



McMaster Divinity
College

On Being a Healthy Human: Understanding Human Development and Maturity CS 3P1000/5P1000

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Fall Term 2026
Mondays, 9:00am to 10:50am, Room TBD
Livestream Link available on A2L

The mission of McMaster Divinity College is to develop effective evangelical Christian leaders for the Church, academy, and society through graduate-level education, spiritual development, and vocational formation.

COURSE SYLLABUS

1. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will seek a broad understanding of healthy human development over the life span, as it relates to counselling and ministry, integrating theological and psychological perspectives on the nature of man, maturity, and our goals in the “curing of souls”. The course will survey psychological theories of healthy human development including psychodynamic, cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, moral, and social systems paradigms, and how culture and context interacts with each age and stage of development. A major theme will be the importance of the relational context of growth and change. We will also explore how the normal issues of different stages over the life span influence the formation and development of faith. Student assignments will include applying the general theories to specific populations and circumstances, critiquing the theories presented, considering the implications of a developmental perspective for counselling and other areas of ministry, and reflecting on the significance of developmental theories in understanding our own psychological and theological formation and maturity. A final exam will ensure mastery of material in preparation for professional examination standards.

Core/Required Course for: MACSC, MDiv Specializations: CS/PS

Elective for: Students outside the above programs

Advanced Research and Doctoral Students: 5- or 6-unit students needing to enroll in the course must obtain a separate set of course requirements from the instructor.

2. COURSE FORMAT

This live-streamed course is offered in-person, on campus while allowing access to distance learners. Lectures are scheduled once a week, to allow maximum time for direct interaction with the instructor and other students. Course objectives will also be met through reading, written assignments, chapter quizzes, a major paper and a final exam, as well as asynchronous (on your own time) online activities, including watching videos/podcasts. Class sessions will include didactic instruction, case studies, and

other experiential activities such as group breakout discussions and analyses. Assignments are formulated to master the content of the developmental theories reviewed and to be able to apply this content to actual contexts in counselling and ministry.

3. INSTRUCTOR'S APPROACH

For over 40 years, as a clinical mental health professional I have been committed to increasing the well-being of individuals and families, and I believe that wholeness involves all aspects of our experience and existence – psychological, physical, relational and spiritual. I believe that “All Truth is God’s Truth”, and that we can discover patterns of health and wholeness in both Scripture and in the natural world, because God has created both. This foundation allows the integration of our faith with our professional practice, if we develop critical thinking in the process of combining psychological and social observations with the enduring principles and revelations of Scripture, much as the “Wise Man” does in the book of Proverbs. I expect students to be active, responsible, and self-motivated in the learning process, and open to increasing their self-awareness as well as their understanding of others in developing themselves as facilitators of change.

4. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

These learning objectives are coordinated with the expected competencies for CASC/ACSS certified chaplains and pastoral counsellors and the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario (CRPO).

Knowing

- To develop an integrated knowledge of human development across the lifespan, using a bio-psycho-social-spiritual lens, and recognize the important milestones, needs, and influencing factors in the different ages and stages of life (CRPO & CASC).
- To understand how these developmental issues are imbedded in the relational imperative of our human nature
- To understand how these developmental issues interact with the development of spirituality in general and faith specifically
- To understand the significance of spiritual, moral, social, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, sexual, gender, and biological development for the counselling process (CRPO & CASC).

Being

- To gain self-awareness as a ministering person through self-reflection and self-evaluation of one’s personal developmental journey (CASC).
- To reflect on and identify the growing edges of our own Christian maturity, and identify processes and goals for our own personal development
- To increase empathy and acceptance in hearing others’ experiences, and openness to the experience of one’s own inner conflict and struggles
- To practice empathic listening skills, effective responses, and appropriate support in all of our interactions and relationships

Doing

- To better communicate in a manner appropriate to a client’s developmental level and socio-cultural identity (CRPO & CASC).
- To assess and understand the client’s spiritual, moral, social, emotional, cognitive, behavioural, sexual, gender, and biological development and to integrate this assessment within the counselling or treatment process (implied within CRPO competencies).
- To reflect on the use of developmental perspectives to understand and assess faith formation, process, structure and content, and formulate a holistic conceptualization of Christian maturity (CASC)
- To read and critically evaluate the implications of theoretical and research articles on human development that are pertinent to one’s specific area of practice or ministry (CASC & CRPO).
- To apply course materials and independent research to assessing and discussing client case examples (CRPO)
- To apply developmental perspectives in designing ministry strategies in one’s area of ministry practice

