

## Optimal Human Development and Social Policy (FCS 5800/6800)

Fall 2022 – Online/Interactive Video Class

Tuesday – 2:00 pm – 4:30 pm

**Instructor: Dr. Kevin Rathunde**, AEB 250, 581-5392; [rathunde@fcs.utah.edu](mailto:rathunde@fcs.utah.edu)

Office hours: By appointment via Zoom

### Basic course information

FCS 5800/6800 was redesigned in 2020 to place a greater emphasis on *theories of human development* and differentiate the course from other graduate-level policy courses offered by the FCS department. Policy issues, however, will still be an important focus this semester in that: 1) each week we will discuss applications of the theory under discussion; and 2) several weeks near the end of the semester will be exclusively focused on empirical research and applied/policy issues related to human development.

The main part of the course will introduce important theories of human development (one per week) that provide a foundation for thinking about human nature, development, and person-context interaction across the life course. The last few weeks of the course will focus on empirical research and specific policy topics (e.g., inequality and health, income, education disparities). The developmental theories covered earlier in the course will inform our social policy discussions in the final weeks.

Two texts are required: (1) *Theories of Human Development* (Newman & Newman); and 2) *Confronting Inequality* (Eds., Tach, Dunifon, & Miller). Additional readings will be supplied through Canvas. These texts should be available at the bookstore or can be ordered online (or downloaded as an ebook).

There are different requirements for undergraduates enrolled in FCS 5800 and graduate students enrolled in FCS 6800. These differences will become clear by reading this syllabus.

***New hybrid (online + Zoom) approach in 2022.*** In the past when I taught FCS 5800/6800 as an Interactive Video Course (IVC), half of class time was reserved for lecture presentations on the main ideas of each theory, and the other half of class was devoted to the discussion of the theory. This year I redesigned the course to take advantage of online lectures and materials I recently created (Spring 2022) so that our Zoom meetings *can be shorter and primarily focused on discussion and student participation*. In other words, instead of starting class with a lengthy presentation on a particular theory, which can be tedious as part of a long class day on Zoom, students can find my presentations online and engage them on their own schedule before class. In addition, I will usually have a “Key Concepts” downloadable pdf that will expand on ideas related to each theory. To prepare for class each week, students should read the assigned reading (i.e., textbook chapter or article) *before* watching my videos or reading my pdf. Having the broader context of the readings will allow you to get more out of the videos and pdf. In many cases, the chapter will provide greater detail about specific theoretical concepts.

When class begins on Tuesdays at 2:00 pm, I may have some brief opening remarks, but we will then move directly to the discussion of the relevant theory because students will have viewed my presentation in advance. Our weekly Zoom meetings, as a result, will typically end well before 4:30 pm, except for a few classes near the end of the term when we cover material on social policy and have student presentations (more on that below). Finally, a few discussions of

the theories will be moved entirely online, *thus creating a few fully online weeks interspersed throughout the semester*. This hybrid approach is completely new for 2022. I think it will provide more variety throughout the semester and avoid too many long days on Zoom.

### **Seminar leaders and weekly discussions**

All of us (instructor, graduate students, and undergraduate students) will be collaborators in discussing the course readings and other relevant topics. However, *one or two graduate students per week* will be asked to serve as **seminar leaders** and be responsible for preparing discussion questions and moderating the discussions (e.g., keeping them on track, moving from topic to topic, and so on). Being an effective seminar leader requires a graduate student to: 1) know the theoretical material very well (i.e., being familiar with the reading for the week as well as my video and pdf document); 2) prepare a number of discussion questions that can sustain an hourlong discussion of a theory (it's a good idea to have more questions than you will probably need); and 3) actively work to keep the class discussion supportive and interesting. Other students can help the seminar leader by being active participants in class! Finally, seminar leaders are free to exercise some creativity if they have ideas on how to improve the understanding of a theory. For example, my video lectures and downloads will not cover every aspect of a theory. If there are some concepts/ideas a seminar leader would like to briefly cover in a short presentation before the discussion, that would be fine. Other ideas on how to stimulate a lively discussion are welcome! Seminar leaders should send me a copy of their prepared questions Monday evening by 11:59 pm. Some of those questions should include applications of the theory that are relevant for social policy.

