individuals within changing structural contexts, thereby highlighting the interaction between biology, biography, and the social world. This BA level course will cover key concepts in life course research (temporality, linked lives, Generations and cohorts, trajectories and transitions) as well as the notions of structure and agency. We will also review key methods of life course research, such as panel data analysis and the biographical interview. Finally, popular life course research topics will be introduced, and we will end the course with a discussion on the controversial notion of ‘life course theory.’

2. Goals and objectives of the discipline

As a didactic result of attending this course, students should:

- enhance their understanding of life course concepts
- enhance their understanding of life course methods
- be able to apply life course concepts to diverse research spheres, such as transitions to and from education, work, and retirement
- be able to conduct and analyze a life story interview

3. Grading

- Group presentation (25%)
 - Group discussion (15%)
 - Life Story Interview Transcript and analysis (30%)
 - Final Exam (written, multiple choice) (30%)
- participation/attendance. If unexcused absences are greater than two, then final grade = (base grade) x (attended weeks / total weeks)*
- Late assignments will be graded down.
 - If you plagiarize, you will fail.

4. Discipline Contents

1. Lessons

Note: The readings for each lesson will be made available online:

<https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B0zzDq9OoQAzYmY4Yjk3ZDUtNjZjMi00YTVjLW15YmQtZjNlZGJlNTMyNGQ5>

Required readings must be read by each student. Supplementary readings are highly recommended, and in the event that they are discussed in class or presented by a student, may also be covered in the exam.

Lesson 1. Introduction



18 January 2013

Required Readings:

Elder, Glen Jr., Monica K. Johnson, and Robert Crosnoe (2003). "The Emergence and Development of Life Course theory." Pp. 3-19 in Jeylan T. (Editor); Shanahan, Michael J. (Editor). *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Supplementary Readings:

Cain, Leonard D. (2010). "*Life Course and Social Structure*" 2009. Pp. 31-63 in W. R. Heinz, J. Huinink, and A. Weymann (eds.), in cooperation with C. S. Swader, *The Life Course Reader*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Lesson 2. Key Concepts

25 January 2013

Required Readings

Mannheim, Karl (1952 [1928]). "The Problem of Generations." Pp. 286-320 in Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Supplementary Readings

Hagestad, Gunhild O. (1991). "Trends and Dilemmas in Life-Course Research: An International Perspective." Pp. 21-48 in W. Heinz (Ed.) *Theoretical Advances in Life Course Research*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.

Heinz, Walter (1991). "Status Passages, Social Risks and the Life Course." Pp. 9-20 in W. Heinz (Ed.) *Theoretical Advances in Life Course Research*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.

Lesson 3. Structure and Agency

1 February 2013

Required Readings



Settersten, Richard A. Jr. and Lynn Gannon (2010). “*Structure, Agency, and the Space Between: On the Challenges and Contradictions of a Blended View of the Life Course*”. Pp. 456-475 in W. R. Heinz, J. Huinink, and A. Weymann (eds.), in cooperation with C. S. Swader, The Life Course Reader. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Supplementary Readings

Hitlin, Steven and G. H. Elder (2007). "Time, Self, and the Curiously Abstract Concept of Agency." *Sociological Theory*, 25(2): 170-191.

Heinz, Walter R. (2010). “*Status Passages as Micro-Macro Linkages in Life Course Research*” . Pp. 473-486 in W. R. Heinz, J. Huinink, and A. Weymann (eds.), in cooperation with C. S. Swader, The Life Course Reader. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Lesson 4. Life Course Methods

8 February 2013

Required Readings

Glenn, Norval D. (2003). “Distinguishing Age, Period, and Cohort Effects Mortimer.” Pp.465-476 in Jeylan T. (Editor); Shanahan, Michael J. (Editor). *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Bertraux, Daniel and Martin Kohli (1984). "The Life Story Approach: A Continental View." *Annual Review of Sociology* 10: 215-237.

McAdams, Dan (2008). “The Life Story Interview.” A life story interview guide. The Foley Center for the Study of Lives, Northwestern University.

Supplementary Readings

Taris, Toon (2000). “Longitudinal Data and Longitudinal Designs.” *Primer in Longitudinal Data Analysis*. Pp. 1-16. London: Sage.