5. COURSE TEXTS

All required and recommended books for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

A. Required Textbooks:

Cannon, Kristi B.; Coker, J. Kelly; Dixon-Saxon, Savitri V.; Roller, Karen M. *Lifespan Development: Cultural and Contextual Applications for the Helping Profession*. New York, NY: Springer, 2022 (393 pages).

The e-book/online text in “Course Connect” format is recommended for its additional resources and study aids. (Quizzes are on A2L, however, not on publisher’s website).

https://www.springerpub.com/lifespan-development-9780826182784.html?srsId=AfmBOoqyn1ety48OC49pY7dw5PAbDmKHtNb_V4OkQZVcAR36hUv9OzZb

Cloud, H., Townsend, J., Carder, D., and Henslin, E. *Unlocking your family patterns: Finding freedom from a hurtful past*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2011. (222 pages)

Balswick, Jack O., King, Pamela Ebstyne, & Reimer, Kevin S. *The Reciprocating Self: Human Development in Theological Perspective*, 2nd Edition. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016.(334 pages)

B. Required Articles:

To supplement the text, lectures and class projects, required articles or their links will be provided on the class website on A2L (See Class Schedule when due).

Carter, John D. "Maturity: Psychological and Biblical." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 2 (1974) 89-96.

Hill, Cathryn I. "A Developmental Perspective on Adolescent "Rebellion" in the Church." *Journal of Psychology & Theology*, Vol. 14 No. 4 (1986), 306-318.

Larzelere, Robert E. "Combining Love and Limits in Authoritative Parenting: A Conditional Sequence Model of Disciplinary Responses", Web article (1998).

<https://parenthood.library.wisc.edu/Larzelere/Larzelere.html> and relevant news articles (Posted as one document in A2L Module, "To Spank or Not To Spank?").

Trokan, J. "Stages of the Marital and Family Life Cycle: Marital Miracles." *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 46 No. 4 (1998), 281-295

Henning, Doug. "Psychological Development and Meaningful Faith: When Faith Works", *In Pursuit of Truth: Journal of Christian Scholarship*, published online April 27, 2011.

<https://www.cslewis.org/journal/psychological-development-meaningful-faith-when-faith-works/view-all/>

Worthington, Everett L. "Religious Faith Across the Life Span: Implications for Counseling and Research", *The Counselling Psychologist* Vol. 17 No.4 (1989), 555-612.

C. Additional Reading and Resources (not required):

Selected bibliographies are provided on A2L as well as copies or links to some supplementary texts, articles and videos, providing a beginning resource for research papers and further reading. These bibliographies and resources are **not** meant to be exhaustive or to be the only sources of information for student papers. Additional podcasts and resources are given in the Coker text as well.

6. COURSE REQUIREMENTS and GRADING

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|--|-----|
| Summary: Class Participation, Asynchronous Activities | 5% |
| Self-Reflection Papers | 10% |
| Chapter Quizzes on Coker text | 15% |
| Final Exam – Essay question and multiple choice | 30% |
| Literature Review Paper | 40% |

Grading Rubrics/Standards are posted on A2L as appropriate to assignment.

A. Class Participation and Online Synchronous Activities – 5%

Attendance, and participation in class lectures and online asynchronous activities as assigned on A2L are expected. Asynchronous activities, such as watching videos/podcasts online, are crucial to the course content, and are crucial to supplement the livestreaming lectures and class time. You will be given a checklist on A2L to keep track of these activities.

B. Reflection Papers - 10%

1) **Due the first day of class:** This assignment is not graded, other than a “pass” for handing it in. The purpose of this assignment is to set personal goals for learning.

Write a brief reflection of approximately 2 pages double spaced on the following:

After reviewing the syllabus and these beginning chapters, what are my personal goals for this course? How do I want my life and/or ministry to be different 13 weeks from now?

