

## **EDLF 8648**

### **College Student Development**

Instructor: Clarence “Bo” Odom  
Time: Wednesday, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.  
Location: Ruffner 237  
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### **Course Overview**

Each day thousands-upon-thousands of students walk in and out of classrooms, dorm rooms, dining halls, libraries, and recreational facilities at today’s colleges and universities. A student’s interaction and engagement with the campus ecology is vast, yet each interaction affects his or her developmental journey in a particular way. As future student affairs professionals and faculty, we seek to meet these students *where they are* so that we might best facilitate their learning, growth, and development during these important years. But with rising enrollments, workloads, and demands for time, how are student affairs professionals able to provide the optimal support to an ever-diversifying student body? As student affairs professionals, should our approach to students be the same, or should we incorporate nuanced differences based on our students’ individual developmental needs?

This course is designed to provide an overview of college student development theory as a tool to help future student affairs practitioners and faculty interact with traditionally-aged colleges students in a way that is informed by the students’ developmental positioning, and to be able to identify those factors in the college climate that influence student development. Specifically, three families of development theory will be explored: cognitive/structural, psychosocial, and identity.

### **Course Objectives**

College student development is a complex phenomenon and an emergent one. There are many perspectives, conflicting views, and few answers. To study college student development is to make a leap of faith into a body of ideas and to realize that one’s own experience, insights, and questions will help to hone the field of inquiry. As you expand your understanding - both of the theoretical underpinnings and your own story in relation to the theory – you will be able to critique and perhaps contribute to the body of work.

By the end of this course, you will be able to describe the developmental trajectories of traditionally aged college students according to the major developmental domains (cognitive/structural, psychosocial, and identity), and identify those environmental factors that facilitate/inhibit development. You will be able to compare and contrast institutional practices for their developmental efficacy, and construct optimal environments and/or policies that promote student development. You will be able to locate students in their developmental journey and infer how differences in race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious beliefs and the students’ environments encouraged this development.

You will also be able to articulate the strengths, weaknesses, and processes used to create theory and critique the appropriateness of developmental theories to various student populations.

The work in this course will not only stretch your ability to read and evaluate established theory; you will learn how to construct your own theories and models of student development through inquiry, analysis, and problem-solving based on observation, interviews, and critical reflection. You will also learn the skills necessary to intelligently present and defend your theories and supported evidence. Finally, a key component to approaching developmental theory is the understanding of your own developmental journey. By the end of this course I hope you will be able to critically reflect on your own development, how this has informed your beliefs/perspectives of college students and institutional cultures, and how your identities act as lenses to inform your interactions as a student and future professional.

For a delineated list of course objectives, click [here](#).

**Instructor and Student Responsibilities:**

*This section is intentionally left blank. On the first day of class, you and your fellow classmates (in consultation with the instructor) will draft this*

*section. Suggested topics may include:*

*Technology in the Classroom*

*Attendance Policy*

*Participation*

## Assessment of Learning

College student development is a complex phenomenon and an emergent one. There are many perspectives, conflicting views, and few answers. Yet immersing oneself in the rigorous analysis of contemporary developmental theory and working to integrate your new understanding into your professional and personal worldview will ultimately move you to a holistic understanding of the college student journey. While developmental theory is complex and sometimes dense, the more you engage in the process of this course, the more you will learn.

Over the course of the semester, I will provide you with multiple opportunities to investigate challenges in the field of development theory, reflect on the effects of campus ecology on student development, experiment with theory construction, and incorporate new understanding into practice. The following activities will serve as markers along our journey, providing avenues for critical reflection and assessment as we move towards a deeper understanding of student development.

### *Article Reviews (3)*

Throughout the course we will consider student development in three separate domains: cognitive/structural, psychosocial, and identity development. In order to describe the developmental trajectories of college students, you must familiarize yourself with the theories that undergird these domains. Furthermore, scholars and practitioners in the student development field should be readily able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in developmental theories and discriminate between those student populations that are affected by each theory. This activity is designed to assess not only your understanding of the developmental theories in each domain, but assesses your ability to critically analyze the literature presented. This activity will be conducted three times during the course of the semester for each developmental domain according to the scenario below:

Scenario: Acting as a reviewer for the *Journal of College Student Development*, it is your job to recommend one of the required course readings for publication in your journal. In a 5-6 page review, compare and contrast the theories described in each reading. Select one article that you believe is the most influential for student affairs professionals and provide evidence of its importance. Finally, describe the student populations that are affected by this theory and those environments on the college campus that would play an influential role promoting/inhibiting this development. External resources may be cited (though not required).

