

Fall 2013

**NCLC 375 – 003:
Contemporary Youth Studies
(3 Credits)**

INSTRUCTOR:

Duhita Mahatmya, Ph.D.
Office: Enterprise Hall 427
Office hours: by appointment

**Innovation Hall 131
Mon & Wed 12:00-1:15pm**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on contemporary perspectives on positive youth development. Moving away from the traditional “deficit model” of youth development, you will learn about the history of positive youth development, how scholars study youth, the theories they use to guide their research, and you will evaluate the policies and programs aimed at empowering youth. A final goal of this course is to encourage you to think critically about the information that is known about this unique developmental period, and how this applies not only to your own experiences, but to other classes, professional work within this area, and arenas outside academics. *Credits: 3. Recommended: NCLC 101, 309, 312.*

Course content will be presented in a seminar format. Appropriate text and activities, along with subtopics to be discussed are all listed by date in the syllabus. I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course and syllabus throughout the semester.

LEARNING GOALS:

This course takes an integrative and active approach to the understanding of youth to help you discover the links between theory, research, policy, and practice through the following enduring understandings:

- ❖ The study of youth undergoes revisions over time as a reaction to current events and social progress.
- ❖ Development occurs as a result of the interaction of the biological, cognitive, social-emotional, and environmental systems of the individual.
- ❖ Youth can be agents of their own development and assets to their communities.
- ❖ YOUR own experiences as adolescents – your innate strengths, abilities, and life experiences – play a crucial role in your learning in this course.

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- ✓ Critically evaluate definitions of youth development across various disciplines.
- ✓ Read and discuss current scholarly work on youth development.
- ✓ Use the Developmental Assets framework to evaluate current youth policies and programs.
- ✓ Practice personal reflection and apply personal experiences to the understanding of youth development.
- ✓ Use different writing strategies to analyze and make connections between class and external content.
- ✓ Demonstrate skills of **communication, critical thinking, civic engagement, and group collaboration** through class activities and assignments.¹
- ✓ Identify positive opportunities and strategies for positive development during this developmental period.

REQUIRED TEXTS/RESOURCES:

Other readings and relevant class material will also be available on Blackboard or in Mason e-reserves.

- ❖ Scales, P. C., & Leffert, N. (1999). *Developmental assets: A synthesis of the scientific research on adolescent development*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.
- ❖ Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

¹ NCC Competencies to be address in this class

- ❖ **Technology requirements:** This course involves the consistent use and interaction with online resources such as Blackboard and email. If personal internet access will be an issue for you, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can make arrangements if necessary.

STUDENT RESOURCES:

Writing Center (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>; 703-993-1200, Robinson A, Rm 114): I encourage you to visit the writing center for assistance on writing assignments for this and other courses. The Writing Center provides, at no charge, tutors who will help you at any stage of the writing process. Call for an appointment.

Student Technology Assistance and Resources (<http://media.gmu.edu>; 703-993-8990; Johnson Center, Rm 229): STAR provides support for web and multimedia design. Video cameras and other equipment are available for student check-out. For support in using **Blackboard**, please contact Learning Services by email at courses@gmu.edu. You can expect a 24-hour turnaround time.

Disability Support Services (<http://ods.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2474; SUB I, Rm 222): Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. If you qualify for accommodation, the ODS staff will help you obtain the appropriate the documents.

Counseling Center (<http://caps.gmu.edu>; 703-993-2380; SUB I, Rm 364): The Counseling Center provides individual and group sessions for personal development and assistance with a range of emotional and relational issues.

SOME OTHER THINGS TO KNOW:

Approach to Teaching: To learn is to know how to think about knowledge in meaningful ways. Learning involves more than the acquisition of information, it must also include a reflection of the information and the big picture. As such, I believe it is essential that the topics presented are interesting, important, and relevant to your academic and professional goals. Creating a safe and comfortable learning environment is also crucial to learning. It is your responsibility, however, to come to class with an open and curious mind. At the end of the day, you are responsible for shaping the information into something meaningful.