2) **Due 8am on the last day of class (day of final exam):**

Write a self-reflection paper, approximately 5 to 8 pages long, double spaced. The purpose of this assignment is to accomplish the “Being” goals by identifying and discussing how the content of the course has illuminated developmental factors in your life, both negative and positive, and how these may have shaped your personality, relationships, and/or faith journey later in life. This will be graded on following the instructions, showing an appropriate level of self-awareness and self-reflection, and integrating course material by applying it explicitly to yourself as a case example. It should be written in first-person narrative. Do *not* quote at length from textbook, lecture, or other sources; rather, *reflect* on them in light of your own experience. However, cite your references using APA in-text format. No bibliography is necessary, unless you use sources outside of class materials – in which case use MDC style for your bibliography. No cover page is required.

- **Assignment Description:**

A. It is strongly encouraged that you ***take notes/ maintain a journal*** each week of class on the personal significance for you of the class material that informs your life journey, so that you have a fund of observations to draw on in the last few weeks of class for this paper. There are many self-reflection questions in the Coker et al text, and also in Cloud et al to help you think about and explore this intersection.

B. At the level of disclosure that feels comfortable to you, ***discuss in your reflection paper:***

1) *What have you discovered about your own development and how these factors have affected you positively and/or negatively later in life? and*

2) *What would you say are the psychological factors that have contributed to your level of spiritual maturity? In other words, how has your psychological development and faith development intersected?*

Conclude by discussing:

3) *How have you met your personal goals for the course according to your first reflection paper?*

4) *How might these observations now affect your work in counselling and ministry? For example, in Cloud Appendix A “Helping the Helpers” (pp.215-221), the authors identify some “traps” that helpers can get into. Which are potential traps for you? How can you work on avoiding them? What is your plan for working on the development factors in your life that might be hindrances in your work?*

C. Chapter Quizzes - 15% of grade - Available on A2L, see class schedule for due dates.

These prepare you in part for the final exam, to make sure that you are mastering the objective content areas of the course (although they are not necessarily the same questions as on the final exam) (Knowing). They coincide with the assigned readings in Coker, and are due at the BEGINNING of almost EVERY class. They are “open book” but you only get one attempt per quiz. Answers are provided upon completion in order to further your understanding.

D. Final Exam – 30% of grade

It has two parts:

1. Open book, essay question to be prepared before the day of the exam and handed in by the beginning of the in-class exam. Worth 20% of your final exam grade, maximum 5 pages double spaced. It is not necessary to use footnotes or give a bibliography, since this is an essay question for the exam, but you must mention specifically which author/theorist you are referencing/using in your answer.

Essay Question:

*Discuss how you think a child in **one** of the following stages will be influenced in their understanding of God and their relationship with God depending on their normative level of cognitive, moral, and social-relational development. Draw from the work of Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, Marcia, and other relevant theorists or authors in the course. You can also include consideration of attachment/separation-individuation issues in development.*

- Toddler/Kindergarten (age 3-5yo)
- Elementary School (6-11yo)
- Adolescence (12-18yo)

2. Multiple choice exam during the final class (100 questions, 120 minutes). This prepares you in part for the professional exams that you will need to write if you are registering with CRPO, and makes sure that you have mastered the objective content areas of the course (Knowing). This will be a proctored, closed book, exam during class, whether synchronous online or in-person taken through A2L. Worth 80% of your final exam grade.

E. Written Assignment: *Literature Review Paper* - 40% DUE: Friday, November 13th 8AM

- **Purpose:**

- 1) Focus on an area of individual interest, and explore and describe in more detail either a developmental theory surveyed in this course as it applies to a developmental stage (topical focus) or research on a particular problem or issues within a developmental stage (problem focus) (Knowing).
- 2) Learn how to and engage in the practice of psychological literature research, including finding appropriate sources of material, and refining their search appropriately for their subject (Doing).
- 3) Critically examine and evaluate research found in the literature, (Knowing and Doing).
- 4) Practice writing a literature review format article using professional language and structure (Doing).

- **Assignment Description:**

A literature review focused on a topic of interest as it applies to individuals or families within a specific developmental stage.

