

## Cradle to grave? The sociology of childhood, youth, adulthood and old age

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**Start date** 5 November 2017

**End date** 5 November 2017

**Venue** Madingley Hall  
Madingley  
Cambridge

**Tutor** Dr Nigel Kettley

**Course code** 1718NDX042

**Director of Programmes**

Emma Jennings

**For further information on this course, please contact**

Public Programme Coordinator, Clare Kerr  
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**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Nigel has had a wide ranging teaching and research career in the fields of sociology, education studies, research methods and teacher education. Before joining the Institute of Continuing Education in 2007, he was a Research Associate in the Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and earlier still an MPhil and PhD student at Wolfson College.

Before returning to study in 1997, he was a lecturer in a Further Education college. He is an active researcher in the areas of widening participation, educational attainment and lifelong learning more generally with a particular focus on issues of gender, social stratification and theory formation.

Nigel teaches on a variety of courses for the Institute, supervises PhD students for the Faculty of Education, and is Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for Education and Social Science courses at the Institute. His major publications include *Educational Attainment and Society* (2007, Continuum) and *Theory Building in Educational Research* (2010/2012, Continuum). He is also a Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge and a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

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## Course programme

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09:30	Terrace bar open for pre-course tea/coffee
10:00 – 11:15	<b>Cradle to grave? An introduction to the sociology of the life course</b>
11:15	Coffee
11:45 – 13:00	<b>Constructions and crisis accounts of childhood and youth</b>
13:00	Lunch
14:00 – 15:15	<b>Adulthood and parenting in an age of ‘risk’, ‘uncertainty’ and austerity</b>
15:15	Tea
15:30 – 16:45	<b>Old age, death and bereavement</b>
16:45	Day-school ends

## Course syllabus

### Aims:

1. To promote an understanding of the social construction of the life course i.e. that the various transitions that people experience throughout their life are not biologically fixed or related to ageing per se, but rather are socially defined and made meaningful;
2. To introduce students to the concepts, methods and theoretical models which sociologists have developed to investigate and explain transitions throughout the life course;
3. To explore and critically evaluate sociological research and explanations of specific stages of the life course including childhood, youth, adulthood and old age.

### Content:

Research into the life course indicates that the various stages and transitions experienced throughout our individual biography, including childhood, youth, adulthood and old age, are not simply determined by biology or the ageing process. Instead, these periods of the life course are also socially defined, made meaningful by society and marked by specific transitions and rites of passage. In this course you will explore specific stages of the life course through a sociological lens.

Topics covered will include an introduction to the concepts, methods and theories sociologists have used to investigate and explain change throughout the life course. The course will then explore: the social construction and crisis accounts of childhood and youth; the meaning of adulthood and variations in styles of parenting (and their effects on children); and the experience of old age in modern society. The final session will also consider how sociologists have studied the end of life.

Therefore, you will examine the impact of various social, economic and historical forces on individual biography from the cradle to the grave. The course examines the strengths and limitations of life course research as a means of understanding how people make sense of their daily life.

### Presentation of the course:

The course will be taught using highly interactive seminar-style sessions, which draw on students' knowledge and experience to illustrate key ideas in the sociology of the life course.

PowerPoint presentations will be used to guide sessions. Class discussion and interaction will be encouraged. Copies of PowerPoint presentations and all resources used in teaching sessions will be made available to students.

### As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

1. Identify, define and explain a range of concepts and methods associated with studying the life course including, for example, socialization, transitions and life histories;
2. Explain the strengths and weaknesses of a range of research evidence related to specific stages of the life course (childhood, youth, adulthood and old age);
3. Critically evaluate a range of sociological explanations of stages of the life course (childhood, youth, adulthood and old age) and consider their utility for understanding how people make sense of their daily life.

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## Reading and resources list

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Listed below are a number of texts that might be of interest for future reference, but do not need to be bought (or consulted) for the course.

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Author	Title	Publisher and date
Archard, D.	<i>Children, Rights and Childhood.</i> (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.)	2004. Abingdon: Routledge.
*Green, L.	<i>Understanding the Life Course: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives.</i>	2010. Cambridge: Polity.
Hodkinson, P. and Deicke, W. (eds.)	<i>Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes.</i>	2007. London: Routledge.
Holdsworth, C. and Morgan, D.	<i>Transitions in Context: Leaving Home, Independence and Adulthood.</i> Chapter 6, Adulthood, pp. 106-124.	2005. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
Seale, C.	<i>Constructing Death: The Sociology of Dying and Bereavement.</i>	1998. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Settersten, R. A. and Angel, J. L. (eds.)	<i>Handbook of the Sociology of Aging.</i>	2011. New York: Springer.

\* Recommended reading.

**Website addresses: None.**

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## Additional information

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### Venue

Details of how to find Madingley Hall can be found on our website:  
<http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/who-we-are/how-to-find-the-institute>

### Refreshments

Tea and coffee and lunch will be provided. If you have any specific dietary requirements or allergies please contact our admissions team: [ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:ice.admissions@ice.cam.ac.uk) or +44 (0)1223 746262.

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 16 June 2017