### *Program Proposal*

Over the course of the semester, you will begin to make connections between the developmental outcomes of students and the impacts institutional ecologies have on these outcomes. This assignment will ask you to dive deeper into the developmental details of program or environment planning in order to understand the effects of institutional practices on student development. It will encourage you to think through the process of assessing developmental programming or environments, and ask you to design an optimal program or environment for a student population of your choice.

Scenario:

Your university has received a grant to use towards the creation of a developmental program or environment for undergraduates. Your vice president has put out a request for proposals (RFP). The RFP stipulates that the program or space must have a one-year duration, be grounded in developmental theory, and include an assessment plan. Approved proposals will receive \$10,000 for implementation.

You will write an 8-10 page proposal and give a 10 minutes presentation to the Vice President (me) and members of the administration (your peers) with the following elements:

- Description of your service area (choose one of the following: academic advising, campus activities, religious and spiritual programs, residence life, LGBTQ programs, multicultural programs, orientation program, service-learning programs, student judicial/conduct programs) and how the proposed program or space fits in the mission of the service area.
- Issue to be addressed by the program or space (choose one of the following: appreciating diversity, independence, intellectual growth, meaningful interpersonal relationships, realistic self-appraisal, social responsibility, spiritual awareness, clarified values).
- Theoretical context for learning and development
- Developmental/learning outcomes
- Program or Space Elements
  - Activities/aesthetics
  - Students involved
  - Staff/Faculty Involved
  - Budget details
- Assessment Plan

### *Theory Construction*

“For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them.”  
- Aristotle, The Nicomachean Ethics

As future scholars and practitioners in the student development field, it is important to understand how developmental theories are constructed, what makes them reliable and valid, and how they can serve as foundation for further understanding. Applying existing theory to student experiences, you will spend a significant portion of this semester constructing an original theory of student development. Theory construction is a multi-faceted undertaking. It requires creative thought and revision, planning and research, investigation, critical assessment, and reflection. While I do not expect you to be an expert in these domains on the first day of class, the process of constructing an original theory of development will strengthen and hone these skills. In order to help craft your theory, I have developed a series of scaffolded assignments throughout the semester that will walk you through this complex process.

#### *Selecting a Population and Developing an Informal Theory*

Working in teams of two, each team will choose a group of students that have something in common with one another (e.g., a psychosocial identity or specific experience). Teams

will then develop an informal theory (2-3 pages) describing the growth and development of the student group, their experiences as college students, and those factors of the college environment that may contribute to the population's experience.

### *Research Plan*

Teams will work together to formulate a research plan to investigate their proposed theory. Plans should include the population (sample), an overarching research question, time frame of data collection, where and how the data will be collected, how you will gain access to your population, and an interview protocol.

### *Literature Review*

In order for your theory to demonstrate validity, a literature review plays a critical role by positioning your theory in the larger context of student development. An effective literature review synthesizes the current literature, provides a summary of the understanding of the topic in question, and provides recommendations for what knowledge is yet unknown or needs further research. Rather than working in teams, individually you will develop expertise in their theoretical topic through locating important research and literature germane to the proposed theory and crafting a review of the literature. You should include at least 10 primary sources from outside the course (though readings assigned for the course may also be included in addition).

I ask that you and your teammate meet with me two weeks prior to turning in your literature review. During this time, we can discuss some of the sources you have found, issues you may be facing in search of primary sources, or other concerns related to the literature review.

### *Interviews*

While theory can be anecdotally constructed from the literature or prior experience, properly gathered data can illuminate important details or reinforce prior thought. Gathering reliable data is an art form in itself, and experience is the only way to build this skill. To that end, each team member will interview at least three people who fit the criteria for their theory. Interviews do not need to be formally transcribed, however it is strongly suggested that you audio record your interviews.

### *Formal Theory Development and Presentation*

Based on the informal theory, review of literature, and conducted interviews, teams will construct a model of development for their selected population. Teams will then present their theories in an in-class *conference-style* presentation. The presentation will offer you the authentic experience of disseminating your findings and defending your constructed theory. Presentations will last no more than 10 minutes and must include an overview of the relevant literature, methods of data collection, results of interviews, and summary of the constructed theory of development.

### *Reflection Paper*

As a final piece of the process, I will ask you (individually, rather than as a team) to critically reflect on the process of developing your formal theory in the form of a 5-7 page paper. Questions for you to consider:

1. How did your formal theory resemble/differ from the informal theory developed at the beginning of the semester?
2. What surprises did you find in the literature as it pertained to your theory? How did the existing literature shape your theory construction?
3. How would you use your theory to inform student affairs practice? How would student affairs professionals apply your model to their interactions with the population?
4. How did this process shape the way that you think about developmental theory? In what ways are you different because of this project?