This assignment addresses many of the knowing and doing goals of the course, and particularly the development of professional research, critical evaluation and writing skills. The paper must discuss normal human development and/or maturity in this developmental stage as related to the topic or issue. The emphasis is on reporting primary research on this theory and stage, and/or problem. It is expected that the student will critically analyze this body of research in terms of whether it is supportive of the relevant developmental theory (theories) involved,

and/or whether it is consistent in its findings regarding the development stage or problem involved. You will need to integrate the relevant themes and conclusions drawn from the literature (don't just summarize articles or books).

- **Paper length:** 12-15 pages, double spaced, not including references or cover page.
- **References:** You may include relevant chapters from the course texts, but you *must* include at least one academic monograph (i.e., book) related to this topic, and must include no fewer than 7 relevant academic (i.e., peer-reviewed) articles drawn from the psychology, social sciences, counselling, pastoral counselling or pastoral care literature.
- **Format: Use the expected structure for a professional literature review** including -
 - 1) Introduction/Thesis Statement,
 - 2) Integrated Review of Literature,
 - 3) Conclusions of your Review
 - 4) Theological Implications and Ministry Application.
 - 6) Conclusion (for the paper as a whole)
 - 7) BibliographyUse Headings and Sub-headings per the MDC style guide to clearly delineate your discussion.
- **How to Choose Your Topic:**

Step 1. Choose a developmental period/phase of life -

Early Childhood (0-5 yrs), Middle Childhood (6 to 9yrs), Late Childhood/ Pre-Adolescence (10-12yrs), Adolescence (13-18yrs), Early Adulthood (19 to 30yo), Middle Adulthood (30 to 60), Later Adulthood (60+)

Step 2: Choose 1 of the following -

1. Theoretical Approach: A specific theory you will research in more detail regarding this stage.

This will include background on the development of the theory/theorist, an overview of the theory as applicable to your chosen developmental period, survey of research evidence that supports and/or challenges this theory, and your conclusions about its utility in understanding this stage. Be thorough in covering both supporting and challenging evidence. Discuss the limitations of the research considering populations studied and research context. How does cultural diversity in background and experiences of other countries impact the application of this theory?

OR

2. Topical/Stage Approach: Summary and overview of the major milestones and developments of your chosen period.

This is your opportunity to become the “expert” on this period. Include the cognitive, emotional, physical, gender/ sexual and social/relational development layers of development (think of it as a “quick reference manual” for this period). Include consideration of relevant theoretical issues and research for this period: for example, what are the questions or issues currently being researched or debated in this period of development? Are these developmental milestones and/or tasks universal, or is their normative variation in their

trajectory or expression? How does the achievement of these tasks/milestones potentially influence those of the next period of development? Are these tasks/milestones universal across cultural and geographic contexts, or are these seen differently or impacted differently in other contexts?

OR

3. Topical /Specific Focus Approach: Narrow your topic by choosing one or a combination of the following parameters:

- Crisis issue: Explore a specific aspect of human experience (e.g., bereavement, family violence, illness & disability, immigration, learning disorders, separation, divorce & remarriage).
- Specific Population: cultural or ethnic community,
- Specific Setting or situation: school, foster care, adoptive family, military family/deployment, missions.

Based on current research literature, **you** will discuss how these parameters affect an individual's or family's development (behavioural, biological, cognitive, emotional, gender, moral, sexual, social, and/or spiritual). Make sure that you

(a) demonstrate how the issue relates to a particular perspective on human development and/or maturity and

(b) make sure to specifically focus on research that informs how these experiences or contexts may influence a normal trajectory of development.

(egs. what typical or "normative" needs or milestones does this issue interrupt or distort? Or how does development look different in this population or context? How is a *developmental theory* relevant to these contexts or events in development?)

Step 3: Include in Implications/ Application the following considerations, depending on your specialization -

For MACSC and MDiv Specialization in SC:

Building on your literature review, how you would apply those concepts therapeutically in counselling? For example, as our text does, you can use a BRIEF individual, family, or group case example, either hypothetical and/or drawing from personal or ministry experience (taking care to disguise all potentially identifying elements) (this can be single spaced and a smaller font to save space for discussion). Use your chosen developmental lens to assess the individual, family, or group in your example, and outline the counseling or other intervention strategies you would use - based on the research of this paper - to help them towards greater spiritual and/or psychological maturity.

