

**UNCP 557.001 FALL 2024**  
**CAPSTONE: ADULTING**  
**Thursdays 4:30-6:50 pm; Stokes S133**  
 Dr. Karen Arnold  
[arnoldkc@bc.edu](mailto:arnoldkc@bc.edu); 617-717-9071

**ADULTING IS ...**”the assumption of tasks, responsibilities and behaviors traditionally associated with normal grown-up life, along with the implication that the individual in question does not particularly identify as an adult and that acting as one does not come naturally. *Adult*, in this context, is a verbed noun and is also used to describe forcing someone else, such as an employee, to behave like an adult” (Rouse, 2017, italics in original).

Most college students in their early 20s feel neither fully adult nor fully competent in the tasks, responsibilities and behaviors that are traditionally associated with grown-up life. In this class, students will take stock of their journey to adulthood so far and look ahead to what work, relationships, citizenship, and spirituality might look like in post-college life. Readings on the developmental psychology of young adulthood will be paired with popular media, exercises, and reflective writing to help students progress in their own “adulting” as they prepare to negotiate the transition out of college.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To *review* the pattern of choices, values, and formative influences in your life so far
2. To *preview* long-term commitments in work/career; relationships/family; citizenship; and spirituality
3. To *develop* selected competencies, skills, and practices

### **REQUIRED TEXTS (available at BC bookstore and on reserve at O’Neill Library)**

1. Kelly Williams Brown, (2018). *Adulting: How to become a grown-up in 468-535 easy(ish) steps* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Hachette.
  2. Meg Jay (2021). *The Defining Decade* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Twelve.
  3. Strongly encouraged: A blank journal that makes you happy.
- All other readings and videos available on class Canvas website

### **OFFICE HOURS BY APPOINTMENT**

Cultivating conversation partners is part of adulting. I encourage you to email or text me to make an appointment to talk with me individually about the class, life, the future, or whatever’s on your mind.

### **COURSE READINGS AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

Assignments are due by submission to Canvas by the start of class on the date they appear on the syllabus

**CLASS CULTURE GUIDELINES\***

We want to do our best to create a learning community where everyone feels welcomed, safe, and whole. In addition to preparing, attending, and participating in class sessions with genuine engagement and openness, this means embracing these community norms:

1. Presume and extend welcome. It is almost always challenging, in one way or another, to be part of a group. Good news: there is no “inside” and no “outside” to this class community! Be aware, though, of such sensitivities in ourselves and in each other.
2. We are a truly diverse group. Respect difference and allow others to be fully themselves. Cultivate curiosity.
3. Know that there is genuine freedom in this class. We invite everyone to speak but we do not engage in “forced sharing.” You can and should share only in ways that you feel comfortable. *Every invitation to speak and participate is just that: an invitation.* Passing or staying quiet is perfectly acceptable
4. When in a group, whether a small group or the group as a whole, give your full attention to the person speaking. Do not engage in side conversations, including in digital forms like “chat” functions. Use “I” statements when speaking. Be aware of how much space you are taking up.
5. Each person in the circle commits to both conventional and “double” confidentiality. Conventional confidentiality means that we do not speak to anyone outside the group about what is shared in this class. “Double” confidentiality means that when a person shares a confidence that we sense makes them vulnerable, we do not raise the issue again with that person or anyone else in the group, without the invitation of the person in question.
6. Make every effort to respect the group container. Please come to class punctually. If you cannot make a class or need to switch temporarily from in-person to remote attendance, please let Karen know in advance.

*\*adapted from the Institute for Jewish Spirituality*

Aug. 29

Introduction

Pre-class work for August 29: Look over syllabus and Canvas site

OPTIONAL: Bruni, F. (2018, August 17). How to get the most out of college. *New York Times Sunday Review*.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/17/opinion/college-students.html>

OPTIONAL: Gorlick, A. (2009). Media multitaskers pay mental price, study shows. *Stanford News*.

**Assignment due August 26th:** [Pre-class survey & adulting skills inventory](#)

Make an appointment to meet *in person* with Karen individually between September 6th and September 18th ([online sign-up link](#)).