A handout and rubrics will be provided with specifics about the projects and due dates.

### *Journal Portfolio*

Mapping theory to authentic situations and relationships moves our understanding from the conceptual to the tangible. While there are ethical considerations that prohibit us from directly interacting with the college students at this institution, a major part of this course will engage you in case studies involving fictional (yet true to life) college students whose biographies between them represent the spectrum of development for traditionally aged college students. You will interact with these “students” through weekly prompts that seek to critically reflect on the characters’ development in light of the material and activities covered that week in the course.

Each week, you will be asked to create a visual representation of the theories encountered during class. You will then be prompted to write:

a. a letter or correspondence to one of these characters

-or-

b. a journal entry from the perspective of one of these individuals

that seeks to critically reflecting on the characters’ development in light of the material and activities covered that week in the course. These journal entries will not serve to diagnose or treat these characters, but will seek to “wonder” with them about their developmental process.

You may consider the following questions as starting points for each week’s reflection:

1. How did the theory or activities resonate (or not) with any of the characters’ developmental experiences?
2. How does the college environment promote (or inhibit) the characters’ development in this area?
3. What concepts, if any, did you have trouble understanding or linking to any of the characters?

Prompts for these weekly assignments will be distributed by the end of the class, and you will need to turn in the completed assignment by 5pm on Friday. Many weeks, I will provide

reflections on your work and return your entries by the following morning. Other weeks, your peers will be asked to assess your work, or you will be asked to self-reflect on your assignment. At the end of the semester you will write a culminating letter to all characters, whereby you provide them a narrative of your journey and growth with them over the semester.

## Evaluation

Your final course grade is compiled as an aggregate of scores you receive on the classroom assessments and will be weighted in accordance with your participation. A detailed breakdown of your evaluation according to the course assessments is provided below:

Assignment Description	Points per Assignment	Percentage of Final Grade
Article Review: For each (3) developmental domain, you will write a 5-6 page review according to the scenario described above. Click here for <a href="#">rubric</a> .		30%
Cognitive/Structural Development	50	
Psychosocial Development	50	
Identity Development	50	
Program Proposal: For the program proposal, you will write an 8-10 page proposal and give a 10-minute presentation. Both the written proposal and the presentation will be weighted evenly. Click here for the <a href="#">written proposal rubric</a> . Click here for the <a href="#">presentation rubric</a> .		20%
Written Proposal	50	
Presentation	50	
Theory Construction: This assignment requires you and a teammate to engage in a number of activities that will result in an original theory. Graded portions of this assignment include the research plan, literature review, presentation, and reflection paper. While your informal theory construction and interviews are ungraded, they are still an integral piece of the project and failure to fulfill these assignments will be apparent in your overall work. Click here for the <a href="#">literature review rubric</a> . Click here for the <a href="#">presentation rubric</a> . Click here for the <a href="#">reflection paper rubric</a> .		35%
Research Plan	15	
Literature Review	60	
Presentation	70	
Reflection Paper	30	
Journal Portfolio: Your journal portfolio will include journal reflections for each week of the semester as well as a final critical reflection and summary at the end of the semester. Due diligence and thoughtfulness will be the evaluative factor for this assignment. Full credit will awarded for due diligence, thoughtfulness, and participation.		15%
Weekly Participation and Final Reflection	75	

### **A note on approaching the reading:**

In an effort to make the reading manageable and accessible, you will find that the weekly readings include recommended articles or books in addition to the required readings. Readings were chosen that illustrate the application of theoretical concepts to diverse populations and to student affairs practice. At times, readings may seem repetitious. However, they each present the material from a different perspective and therefore help to clarify the main concepts and provide different ways of approaching the material or using it in practice.

I encourage you to form reading groups with classmates to review and discuss the readings outside of class. While I don't expect students to complete the recommended readings, they have been made available to you to aid in your understanding as well as provide key articles on ideas and theories that may be useful as you write papers. Material from recommended readings may also be used in class discussions.

### **Civility & Academic Integrity:**

Because we will often talk about sensitive issues (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, moral values) it is important to be aware of the potential emotional impact of your comments. We all bring a variety of beliefs and viewpoints to the class. I ask that you not judge or criticize others because of where they are developmentally or their admission of prejudices, biases, and assumptions about those who are different; rather, seek first to understand.

The material in this course should challenge and/or reinforce individuals' beliefs and assumptions. Challenge, as we will learn, is an integral part of learning and growth. As the instructor, it is my responsibility to provide a safe space to discuss these issues. I expect students in this course to remain open, civil and supportive of their peers within the classroom as well as outside the class. Finally, please maintain the confidentiality of the in-class discussions -- what is said in our class should remain here.