The overall quality of the class will be influenced greatly by the quality of graduate-student-led discussions. Therefore, it is important that *everyone is familiar with the material for the week and comes prepared on Tuesday afternoon to discuss it*. Attendance and participation in discussions will be part of the final grade for the course (see below).

### **Writing assignments**

On the first day of class, each of us we will spend a few minutes talking about our *main interests* related to human development and social policy. For some graduate students, their interests may align closely with their thesis topic. For other graduate or undergraduate students, their main interests might be the ones that led them to select their undergraduate major or decide to attend graduate school. Whatever the case, the writing assignments for the semester are designed to build on your stated interests.

Reflection papers. After completing the assigned theoretical reading and participating in our class discussion on Tuesday, students will often be required to turn in a reflection paper addressing the following two questions. What did you think were the most important ideas addressed during the week and *why*? How did these ideas affect or further your main interests (i.e., what did you **learn** or what **new insights** did they generate for you about human development)? Please note a couple things about these reflection papers. I may turn back assignments to students and ask for a rewrite if a paper does not address “why” selected ideas were seen as important, or if students do not specifically state what was learned or what new insights occurred during the week. Some of the theories we discuss will be familiar to you, and it may require a little “digging” to identify something new that you did not know before!

These weekly reflection papers (two double-spaced pages for graduate students and one page for undergraduate students) will not be graded, but they must be completed satisfactorily to receive full credit for the course. Reflection papers will not be due for the weeks when class discussions are moved fully online. In addition, papers will not be due for the weeks at the end of the course that are focused on empirical research and policy issues. Each reflection paper will be due the Monday evening (by 11:59 pm) *following* a discussion of a theory the previous week. These short papers will also prepare students and provide an important context for the final writing assignment (see below).

Discussion posts on Canvas. There are a few weeks this semester when our discussion of a theory will move online in the form of discussion posts on Canvas (i.e., we will not meet as a class on Zoom). I will provide three questions for the discussion. Graduate students will be required to: 1) *answer two of the three discussion questions; and 2) respond to at least one other student's post.* Undergraduate students should respond to *one question and one other student.* Responses to other students should be respectful and might convey agreement with their points, elaboration, or a different perspective. The length of posts should at least be 175-200 words, or one good paragraph. No reflection papers will be due for the weeks when discussions move entirely online.

Final paper. There will be one longer writing assignment (approximately 10 double-spaced pages for graduate students and six pages for undergraduate students) due at the end of the course that will selectively build on the reflection papers. This paper will require students to elaborate on the *three theories perceived as most relevant to advancing your main interests.* Supplemental reading or research about each theory is expected, as is a thoughtful integration of the selected theories to your specific interests. More detail about this assignment will be provided later in the semester.

### **Oral presentation for graduate students on the last day of the course**

On the last day of class, graduate students will be required to present a brief synopsis of their final paper (5-10 minutes). In other words, by drawing on what they have already written in the weekly assignments and anticipating the ideas they plan to discuss in their final papers, each student will share their thoughts about which theoretical ideas advanced their interests and understanding of human development and social policy.

### **Attendance requirements**

This course places a strong emphasis on engaging ideas through discussion. Participation in Zoom meetings, therefore, is *required*. If a student needs to miss a class meeting, they must substitute a paper that responds to the discussion questions prepared by the seminar leader. Students who miss a class will still be responsible for turning in their weekly reflection paper, if one is due. Multiple absences during the semester will negatively affect a student's final grade.