Sept. 5

Authoring your own life

Pre-class work for September 5

Karen’s *Last Lecture* (2023, April). Start at minute 8 (30 minutes)

Zander, R.S. & Zander. B. (2000). Giving an A. In R.S. Zander & B. Zander, *The art of possibility* (pp. 25-45). Harvard Business School Press.

Meg Jay (MJ): *Defining Decade*: Preface and Introduction, pp. xv-xxxv and Identity Capital, pp. 3-16.

What is self-authorship?-excerpt from Hodges, D.C., Baxter Magolda, M.B., & Haynes, C.A. (2009). Engaged learning: enabling self-authorship and effective practice. *Liberal Education*, 95(4).

OPTIONAL: Pre-class 11-minute video teaching on self-authorship by Karen (In class) Keane, M. (2021, January 10). [Life kit: Making big decisions](#). *All Things Considered*, National Public Radio.

**In-class activity:** “36-question” conversation with assigned classmate (repeated weekly and checked in class) **REPEATED MOST WEEKS**

**Assignment due:** “Why I got my ‘A’” letter to instructor (uploaded to Canvas)

Sept. 12

The Ecology of Adulthood

Pre-class work for September 12

Pre-class short video by Karen on human ecology

Meg Jay (MJ): *Defining Decade*: The Unthought Known; My Life Should Look Better on Instagram; The Search for Glory; and The Customized Life, pp. 33-72.

Schlossberg, N.K. (2011). The challenge of change: The transition model and its applications. *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 48(4), 159-162

Kelly Williams Brown (KWB) (2018). *Adulthood*. A note on the second edition and introduction. pp. ix-xvi; pp. 3-8; and Families pp. 294-315.

OPTIONAL: Arnold, K.D., Lu, E.C., & Armstrong, K. (2012). *The ecology of college readiness*. Chapter 2: The Human Ecology Framework, pp. 11-18. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Assignment preview:** Autobiography/Life view paper overview

**Assignment due:** Adulthood skill #1

Sept. 19

Emerging Adulthood. Guest: Boston Globe Reporter Dana Gerber

Pre-class work for September 19

Pre-class [short video on emerging adulthood](#) by Jeffrey Arnett (11 minutes)

Kelly Williams Brown (KWB) (2018). *Adulthood*. Fake it till you make it, pp. 78-90 (steps 100-118).

MJ: *Defining Decade* Getting along and getting ahead, pp. 199-208.

Arnett, J. J. (2006). Emerging adulthood: Understanding the new way of coming of age. In JJ Arnett & JL Tanner, *Emerging adults in America*, (pp. 3-19). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Browse Dana Gerber Boston Globe Series: [No Stupid Questions, how-to guides for navigating adult life in Boston](#) and COME TO CLASS WITH YOUR OWN “STUPID QUESTION”

Read or listen to ONE of the following two sources about NOT searching for your passion:

DeWitte, M. (2018). *Instead of finding your passion, try developing it, Stanford scholars say.* <https://news.stanford.edu/press-releases/2018/06/18/find-passion-may-bad-advice/>

Terri Trespicio Ted Talk: Stop Searching for your Passion (11 minutes)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MBaFL7sCb8>

Read or listen to ONE of the following two sources about NOT specializing:

Chen, A. (2019, May 30). Why specialization can be a downside in our ever-changing world: David Epstein's new book *Range*, explains the benefits of taking our time and learning by doing. *The Verge*.

David Epstein, author of *Range* [interview on CBS This Morning](#) (5 minutes)

**Assignment due:** Autobiography Chapter 1: What matters most: Formation and Values

Sept. 26

Happiness

Pre-class work for September 26

Sean Achor: The happy secret [Ted Talk](#) (start at minute 6)

MJ: *Defining Decade* The unthought known, pp. 33-42.

Heshmat, S. (2015, June 13). Satisficing vs. maximizing: The downside of rationality. *Psychology Today* blog.

Pinsker, J. (2019). The Yale Happiness Class, Distilled. *Atlantic*. (Includes lecture notes

“Top Ten Tips for Happiness” from the Yale course instructor, Dr. Laurie Santos).