Due 14 February 2013: Your life story interview should have been conducted

Lesson 5. The Life Story Interview

15 February 2013

Due 23:59 on 28 February 2013: Your life story interview analysis should be turned in.

Lesson 6. From Youth to Adulthood

1 March 2013

Themes 6, 7, and 8 will look at a variety of important and contemporary life course topics (such as the transition to adulthood, crime and the life course, and migration) through the students' analysis and presentations of empirical articles and book chapters. These readings represent a range of important and innovative themes within life course research. They offer students a practical opportunity to understand and interpret life course research using their knowledge. Student groups will be assigned one reading from below. They will then identify, on their own, a related piece of research and then compare both readings against one another using life course concepts.

Required Readings

Aronson, Pamela (2008). "The Markers and Meanings of Growing up: Contemporary Young Women's Transition from Adolescence to Adulthood." *Gender and Society*, 22(1): 56-82.

Supplementary Readings

Oesterle, Sabrina, J. D. Hawkins, K. G. Hill, and J. A. Bailey (2010). "Men's and Women's Pathways to Adulthood and Their Adolescent Precursors." *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 72: 1436-1453.

Liefbroer, Aart C. (2009). "From Youth to Adulthood: Understanding Changing Patterns of Family Formation From a Life Course Perspective." Pp. 311-337 in WR Heinz, J Huinink, and A Weymann (eds.), *The Life Course Reader*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.



Staff, J. And J. Mortimer (2007). "Educational and Work Strategies from Adolescence to Early Adulthood: Consequences for Educational Attainment," Social Forces, 85 (3):1169-1194.

1 March 2013

Due 23:59 on 7 March 2013: Your life story interview transcript should be turned in.

Lesson 7. Crime and the Life Course

8 March 2013

Required Readings

Uggen, Christopher and Michael Massoglia (2003) “Desistance from crime and deviance as a turning point in the life course.” Pp. 311-329 in Jeylan T. (Editor); Shanahan, Michael J. (Editor). Handbook of the Life Course. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Supplementary Readings

Haigh, Yvonne (2009). "Desistance from Crime: Reflections on the Transitional Experiences of Young People with a History of Offending," Journal of Youth Studies, 12:3, 307-322

Moffitt, T. (1993). "Adolescence-Limited and Life-Course-Persistent Antisocial Behavior: A Developmental Taxonomy." Psychological Review, 100 (4): 674-701.

Sampson, Robert and J. Laub (2005). "A Life-Course View of the Development of Crime," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 602, Developmental Criminology and Its Discontents: Trajectories of Crime from Childhood to Old Age. pp. 12-45.

Lesson 8. Transformation, Migration, Comparative Approaches

15 March 2013

Required Readings



Allmendinger, Jutta and Thomas Hinz (2009). “Occupational Careers Under Different Welfare Regimes: West Germany, Great Britain and Sweden.” Pp. 234-251 in WR Heinz, J Huinink, and A Weymann (eds.), *The Life Course Reader*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Supplementary Readings

Gong, F, J. Xu, K. Fujishiro, and D. Takeushi (2011). “A life course perspective on migration and mental health among Asian immigrants: The role of human agency.” *Social Science & Medicine*, 73: 1618-1626.

Pandit, Kavita (1997). “Cohort and Period Effects in U.S. Migration: How Demographic and Economic Cycles Influence the Migration Schedule.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87 (3): 439-450.

Mayer, K. U. and M. Diewald (1999). “Transitions to Post-Communism in East Germany: Worklife Mobility of Women and Men between 1989 and 1993.” *Acta Sociologica* **42** (1): 35-53.

Lesson 9. Life Course Theory, Review

22 March 2013

The final week’s theme will focus on the controversial notion of life course theory. Various perspectives will be debated. Those strongly in favor of life course theory are often so because of the conceptual and methodological advantages of the approach, but critics point to the lack of specificity of many life course concepts and the fact that the approach does not attempt to explain an identifiable and isolated phenomenon. In this vein, we will discuss ways to improve the life course approach. We will also suggest ways in which the life course itself may develop in future years, both in Russia and in the European Welfare States, based on foreseeable demographic and institutional changes. The remainder of the class will focus on a review for the exam.

