

Canadian Bible College
GST 301 - Sociology of Adolescence
Class Syllabus

Dr. Marv Penner
Spring, 2003
3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Patricia Hersch describes the world of adolescents as “a perplexing place where kids these days are growing up among themselves, out of the range of adult vision.” She says “theories abound on how to manage them, fix them and improve them as if they were products off an assembly line: just tinker with the educational system, manipulate the drug messages, impose city wide curfews, make more rules, write more contracts, build more detention centers...but the piecemeal attempts to mend, motivate or rescue them obscure the larger reality – *we don't know them* .”

This course is designed to give students the tools to “know them” – as a generational group perhaps, but far more importantly as individuals, made in God's image, struggling with the challenges of navigating all the changes, planted in the middle of the chaotic cultural reality of today's world ... and rich with potential to be all they were created to be.

This course is about finding ways to connect the reality of the Gospel with the reality of their world.

COURSE TEXT

Hersch, Patricia. A Tribe Apart. New York: Fawcett Books, 1998

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Elikind, David. All Grown Up and No Place to Go. Don Mills, Ontario: Addison Wesley Publishing, 1998

Hine, Thomas. The Rise and Fall of The American Teenager. New York: Harper Perennial, 2000

Huggins, Kevin. Parenting Adolescents. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1989

Larson, Scott. Risk in our Midst. Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2000

Lawrence, Rick. Trendwatch. Loveland, CO: Group Publishers, 2000

McDowell, Josh and Bob Hostetler. Right From Wrong. Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994

Mueller, Walt. Understanding Today's Youth Culture. Wheaton: Tyndale Publishing, 1998

Olsen, Keith. Why Teenagers Act the Way They Do. Loveland, CO: Group Books. 1987

Olsen, Keith. Counseling Teenagers. Loveland, Colorado: Group Books, 1984

van Pelt, Rich. Intensive Care. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988

Santrock, John. Adolescence (8th Edition). Madison, Wisconsin: Brown and Benchmark, 2000

Taffel, Ron. The Second Family. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course the student should be able to.....

- ★ Understand the world of North American adolescents and appreciate the implications of that understanding for more effective ministry.
- ★ Identify the key areas of transition experienced during normal adolescent development.
- ★ Describe the evolution of understanding that has occurred over the past century with regard to adolescent developmental issues and place this present generation of adolescents into an appropriate historical context.
- ★ Evaluate trends in adolescent culture from a Biblical perspective and teach young people to make wise choices based on that evaluation.
- ★ Understand contemporary family dynamics and their impact on the lives of adolescents.
- ★ Articulate the key tasks of adolescence as outlined by Robert Havighurst and others.
- ★ Understand the essentials of the physiological changes experienced by boys and girls during adolescence.
- ★ Teach junior and senior high students effectively and biblically with regard to their own sexuality and the appropriate expressions thereof.
- ★ Synthesize concepts of cognitive development and faith development so that adolescent spiritual growth can be better understood.
- ★ Explain the implications of Kohlberg's paradigm for understanding moral development.
- ★ Discuss intelligently the way aberrant adolescents are dealt with by the Young Offender Act in Canada.
- ★ Assist students in the development of healthy growing friendships both with the same sex and with the opposite sex.
- ★ Offer themselves as a significant adult to an adolescent in transition - providing a modeling, mentoring friendship for that young person.
- ★ Shape or adjust their ministry with students to create a meaningful context for the development of faith, based on a deep understanding of the broader realities of adolescent culture and development .

COURSE SCHEDULE

- Class 1 – Tuesday, January 14, 2003
- Class 2 – Tuesday, January 21, 2003
- Class 3 – Tuesday, January 28, 2003
- Class 4 – Tuesday, February 4, 2003
- Class 5 – Tuesday, February 11, 2003
- Class 6 – Tuesday, March 4, 2003
- Class 7 – Wednesday, March 26, 2003*
- Class 8 – Tuesday, April 8, 2003
- Class 9 – Tuesday, April 15, 2003
- Class 10 – Tuesday, April 22, 2003

* This is because the Tuesday is the YC clean-up day. If the class chooses to stick with the Tuesday class (the 25th) we'll go with Tuesday – It'll be up to the class to decide.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Reading and Response** - 30%

Text- Read Hersch thoughtfully and respond in the following ways...

- a. Identify 15 – 20 quotes that you could use in a talk, sermon, lesson or seminar to help people understand the world of adolescents better. Pick one of the quotes you have listed and write a one page response to the quote explaining how an understanding of that particular point should shape or change our ministry with kids. (15%) (Due February 4)
- b. Which of the adolescents Hersch describes do you find yourself identifying with most closely and why – just a page or two on this. (5%) (Due February 4)
- c. As you read this book you must get a sense of the deep commitment the author has to teenagers. Write a letter of a couple of pages to the author telling her how you as a Christian, committed to working with kids, responds to her research and writing. (10%) (Due February 4)

2. **Cybersurfing** - 15%

Explore the resources addressing adolescent developmental and cultural issues available on the Internet and identify at least 10 sites that every youth worker could benefit from. Provide the URL and 3 – 4 sentence soft description and evaluation for each of the sites you list. (Due January 21)

3. **Here's My Story – and I'm sticking to it!** - 20%

In the spirit of "A Tribe Apart" tell the story of an adolescent you know. You have two options for this assignment. You may either tell your own story (It will be treated with absolute confidentiality) or spend some time during the semester getting to know a teenager and their world as Hersch did. Include highs and lows, victories and defeats, joys and pains. Talk

about family and friendships. Address issues of gender (what it means to be a guy or girl as an adolescent) and the struggles of puberty, opposite sex relationships and the challenges that come with growing up. Address issues of the faith journey and relationship with God. Include significant shaping events and key people.

Conclude your (auto)biography with a written prayer (no more than a page). If you told your own story, talk to God about what you've learned through this exercise. If you wrote about someone else, write a prayer for them based on what you've learned. (Due March 26)

4. The Marketing of Adolescence - 15%

Observe the diverse means by which adolescents are targeted by advertisers, the media, retailers and others who are attempting to get the attention of adolescents today. Walk through malls, look at magazines, watch television, listen to the radio and journal your observations in response to this question. "What do the people who are attempting to persuade adolescents to change their lifestyle, habits or priorities in some way know about adolescents ... and how do they apply that knowledge to bring about those changes. A couple of pages will suffice - Include copies of ads or other messages that particularly illustrate your observations. (Due April 8)

5. – Hot Topics - 20%

Pick a topic that is relevant for an adolescent – family, honesty, friendship, doubt, hope, salvation, temptation, kindness, humility, suicide, self image, peer pressure, discipline, moral purity, sharing your faith, etc. the sky's the limit. Prepare a one page outline for a devotional, talk, lesson or Bible Study on the topic. That's just the start...

Using a "voice from their world" prepare a 6 – 8 minute introduction to your topical study. By "voice from their world" I mean a song (Christian or secular), video clip (movie or television), TV commercial or a print ad that most kids would recognize. You will present your introduction to the class and distribute copies of your study to each of your class members. By the time everyone has done these you should have enough great intro ideas to last you through your first year as a youth pastor. (Due throughout the semester as scheduled beginning January 21)