Finally, all students are expected to uphold their agreement to abide by the Honor Pledge and uphold the community of trust. All alleged honor violations brought to my attention will be forwarded to the Honor Committee.

### **Textbooks**

Evans, N. J., Forney, D. S., Guido-DiBrito, F., Patton, L. D., & Renn, K. A. (2010). *Student development in college: Theory, research and practice* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Harper, R., Wilson, N. L. & Associates (2010). *More than listening: A casebook for using counseling skills in student affairs work*. Washington, DC: NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. **Weekly Schedule:**



Week	Assignment	Assignment Due in Class
1 Jan 14	<b>Topic: What is theory anyway?</b> Before Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the <a href="#">syllabus</a></li> <li>• Read Evans et al., p.</li> </ul>	
2 Jan 21	<b>Topic: Development and the Environment</b> Before Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 9</li> <li>• Read Renn &amp; Arnold (2003)</li> </ul>	<b>Informal Theory</b>
3 Jan 28	<b>Topic: How do we think? Developing Cognition and Academic Identities</b> Before Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapters 5 &amp; 7</li> <li>• Read Snowman, McCown, &amp; Biehler (2012)</li> <li>• Read Tudge &amp; Winterhoff (1993)</li> </ul>	<b>Research Plan</b>
4 Feb 4	<b>Topic: Developing a sense of Right and Wrong: Foundations of Moral/Ethical Development</b> Before Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 6</li> <li>• Read King (2009)</li> <li>• Read Harper &amp; Wilson, Chapter 5</li> </ul>	
5 Feb 11	<b>Topic: Who are we? Social Identity and Social Group Theory</b> Before Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 13</li> <li>• Read Tajfel (1982)</li> <li>• Read Aronson &amp; McGlone (2009)</li> <li>• Read Patterson &amp; Bigler (2007)</li> </ul>	<b>Structural/Cognitive Review</b>
6 Feb 18	<b>Topic: How do we define ourselves in relation to others? Self Authorship</b> Before Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 10</li> <li>• Read Cameron (1999)</li> <li>• Read Pizzolato (2005)</li> </ul>	
7 Feb 25	<b>Topic: The academy and the Big Guy Upstairs: Religion and Spirituality</b> Before Class:	<b>Literature Review</b>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 11</li> <li>• Read Love (2001)</li> <li>• Read Goodman &amp; Mueller (2009)</li> </ul>	
<b>8 Mar 4</b>	<p><b>Topic: Racial &amp; Ethnic Identity</b></p> <p>Before Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapters 14, 15, &amp; 16</li> <li>• Read Rockquemore, Brunson, &amp; Feagin (2008)</li> <li>• Read Hardiman (2001)</li> <li>• Read Harper &amp; Wilson, Chapter 6</li> </ul>	<b>Psychosocial Review</b>
<b>9 Mar 18</b>	<p><b>Topic: Gender</b></p> <p>Before Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 18</li> <li>• Read Bilodeu (2005)</li> <li>• Read Edwards &amp; Jones (2009)</li> <li>• Read Harper &amp; Wilson, Chapter 10</li> </ul>	
<b>10 Mar 25</b>	<p><b>Topic: Class</b></p> <p>Before Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Aries &amp; Seider (2007)</li> <li>• Read Kaufman (2003)</li> <li>• Read Harper &amp; Wilson, Chapter 11</li> </ul>	<b>Program Proposal</b>
<b>11 April 1</b>	<p><b>Topic: Sexual Orientation</b></p> <p>Before Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapter 17</li> <li>• Read Bilodeu &amp; Renn (2009)</li> <li>• Read Worthington, Savoy, Dillon &amp; Vernaglia (2002)</li> </ul>	
<b>12 April 8</b>	<p><b>Topic: How does this all fit Together? Multiple Dimensions of Identity and Developmental Transitions</b></p> <p>Before Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Abes, Jones, &amp; McEwen (2007)</li> <li>• Read Baxter Magolda (2009)</li> <li>• Read Jones, Kim &amp; Skendall (2012)</li> </ul>	<b>Identity Review</b>
<b>13 April 15</b>	<p><b>Topic: Your Original Theories</b></p>	<b>Theory Presentations</b>
<b>14 April 22</b>	<p><b>Topic: Wrap-Up and Debrief</b></p> <p>Before Class:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read Evans et al., Chapters 19 &amp; 20</li> <li>• Read Perry (1978)</li> </ul>	<b>Theory Reflection</b>