Academic Dishonesty: High standards of academic honesty will be expected in this course. You are expected to do their own work and cheating and plagiarism **will not be tolerated** on exams or any assignments. Any form of cheating or plagiarism will be directly confronted and handled according to the university judicial procedure defined in the Mason student handbook. At the very least, plagiarism or cheating will result in a failing grade for the exam, assignment or possibly for the course. To protect yourself and understand your rights, refer to the GMU Honor Code (<http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>).

Evaluation Concerns: You will be notified of your grade on an assignment within two weeks of the due date. If you feel that you have been evaluated unfairly or inaccurately, please provide the instructor with a written statement addressing why the evaluation was unfair or inaccurate in order to address the concern within **72** hours of the grade being posted. The written statement should be based on facts and be at least ½ page long, typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins.

Late Assignments: All work assigned must be completed on time. No late assignments will be accepted. In the event of a **documented** emergency, assignments will be accepted only if the instructor has been informed at least 24 hours prior to the situation. Again, documentation and notification of missing class must occur 24 hours prior to missing class. Late assignments will NOT be accepted if less than a 24 hour notice is given and if technological difficulties, forgetting to hand in the assignment, emailing the assignment, or putting the assignment under my door is involved.

Professional: Professionalism encompasses the character and methods of professionals. Think about your own professional or career goals and the attitudes, behaviors, and skills you will need to succeed in your field/discipline. My hope is that for many (if not all of you), being in this class will not only help you to obtain the necessary knowledge so that you will be successful, but also give you the opportunity to practice being emerging professionals. As such the use of formal language in the classroom and in email communications; appropriate dress for presentations; and respect for each other's time is expected.

Technology: To minimize the amount of distractions to your fellow you and instructor, the use cell phones and other personal electronic devices (e.g. Ipods, MP3 players) is expected to be minimal. If you are expecting an important phone call, please inform me prior to class and excuse yourself from the classroom or do not show up to class. Laptops are allowed if you are taking notes for class. Please do not surf the internet, check email, Tweet, blog, watch clips on YouTube, shop online, do other coursework, etc. while in class. If you are using your laptop for other purposes, I will ask you to shut it down. If it is not in your priority to adhere to these guidelines, you are more than welcome to excuse yourself from the classroom or do not show up and take care of what is your priority.

Attendance: The University does not require students to attend class and you cannot be graded based specifically on attendance. However, class participation is fundamental to a learning community and your active participation is essential both for your success and for the success of the whole class. To that end, attendance and constructive participation are expected. Lack of participation in activities, discussion, and assignments will be reflected in your final grade. If you have to miss class, get the notes from a reliable classmate. You cannot obtain missed notes from me. You are responsible for ALL material and assignments presented in class, as well as in the texts. Seminars may supplement, highlight, or bring something entirely different from what is in the readings. Class participation is also a means to help you develop your verbal and listening skills and take an active role in your own learning.

COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY STATEMENT:

New Century College, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and disability.

- ❖ We value our diverse student body and desire to increase the diversity of our faculty and staff.
- ❖ We commit to supporting students, faculty and staff who have been the victims of bias and discrimination.
- ❖ We promote continuous learning and improvement to create an environment that values diverse points of view and life experiences.
- ❖ We believe that faculty, staff and students play a role in creating an environment that engages diverse points of view.
- ❖ We believe that by fostering their willingness to hear and learn from a variety of sources and viewpoints, our students will gain competence in communication, critical thinking and global understanding, aware of their biases and how they affect their interactions with others and the world.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Italicized readings are available on Blackboard.