### **Expected learning outcomes**

The overall goal of this advanced seminar is to carry on an enjoyable semester-long dialogue about timely and important developmental ideas and issues that affect individuals and communities. After completing the course, students should gain: 1) a deeper understanding of

major theories that guide multidisciplinary research on human development and social policy; 2) a better appreciation of the challenges of conducting policy-relevant and applied research; and 3) a greater capacity to communicate their insights about optimal human development.

## **Final grades**

Semester grades will be determined by two factors. First, student participation will be 40% of the final grade (e.g., attendance and participation in Zoom discussions, completing posts to Canvas discussions for fully online weeks, and completing the required reflection papers). Graduate students must also serve once as a seminar leader and give an oral presentation on the last day of class to fulfill participation requirements. Second, the final paper will count for 60% of the final grade. Due dates for the final paper will be announced later in the semester.

[Please note: Graduate and undergraduate students will complete the same assignments in this course. However, as stated above, the writing assignments for graduate students are longer. Also, undergraduate students do not have to serve as a seminar leader or give an oral presentation on the last day of class.]

## **Miscellaneous things to keep in mind**

I plan to update the Canvas home page every Sunday morning. At that time, I will publish a “Weekly Message” with a quick recap of what to expect for the week (e.g., what assignments are due, whether we are meeting on Zoom, etc.). I will also publish some course content (i.e., videos and pdf file) for the upcoming weeks. A link to the course content (entitled: “WEEKLY COURSE CONTENT”) can be found at the bottom of the home page. *Please log on to the home page and check out this message every week to make sure you are up to date with the course!* If students miss a message, you will be able to find messages from previous weeks by clicking on the link entitled “PAST WEEKLY MESSAGES.” This link will always be visible on the course home page.

Finally, the videos about various theories were created for created for another course (i.e., FCS 5250 – Theories of Human Development), and you will see that information in the title sequence that opens each video. That course used the same Theories textbook, so the videos are 100% relevant for our purposes in FCS 5800/6800.

## **Course Schedule**

Week 1 (8/23) -- Intro to the course

Reading: Chapter 1 (Introduction) in the Newman text.

Online content: Week 1 Video and Key Concepts PDF.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: None

Week 2 (8/30) – Evolutionary theory

Reading: Chapter 2 in the Newman text.

Online content: Week 2 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.  
Assignments: Reflection paper due 9/5 by 11:59 pm.

Week 3 (9/6) – Psychoanalytic theory  
Reading: Chapter 3 in the Newman text.  
Online content: Week 3 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

***No Zoom meeting***

Assignments: Discussion posts on Canvas due by 9/12 by 11:59 pm

Week 4 (9/13) – Cognitive developmental theory  
Reading: Chapter 4 in the Newman text.  
Online content: Week 4 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.  
Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.  
Assignments: Reflection paper due 9/19 by 11:59 pm.

Week 5 (9/20) – Learning theories  
Reading: Chapter 5 in the Newman text.  
Online content: Week 5 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

***No Zoom meeting***

Assignments: Discussion posts on Canvas due by 9/26 by 11:59 pm

Week 6 (9/27) – Life course theory  
Reading: Chapter 7 in the Newman text.  
Online content: Week 6 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.  
Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.  
Assignments: Reflection paper due 10/3 by 11:59 pm.

Week 7 (10/4) – Psychosocial theory (***two seminar leaders this week***)

Reading: Chapter 8 in the Newman text.  
Reading: Waterman reading supplied through Canvas.  
Online content: Week 7 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.  
Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.  
Assignments: Reflection paper due 10/10 by 11:59 pm.

Week 8 (10/11) – Spring Break

Week 9 (10/18) – Cognitive social-historical theory  
Reading: Chapter 9 in the Newman text.  
Online content: Week 9 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

***No Zoom meeting***

Assignments: Discussion posts on Canvas due by 10/24 by 11:59 pm.

Week 10 (10/25) – Bioecological theory (***two seminar leaders this week***)

Reading: Chapter 10 in the Newman text.  
Reading: Chapter 9 in the Tach et al. text  
Online content: Week 10 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: Reflection paper due 10/31 by 11:59 pm.