Stierwalt, E. (2018). Mindfulness: The science behind the practice. *Scientific American*.

OPTIONAL:

Check out the Happiness Lab podcast episodes of your choice from Yale's Laurie Santos.

De Botton, A. (2021, Oct. 8). Why you will marry the wrong person. *New York Times*.

Stephens-Davidowitz, S. (2017, May 7). Don't let Facebook make you miserable. *New York Times* p. SR12.

Wang, S.S. (2011, March 15). Is happiness overrated? *Wall Street Journal*, D1; D6.

**Assignment due:** Happiness Practice #1

October 3 Spirituality and the meaning of life

Pre-class work for October 3

KWB: *Adulthood*: Times were tough pp. 268-293

Ware, B. (2012). *The top five regrets of the dying: A life transformed by the dearly departing*. Carlsbad, CA: Hay House. Excerpt.

Christensen, C. (2010). How will you measure your life?: Don't reserve your best business thinking for your career. *Harvard Business Review*.

OPTIONAL:

Boorstein, S. (2020). Sweetheart, relax.

Rogers, F. aka Mr. Rogers (2002). [Commencement address](#) on the meaning of life. (16 minute video; can start at 3 minutes 50 seconds to miss Dartmouth-specific intro)

**Assignment due:** Faith/spirituality/religion map

- October 10 Narrative: The Story of Your Life with guest Dr. Kathy Chau Rohn  
 Pre-class work for October 10  
 How I got into College: This American Life; Act 2: [My Ames is True](#)  
 KWB: *Adulting*: Conclusion p. 316  
 MG: *Defining Decade*: Outside in pp. 190-198; Do the math and Will things work out for me? pp. 226-239.  
 Smith, E.E. (2017, Jan. 12). [The two kinds of stories we tell about ourselves](#). Ted Ideas.  
**Assignment due:** Autobiography chapter 2: Let your life speak: Vocation
- October 17 Friendship and Love  
 Pre-class work for October 17  
 MJ: *Defining Decade*: Love pp. 75-149  
 Brooks, A. (2021). The type of love that makes people happiest. *The Atlantic*.  
 Gottman Institute (n.d.). The four horsemen of the apocalypse. (2 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o30Ps-8is&feature=youtu.be>  
 Beck, J. (2015). How friendships change in adulthood. *Atlantic*.  
 Newman, K. (2018). How long does it take to make a friend? [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_long\\_does\\_it\\_take\\_to\\_make\\_a\\_friend](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_long_does_it_take_to_make_a_friend)  
 Pearson, C. (2022): How to Make, and Keep Friends in Adulthood. New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/01/well/live/how-to-make-friends-adult.html>  
 OPTIONAL:  
 Modern Love Podcast (2016): “A Millennial's Guide to Kissing” (18 min) <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/fashion/emmy-rossum-modern-love-podcast.html>  
 KWB: *Adulting*: Friends and neighbors 202-227 and Love pp. 228-267  
 KWB: *Adulting*: Friends and neighbors 202-227 and Love pp. 228-267  
 Hunter, T. (2023). Meeting friends online is normal. Here’s how to do it. *The Washington Post*.  
 Chalabi, M. (2021, October). [What makes a friendship last? Am I normal?](#) Ted Talk. (3.5 minutes)  
**Optional assignment due:** Revision of “why I got my A” letter  
**Assignment due:** Happiness practice #2
- October 24 Life Roles with guest Quinn Burgess  
 Pre-class work for October 24  
 MG: *Defining Decade*: Every Body pp. 209-225

Caron, C. (2024, July 24). Kids? A growing number of Americans say, ‘no, thanks.’ *New York Times* (reprinted in the *Boston Globe*).

Miller, C.C. (2018, August 20). The costs of motherhood are rising, and catching women off guard. *The New York Times*, p. B1.

Pew Research Center. (2019). 8 facts about American dads.

Raeburn, P. (2017). [Five myths about fatherhood](#). Washington Post.