Required Readings



Heinz, W. R., J. Huinink, A. Weymann, and C. S. Swader (2009). "General Introduction." Pp. 15-27 in WR Heinz, J Huinink, and A Weymann (eds.), *The Life Course Reader*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Supplementary Readings

Weymann, A. (2003). “Future of the Life Course.” In J. T. Mortimer and M. J. Shanahan (Ed.), *Handbook of the Life Course* (pp.703-14). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

Lesson 10. Exam

29 March 2013

Additional Background Readings for the Course

Han, Shin-Kap (2009). “Clocking Out: Temporal Patterning of Retirement.” Pp. 487-520 in in WR Heinz, J Huinink, and A Weymann (eds.), *The Life Course Reader*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Krüger, H. (1996). “Normative Interpretations of Biographical Processes.” Pp. 130-146 in A. Weymann and W. Heinz (Eds.) *Society and Biography*. Weinheim: Deutscher Studien Verlag.

Moen, Phyllis and Mary Ann Erickson (2009). “Linked Lives: A Transgenerational Approach to Resilience.” Pp. 370-396 in WR Heinz, J Huinink, and A Weymann (eds.), *The Life Course Reader*. Frankfurt: Campus Verlag.

Pallas, Aaron M. “Educational Transitions, Trajectories, and Pathways.” Pp. 165-184 in Jeylan T. (Editor); Shanahan, Michael J. (Editor). *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

2. ASSIGNMENTS (Components of Final Grade)

Participation and Attendance:

Participation is required and expected. Come prepared, having read the relevant texts, and prepared to discuss.
For students who miss more than two lessons (seminars or lectures) without a valid doctor's excuse:

final grade = (base grade) x (attended weeks / total weeks)



For example, if you missed 3 of 10 weeks with no excuse, and your base grade was an 8, your final grade will be $8 \times 0,7 = 5,6$. Your attendance penalty will also apply to your re-examination grade. Furthermore, only your “exam” can be re-examined. There is no possibility to make up your attendance or any late or missed assignments. If you have only missed 2 lessons unexcused, there will be no grading penalty.

Group Presentation:

Presentation groups will be formed in the second week. These groups will be assigned one of the Week 6, 7, or 8 articles to work on. They will read and analyze this article and find an outside, and more recent, article on a similar theme. In front of the lecture, this group will present article A, explaining its key concepts, methods used, and findings. **They will then note in detail, using life course concepts, how article B is similar and/or different compared to article A.** The groups must use either power point or a handout. **The new article must be turned in to the instructor and classmates one week before the presentation (if it is not, the grade will suffer).** The power point slides or handout should be mailed to the instructor one day before the presentation. These group presentations will consist of 25% of the total grade for the course. All group members will receive the same grade, and each group member must take a fair share of the presentation. The presentations should last for 15 minutes.

Group discussant role:

Each presentation group will also be responsible for serving as “discussants” for another group's presentation. This discussant team will have 10 minutes after the presentation to *cordially* bring up clarifications and issues that stimulate discussion. The discussant's should point to *content* areas in the presentation that were accurately covered **and** that could be improved. For example, did the presenters accurately depict key concepts in the two texts, key areas of overlap? Did they demonstrate an understanding of methods and data in the articles? After the discussants speak, the audience may bring up additional points and questions. After this, the presenters may respond. This discussant role accounts for 15% of the students' grade, and all group members must speak.



Life Story Interview and Analysis:

Students will independently conduct a “life story interview” with someone of their choosing. They should use as a guideline the McAdams (2008) guide. *As a result of conducting this interview, each student should turn in a transcript of the first 30 minutes of the interview (in the language it was conducted; e.g. Russian) and a full digital recording.* In addition, students will be graded on their 1500 word analysis of their interview using life course concepts. The interview should be conducted with a person over 50 years old, who is not the student's own parent or grandparent. Students will conduct the interview and transcript as a pair, **but they will write separate analyses.** This analysis will consist of 30% of the student's final grade for the course. The interview transcript and recording must be turned in on February 19th and the analysis is due on March 4th. I will investigate and strongly respond to plagiarism of any kind.

Final Exam:

Students will take an in-class multiple-choice exam on March 29th. Use of notes, electronic devices of any kind, or classmates is forbidden. The exam may cover all topics discussed and read in class, to include materials from other students' presentations. The exam will consist of 40% of the total grade. The duration of the exam will be from 15:10 to 18:00.

Please send any questions and course-related exchanges to my email at cswader@gmail.com with “life course sociology” in the subject line. Thank you!