Week 11 (11/1) – Dynamic systems theory

Reading: Chapter 11 in the Newman text.

Online content: Week 11 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

***No Zoom meeting***

Assignments: Discussion posts on Canvas due by 11/7 by 11:59 pm.

Week 12 (11/8) – Optimal experience theory (***two seminar leaders this week***)

Reading: Chapter supplied through Canvas

Online content: Week 12 Videos and Key Concepts PDF.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: Reflection paper due 11/14 by 11:59 pm.

Week 13 (11/15) – Inequality (Health) (***two seminar leaders this week***)

Reading: Chapters 1 & 3 of the Tach et al. text

Online content: None.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: None.

Week 14 (11/22) – Inequality (Family) (***two seminar leaders this week***)

Reading: Chapters 4 & 5 of the Tach et al. text

Online content: None.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: None.

Week 15 (11/29) – Inequality (Schools/Neighborhoods) (***two seminar leaders this week***)

Reading: Chapters 6 & 7 of the Tach et al. text

Online content: None.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: None.

Week 16 (12/6) – Student presentations

Suggested reading: Chapter 12 in the Newman text.

Online content: None.

Zoom meeting at 2:00 pm.

Assignments: None.

## **Miscellaneous U of U information and policies**

**Covid-19 information:** Please see this website (<https://coronavirus.utah.edu>) for the latest information and recommendations related to the University of Utah's Covid-19 response.

**Students with Special Needs:** The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the [Center for Disability Services](#), 162 Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations.

**Academic Honesty:** All honesty and plagiarism policies established by the University of Utah will be upheld in this class. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, representing another's work as your own, collaborating on individual assignments (such as by receiving help with an exam), and **submitting the same work for more than one course without the permission of both instructors**. Any of these actions will not be tolerated. If you include information from outside the class or quotes in your written assignments (with the exception of exams), you must provide citations and a reference list. Avoid the urge to over-rely on quotes; a written assignment that is substantially made up of quoted material will not be considered your own work, even if you have used correct citations.

If it is discovered that you have engaged in academic misconduct of any type in this course, **the Family & Consumer Studies departmental policy states that you will be given a failing grade in the course** and be reported to the Dean and the VP for Academic Affairs, who will keep your name on record. Should you be reported more than once, you may face expulsion from the University.

For further information about the University of Utah's policies regarding academic misconduct, please refer to the online "Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities:"  
<http://www.regulations.utah.edu/academics/6-400.html>

**University Drop and Withdrawal Policies:** You may *drop* this class without penalty or permission until September 2, 2022. You may *withdraw* from the course without permission until October 21, 2022, but a "W" will be recorded on your academic record, and applicable tuition and fees will be assessed. After October 21, you will not be allowed to withdraw from this course. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the Office of Admissions and Registrar at (801) 581-5808.

**Incompletes:** In order to qualify for an "Incomplete" in any University of Utah course, you must complete no less than 80% of the course work *and* be in good standing (i.e., have earned at least a C on all completed work) *and* receive permission from the instructor. **The FCS Department Policy is that students who do not complete the work within 1 year will automatically receive a failing grade.** No exceptions will be made to this policy.

**Scheduling Accommodations:** Students should register for courses for which they have no scheduling conflicts. Instructors should be very cautious in providing accommodations for students missing classes due to trips, family events, etc. It is the student's responsibility to get class information from other students.

U of U policy allows students to make up assignments and exams if they are participating in officially sanctioned University activities such as intercollegiate athletics. If students miss an exam due to illness, medical documentation (i.e., a doctor's note) should be provided to make up missed work. Except in the case of an emergency, students must inform the instructor before the exam.

**Non-Contract Note:** The syllabus is not a binding, legal contract. The instructor may modify it when the student is given reasonable notice of the modification.