For students other than the above specializations:

What are the specific implications of the literature review for your ministry? That is, how does your research inform your ministry strategies? Discuss how you would apply the conclusions and themes of your literature review in the context of your ministry, particularly what you would do based on your research to encourage greater psychological and/or spiritual maturity and health in your ministry context. Include consideration of the demographics, culture, history, goals, and challenges of your ministry context and how these factors interact with your developmental perspective.

- **Writing and Research Guidelines:**

1/ You MUST study and use the following guidelines that are available on A2L:

- “*Tips for Researching a Great Psychology Paper*” (Harris) and “*25 Expanded Tips for How to Write a Great Psychology Paper*” (Harris)
- “*Understanding Psychological Research*” (Harris) which explains research terms
- A more in-depth paper called “*Writing a Psychology Literature Review*” (Univ of Washington, 2010) that takes you through the whole process step by step.
- A “*Sample Paper Outline*” is also provided. I strongly recommend you make an outline before writing the paper (along with the other organizational suggestions in “*23 Tips*”).

2/ You MUST use the MDC Style Guide in all respects.

- This also provided on A2L
- Find in the Style guide the example of footnote and bibliographic format for each of your references that most closely matches the type of reference. Ask the GA for help *before you hand in your paper* if you are not sure which example to apply.
- Dr. Mutter’s paper, “*Book Reviews, Annotated Bibliographies, and Literature Reviews*” also posted on A2L not only gives great further guidance, it also provides examples of how to use MDC style for these three types of papers.

3/ You MUST use AI appropriately, if you use it:

- **You** may use AI to help you in searching for references or resources but be sure you set the parameters to only include official government, professional, and academic publications, and to cite all sources/links.
- You must both *read in entirety* and *cite properly* all original sources, not just use AI’s summaries. You must know your subject enough to check for accuracy in its search results as well.
- While it is tempting to use AI to correct your English usage and professional writing style, especially if English is not your native language, beware that it will change your wording and phrasing and it will no longer be your “voice” or written expression.

You SHOULD NOT simply copy AI results, or the suggested wording of other programs into your paper! Use such results as suggestions and examples, then use your own voice!

4/ You MUST proof read and critically examine your work!

- Double check that you have followed the instructions in this syllabus.
- Consult the *Grading Rubric* posted within A2L for the assignment to make sure you have fulfilled the assignment’s major objectives and standards for professional writing.
- Have a fellow student who is good in English proof read your work, especially if English is your second language.

- **Grading standards:**

You will be graded according to how closely you follow the provided guidelines, and your adherence to the MDC Style Guide, according to the Rubrics of the assignment on A2L. Additionally, your paper will be checked with TurnItIn and other programs that check for AI and plagiarism. High scores reflecting plagiarism will result in an automatic reduction in grade or failure of the assignment.

7. COURSE and INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES – *Note that not adhering to these expectations may result in reduced grades or being dropped from a class or the program.*

Communication Policies:

Contact and Availability: I am available for one-on-one consultation in-person briefly after class and during breaks on the day class is scheduled, and also on Zoom by appointment. Office hours are Mondays from 11:15am to 12:30pm. Otherwise, students may contact me at drcathryn.harris@gmail.com. *Please make sure you put “Human Development course” in the subject line of any email to rapidly identify your communication.* I try to reply by email within 1-2 business days, but because I also work full time doing clinical work, I may only be able to reply Friday through Sundays, so please check your email for a response on weekends. Phone numbers for the professor and the GA for technological emergencies during class are provided on A2L.

Mandatory Use of A2L: Many important communications with the class are made through our online digital course platform, called “Avenue to Learn” or “A2L” for short. . I frequently make announcements pertaining to the class through A2L, so make sure you sign up for email notifications from A2L. It is also there that you will find the slides for each lecture (often updated the night before!), extra resources to be successful in the course, asynchronous assignments, the quizzes that are part of your grade, and the place to submit your written work. Without a doubt that it is your responsibility to regularly log into the system to check for announcements, course content, and course activities. Additionally, when doing collaborative group projects for any of my courses, please primarily use the A2L discussion platform provided, and only secondarily and if necessary use direct email to your colleagues; especially do not use outside communication platforms (Messenger, Snapchat, What’s app, or texting) for class work. This ensures a record of communication and that everyone has access to the same platforms and communications.