Week 1: Introduction & Insights

Monday Readings Due
8/26

Wednesday Readings Due *“What teens really think” Article (Washington post)*
8/28

Week 2: Past & Present Issues

Monday Readings Due **Labor Day Recess – NO CLASS**
9/2

Wednesday Readings Due *Demos & Demos, 1969 – Adolescence in Historical Perspective*
9/4 *Arnett, 1999 – Adolescent Storm and Stress, Reconsidered*

Week 3: Perspectives on Youth Development

Monday Readings Due Scales & Leffert – Introduction (p. 1-17)
9/9 *Damon, 2004 – What is Positive Youth Development?*
Lerner et al 2005 – Findings from the first wave of the 4-H Study of
Positive Youth Development (pp. 17-27)

Wednesday Readings Due Lareau – Chapter 1 (p.1 -8), Chapter 2 (p. 14-32)
9/11

Week 4: Checking for Understanding

Monday Readings Due
9/16

Wednesday Readings Due ***In-Class Exam***
9/18

Week 5: Internal Assets

Monday Readings Due Scales & Leffert – The Commitment-to-Learning Assets (p. 119-148);
9/23 The Positive-Values Assets (p. 149-172)

Wednesday Readings Due Scales & Leffert – The Social-Competencies Assets (p. 173-194);
9/25 The Positive-Identifying Assets (p. 195-212)

Week 6: Internal Assets

Monday Readings Due Lareau – Chapters 3 & 4
9/30

Wednesday Readings Due (Mason LIFE panel/Global Youth video)
10/2

Week 7: External Assets

Monday Readings Due Scales & Leffert – The Support Assets (p. 21-48);
10/7 The Boundaries-and-Expectations Assets (p. 75-96)

Wednesday Readings Due Scales & Leffert – The Empowerment Assets (pp. 49-74);
10/9 The Constructive-Use-of-Time Assets (pp. 97-118)

Week 8: External Assets

Tuesday Readings Due Lareau – Chapters 9 & 11
10/15

Wednesday Readings Due ***Character Analysis Due***
10/16

Week 9: Youth Programs & Policy

Monday Readings Due *Resnick, 2010 – The Case for Programs, Policies, and Practices that Promote Healthy Youth Development*
10/21

Catalano et al, 2004 – Research Findings on Evaluations of Positive Youth Development Programs

Wednesday Readings Due *UNICEF Report: The State of the World’s Children 2011 – Chapter 2 – Realizing the Rights of Adolescents*
10/23 ***Program/Policy Analysis Part 1 Due***

Week 10: Youth Programs & Policy

Monday Readings Due *Obama on Early Childhood Education* (video)
10/28

Wednesday Readings Due *Levin-Epstein & Greenberg – Leave No Youth Behind* (p. 65-74)
10/30 ***Program/Policy Analysis Part 2 Due***

Week 11: Youth Programs & Policy

Monday Readings Due *Foster & Gifford, 2005 – The Transition to Adulthood for Youth Leaving Public Systems*
11/4

Wednesday Readings Due **NO CLASS**
11/6

Week 12: Presentations

Monday Readings Due ***Program/Policy Analysis Part 3 Due***
11/11

Wednesday Readings Due ***Program/Policy Analysis Part 3 Due***
11/13

Week 13: Presentations

Monday Readings Due ***Program/Policy Analysis Part 3 Due***
11/18

Wednesday Readings Due Applied Developmental Psychology Colloquium
11/20

Week 14: Youth in Action

Monday Readings Due *Christens & Krishner 2011 – Taking Stock of Youth Organizing: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*
11/25 *“Can the Young Bring Change to Burma?”* (Times)
“Rage, Rap, and Revolution: Inside the Arab Youth Quake” (Times)

Wednesday Readings Due **Thanksgiving Recess – NO CLASS**
11/27

Week 15: Youth Empowerment

Monday 12/2	<u>Readings Due</u>	USAID – Youth in Development: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity
Wednesday 12/4	<u>Readings Due</u>	Course Wrap-Up *Program/Policy Analysis Part 4 Due*

Turn in Learning Portfolio by 12pm Monday, December 16th

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Unless otherwise noted, all assignments will be submitted via **Blackboard**. Standard formatting for all assignments include: your name in the top left or right corner, double-spacing, 11-12-point font (Times New Roman), and 1-inch margins.