Submission of Written Work:

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) **must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines** for Essays and Theses. This is available on MDC’s website <http://mcmasterdivinity.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/mdcstyleguide.pdf> and also is posted on the A2L platform for this course. Pay attention to assignment instructions! Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

A digital copy of all written materials in **MICROSOFT WORD** format must be submitted online **through Avenue to Learn** by their due dates (do NOT send by email). Late submission of assignments may be deducted points for every late day (each 24 hours or portion thereof after due date). Students are expected to adhere to the page range for written assignments. See Grading Rubric for penalties for papers that are under/over the expected length.

Academic Honesty: [updated September 23, 2025]

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one’s own (regardless of the means of its production, including AI) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which

credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

A special note about Generative AI:

You are expected to do your own thinking and to write your own papers, etc. Generative AI is not to be used to do this work for you. Using AI to produce content for you and then submitting that content as if you produced it is considered plagiarism (i.e., submitting work that is not one's own as if it is one's own) and is a violation of the academic honesty policy. Additionally, although there may be value in using an AI tool to correct mistakes in English grammar, usage, and mechanics, Generative AI is not to be used for translating from your native language to English. All degree programs at MDC are taught in English language. Students are expected to be sufficiently proficient in English to engage fully in academic discourse in these programs.

GuardMe Statement: [updated May 26, 2026]

Students at McMaster Divinity College have access to the GuardMe Student Support Program (GMSSP), which offers free, confidential mental health and wellness support 24/7. Through the program, students can connect with counsellors, access helpful tools and resources, and receive support anytime, from anywhere. Support is available by phone (1-844-451-9700) or visit gmssp.org to download the Student Support App.

AODA: [updated Sep 23, 2025]

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), McMaster Divinity College (MDC) is committed to supporting a learning environment that is inclusive and accessible to all students, including those with disabilities. Students who require academic accommodations to participate fully in this course must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) (<https://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) of McMaster University. SAS will work directly with the MDC Registrar to ensure reasonably appropriate accommodations are in place. Students with accommodations must use the SAS portal to activate the accommodations relevant to each course at the start of each term they are enrolled in. This will generate a notification to course instructors outlining the activated accommodations for the student in their course. Please note that accommodations must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation. Accommodations will be implemented once the faculty member has been notified. Accommodations are not retroactive and will not be applied to coursework or activities that have already concluded.

Contact Information:

- **Student Accessibility Services General Inquiries:** sas@mcmaster.ca
- **Roksana Sobota (SAS Representative for MDC):** sobotar@mcmaster.ca
- **MDC Registrar:** mdcreg@mcmaster.ca

Gender Inclusive Language: [updated Nov 23, 2023]

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions

and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as, for example, the following: NRSVue (2022), TEV/GNB/GNT (1976), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Classroom and Online Etiquette:

Attendance at all classes and participation during class are expected. Faculty know from many years of experience that a student's level of presence and participation in the course will impact how well she or he will score in the course. Although there are exceptions to this rule of thumb, low levels of presence and participation tend to translate to low grades; mediocre presence and participation tend to translate to mediocre grades; and high levels of presence and participation tend to translate to higher grades.

As a counselling training and ministry preparation program, we expect that you use the same good communication skills as are required in the counselling room or the ministry context, including demonstrating sensitivity and respect for individual differences. It is critical that students show respect for classmates and the instructor, both online and in person, in live interactions and in posted ones. This is even truer in the online environment because many of the non-verbal cues that we use to interpret what a person is communicating to us are not present online (except, perhaps in video posts). Therefore, it is especially critical that we be mindful of how our words will be interpreted by those who are reading them. As the instructor of the course, it is my responsibility to monitor communications to ensure that all students feel comfortable expressing their views in a respectful manner. Most if not all courses at MDC are devoted to the interpretation of Scripture. Invariably there will be disagreements; these disagreements must be discussed and negotiated in a respectful manner. This applies to individual and group communications involving the instructor and the others enrolled in the course.

Online Synchronous Course Policy [updated Jan 5, 2026]. (for those joining via livestream)

Attendance & Participation

- This course meets live online at the scheduled times. Attendance and active participation are required.
- Join the session on time; late arrivals disrupt the class and may affect your participation grade.
- Sessions may be recorded for review, but recordings do not replace live attendance.

Technology Requirements

- Ensure you have a reliable internet connection, a device with audio and video capability, and the course platform installed (e.g., Zoom, Teams).
- Test your connection before class.
- Keep your microphone muted unless speaking to reduce background noise.
- Use headphones when possible, for better audio quality.

Webcam & Environment

- Unless otherwise instructed, enable your webcam for the duration of the class session.
- Dress in casual but appropriate attire.
- Minimize distractions in your background. Virtual backgrounds are acceptable if professional.

Netiquette

- Be respectful and courteous in all interactions.
- Use the “Raise Hand” feature before speaking; avoid interrupting others.
- Keep chat messages on-topic; avoid ALL CAPS, sarcasm, or humor that could be misinterpreted.
- Stay focused—do not multitask during class.

Communication

- Check your email and the LMS regularly for updates, schedule changes, and supplementary materials.
- Monitor any additional communication channels used for the course.

Accessibility

- This course is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment. If you require accommodations, please follow the instructions in the Student Handbook.
- Live captions and accessible materials are available upon request.

Privacy

- Class sessions may be recorded for educational purposes and shared only with enrolled students. Recordings must not be distributed outside the course.
- Respect the privacy of peers: do not share images, voices, or contributions outside the class environment.

Academic Integrity & AI Usage

- All work submitted must be your own. Use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, etc.) is prohibited for all assignments, discussions, and assessments unless explicitly authorized by the instructor.
- Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct under institutional guidelines.

Absence Due to Illness:

Because of my own health vulnerabilities, my preference is that you avoid live attendance in class if you suspect that you or a family member may be ill with something that could be contagious. Since attendance is taken and is part of your grade, if you must miss class due to an illness, you must contact me or the GA (via email) as soon as possible to let us know. Although much of the course content will be made available via A2L, and I do record lectures for later review, it would still be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible. Likewise, if I should become ill, I will communicate with you via A2L about attending online instead of in-person, or how we will make up a class session, usually by watching a recorded lecture so we don't fall behind. Even if much of the course content will be made available via A2L, it would still be a good idea to have a friend take notes for you, if possible.

Inclement Weather:

If on a class meeting day MDC closes due to inclement weather, I reserve the right to move the lessons and, where possible, class activities for the week to A2L (asynchronous format). This will help to ensure that we stay on target in the course.

Copyright: *This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.*

8. COURSE OUTLINE : LECTURES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to revision depending on unexpected events and progress in class.

*Reading, reflection papers, and other asynchronous online assignments which may be assigned for each week are designed to prepare for that class and are **due at the time of the class**.*

It is recommended that you read Coker chapters before Balswick chapters.

WEEK 1: Monday Sept 14th: Introductions and Introduction

BEFORE CLASS, by 9am:

Reading Due: Syllabus, Coker Ch. 1, Balswick Chs. 1 & 2,

Video Due: Watch video, “Values and Goals of MDC’s Programs in Counselling and Spiritual Care”

BY END OF DAY, 11pm:

Quiz Due: Chapter 1, Coker (11pm)

Reflection Paper Due: *After reviewing the syllabus and these beginning chapters, what are my personal goals for this course? How do I want my life and/or ministry to be different 13 weeks from now?*

Lecture Topics: *Goals, Expectations, and Challenges of the Course*

Introduction to the Texts and to the Field:

The relationship of Psychology to Theology

The “Problems” of Developmental Psychology

On the Nature of Human Nature:

A (very) Brief Introduction to Theological Anthropology

WEEK 2: Monday, Sept 21st: Overview of Psychological Theories of Development

Reading Due: Coker Ch. 2, Balswick Ch. 3 & 4

Quiz Due: Coker Ch.2

Lecture Topics: *Overview of Psychological Theories*

WEEK 3: Monday Sept 28th: The Social Context: A Relational/Systems Perspective on Development

Asynchronous Assignments Due:

- Watch videos on “Mirroring and Nonverbal Communication in Attachment” (see Module A2L) (10 mins)

Reading Due: Coker Ch. 3, Balswick Ch. 5

Quiz Due: Coker Ch.3

Lecture: *The Relational Imperative of Development and the “Reciprocal Self”*

We are “wired” for relationship!: Neurobiology and attachment

Attachment vs. Separation-Individuation throughout life

WEEK 4: Monday Oct 5th: *Early Childhood (0-5yrs)*:

Asynchronous Assignments Due: - see A2L Modules.