- ❖ **Exam (50 points, 10%, Wednesday, September 18, 2013)**
- ❖ **Making Connections: Character Analysis (100 points, 20% due Wednesday, October 16, 2013)**
An enduring understanding of this course is that YOUR own experiences as youth play a crucial role in your learning in this course. So, how has youth been defined in your generation? In this assignment, you are asked to select a character from contemporary media (e.g. books, movies, and television series) that represents youth (12-25 years old) and a corresponding news story. You will turn in a 5-6 page character analysis paper (double-spaced, 12-point font), which should include the following:
 - a) The name of your character and a description of their main characteristics.
 - b) A discussion of how these characteristics create an image of youth.
 - c) Examples of how these characteristics are reproduced in current news media.
 - d) An evaluation of how these characteristics do AND do not address internal and external assets.
 - e) Implications for positive youth development and social change.
- ❖ **Applying Your Knowledge: Program or Policy Analysis (200 points, 40%)**
To better understand the current landscape of youth and opportunities for positive development, you will conduct a program analysis. In this assignment, you will evaluate a youth developmental program (i.e. afterschool activity, Girl/Boy Scouts, sports, community-based program, Boys and Girls Club) or policy (i.e. DREAM Act, No Child Left Behind Act, etc). The assignment has four parts:
 - Part 1: Identifying the Program or Policy (25 points, 5% due Wednesday, October 23rd, 2013)** – Submit a description of the program or policy which you chose, explain why you chose it, and provide a link to the program’s or policy’s website for approval.
 - Part 2: Asset Analysis (50 points, 10% due Wednesday, October 30, 2013)** – Submit your analysis of the program or policy using the Developmental Assets framework worksheet (to be handed out in class).
 - Part 3: In-class Presentation (50 points, 10% due during weeks 12-13)** – You will prepare a 7-10 minute class presentation describing the program and how it promotes Developmental Assets.
 - Part 4: Critical Memorandum (75 points, 15% due Wednesday, December 4, 2013)** – Using the feedback you received in parts (2) and (3) of the assignment as a guide, synthesize your evaluation of how the program’s or policy’s mission and main components do or do not support positive youth development. Pretend that I am the director of a funding agency that is looking to only support programs and policies that practice positive youth development. Conclude the memorandum by making recommendations as to changes that could be made based on the developmental assets framework. The memorandum should be addressed to me and follow the proper formatting requirements (*Visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/590/1/> for help in writing memos*). The memorandum should be no more than 3 pages (single spaced).

❖ **Deepening the Discussion: Learning Portfolio (150 points, 30%, checkpoints throughout the semester)**

Your engagement in the class is an important component of your final grade. To evaluate your active learning, a graded individual or group **in-class** assignment will be given on selected weeks of the semester. The in-class assignment will ask you to demonstrate your careful reading and consideration of the materials. Thus, your attendance and participation in class are necessary for you to receive full credit; no email requests for the assignment will be considered. It is also essential that you **KEEP ALL RETURNED IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES**, as you will need them for your final learning portfolio.

For the final learning portfolio you will select two (2) of your in-class assignments to analyze: one of the selections should demonstrate an activity/prompt that was the **most** helpful for your learning, and one selection should demonstrate an activity/prompt that was the **least** helpful for your learning. Then in a 4-5 page paper, discuss why you chose each assignment and how it reflects your learning and engagement in the course. Conclude the paper with an evaluation of how your learning developed over the course of the semester particularly in relation to your understanding of core course concepts, course learning objectives, and NCC competencies. Successful evaluations are those that cite specific examples to demonstrate your learning. Finally, be sure your final assignment addresses how your learning will be valuable in your future academic career, jobs, or future profession.

Turn in a copy of your 2 selected in-class assignments and the paper as your final exam.

GRADING SCALE:

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

Last Day to Add and Drop (without penalty) = September 3, 2013

Final Drop Deadline = September 27, 2013

Elective Withdrawal Period = September 23 – October 18, 2013