- 2 Videos on Early Cognitive Development and The Three Mountains Task (23 mins total), and article summarizing and challenging Piaget
- 5 Videos on “Strange Situation/Attachment” and “Normal Toddler Behavior” (18 mins total)

Reading Due: Coker Ch. 4 & 5, Balswick Ch. 6,
2 Larzelere articles - “To Spank or Not to Spank” (on A2L)

Quiz Due: Coker Chs. 4 & 5

Lecture: *The drama of attachment vs. autonomy begins in Early Childhood!*

WEEK 5: Monday October 12th: No Class, Thanksgiving, Reading Week

WEEK 6: Monday, Oct 19th: *Middle Childhood (6-12yrs)*

Asynchronous Assignment: Videos: Harris – Cognitive Development (48 mins),
and 2 others (8 mins) – see A2L

Reading Due: Coker Chs. 6 & 7, Balswick Ch. 7

Quiz Due: Coker Ch. 6 & 7

Lecture: *Key Details in Understanding Middle Childhood*

WEEK 7: Monday Oct 26th: *Adolescence (13-18yrs)*

Asynchronous Assignments Due:

1. *Effects of Nurturance and Attachment on Later Development:*

- Various videos (25mins) , a personal quiz, and a short article – see A2L

2. *Adolescent development:* 2 videos (9 mins) – see A2L

Reading Due: Balswick Ch. 8

Lecture: *Key Details in Understanding Adolescence: Separation-Individuation Revisited*

WEEK 8: Monday Nov 2nd: *Emerging and Young Adulthood (19-30yrs)*

Asynchronous Assignments Due: Video - Arnett, on "Why does it take so long to
grow up?" – see A2L

Reading Due: Coker Ch. 8 & 9, Balswick Ch. 9, 4 articles on A2L

Quiz Due: Coker Chs.8 & 9

Lecture: *Key Details in Understanding Emerging Adulthood*
“Failure to Launch” and other challenges

WEEK 9: Monday Nov 9th: *Middle Adulthood*

Asynchronous Assignment: Video Kegan - "How to Develop a Self-Authoring Mind"

Reading Due: Coker, Ch. 10 & 11, Balswick Chs. 10 & 11, 3 Additional articles on A2L

Quiz Due: Coker Chs. 10 & 11

Lecture: *Key Details in Understanding Middle Adulthood*
The varied faces of “Mid Life Crisis”

Friday November 13th, 8 AM: MAJOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE

WEEK 10: Monday Nov 16th: Late Adulthood

Reading Due: Coker Ch. 12 & 13, Balswick Ch. 9,

Quiz Due: Coker Chs. 12 & 13

Lecture: *Key Details in Understanding Late Adulthood: Making the ending count!*

WEEK 11: Monday Nov 23rd: Marital and Family Development

Reading Due: Article - Trokan (On A2L), Finish Cloud et al by now

Lecture: *Key Details in Understanding Marriage and Family Development*

Class Discussion: Based on Cloud et al, and other theories covered, what are characteristics of and some biblical examples of a healthy vs an unhealthy family?

WEEK 12: Monday Nov 30th: Moral and Spiritual Development

Asynchronous Assignment Due: Video – *Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development* (6 mins)

Reading Due: Balswick Ch. 12 & 13, Articles: Carter, Hill, Henning, Worthington,

Lecture: *An Integrative View of Christian Maturity*

WEEK 13: Monday Dec 7th: Catching up and Wrapping Up

Lecture: *Anything else we didn't get to!*

Case Analysis and Discussion – Small Groups

Q & A/ Review for Final

WEEK 14: Monday Dec 14th: FINAL EXAM

Final Exam Essay Question Due (9 AM)

Personal Reflection Paper Due (9 AM)

Class Evaluations Due