OPTIONAL:

Slaughter, A.M. (2013). [Can we have it all?](#) Ted Talk. (17 minutes)

Stanford Center on Longevity. (2017). *Shifting life milestones across ages: A matter of preferences or circumstance?*  
<http://longevity.stanford.edu/milestones/>

**Assignment due:** Autobiography/Life View draft chapter 3: The Future

October 31

Adult Survival: Finances and “doing life”

Pre-class work for October 31:

KWB: *Adulthood*: Money pp. 151-172

Higgins, M. (2018). Americans are terrible at small talk. *The New York Times*.

Issa, E. (2020). [Gen Zers: How America’s newest adults are doing money](#). *NerdWallet*.

Singletary, M. (2023). 6 money tips new graduates should know. *Washington Post*.

Grinberg, R. (2017). [The 3 secrets of budgeting](#). Medium.com.

Gursoy, R. (2023). [Gen Z is signing up for credit cards faster than any other generation: 3 tips they should know](#). CNBC Select.

Duley, M. (2023). [The most confusing money task for Gen Z](#). yahoo!Finance.

Muse editors (2020). [Doing your taxes? 10 things you must know](#). The Muse.

Grinberg, R. [3 crucial facts about health insurance that most people don’t know](#). Medium.com

SKIM: KWB: *Adulthood*: Domesticity, pp. 15-36; Cooking, pp. 26-58; Maintenance, pp. 175-201

OPTIONAL:

Paulus, N. [Buying health insurance for the first time: A guide for new college graduates](#). Moneygeek.

Bank of America. Gen Z: [Know your money](#) (overview budgeting, building credit, borrowing, investing).

**Assignment due:** Brief pre-class survey for next week’s guest speaker

**Assignment due:** Adulthood skill #2

November 7

Wellness and self-care with Center for Wellness guest instructor Jeannine

Pre-class work for November 7

MG: *Defining Decade*: Forward thinking; A social experiment; Calm yourself pp. 153-189.

Rubin, G. (2011). Be serious about play. *The happiness project* (Chapter 5 pp. 112-140). Harper.

SKIM: [Wellness and Personal Growth folder](#) on shared Google Drive (come to class ready to share about a reading that stood out to you)  
 KWB *Adulting*: Getting your Mind Right, pp. 9-20; and Maintenance: The Body, pp. 194-201.  
**Assignment due**: Autobiography chapter 4: Let your life speak: Vocation

November 14 Work: with guest Julie Miller Redmond, Brandeis University

Pre-class work for November 14:

MJ: *Defining Decade*: Weak Ties, pp. 17-31.

KWB: *Adulting*: Get a Job, pp. 117-150

VIDEO Bill Burnett: [Designing your Life](#) from Bill Burnett, Stanford University (25 minutes, but fabulous)

OPTIONAL:

Lewis, M. (2018). *When to jump: If the job you have isn't the life you want*. New York: Henry Holt. Read pp. 1-15. Feel free to skim some of the rest—stories of people who jumped from one career to another.

Strada Institute (2018). *The permanent detour: Underemployment's long-term effects on the careers of college grads*. Boston, MA: Burning Glass Technologies. Read findings pp. 7-8 and skim anything else that you want.

Abril, D. (2023). [Improve your chances of getting notice by AI on job site](#). *Washington Post*.

**Assignment due**: Come with a LinkedIn site at any stage of design

Nov. 21 Student Presentations: Group 1

**Assignment due**: For group 1: Autobiography/life view student presentations,

Make an appointment to meet with Karen individually between November 30 and December 14 ([online sign-up link](#))

Nov. 28 Thanksgiving: No Class

**Assignment**: Relax, have fun, practice new perspective on family, try adulting skill requiring equipment or a guide unavailable at BC

Dec. 5 Wrap-up and Group 2 Student Presentations

**Assignment due**: For Group 2: Autobiography/life view student presentations,

**Assignment due**: For everyone: Final autobiography/life view “paper” due (Check-in with Karen for formats other than a paper)

### Assignments and Due Dates

Assignment	Due
------------	-----

• Weekly 36 questions peer conversations	ongoing
• Pre-class survey/adulting skills inventory	8/26
• Why I got my 'A' letter to instructor	9/5
• Adulting skill #1: Documentation	9/12
• Autobiography Chapter 1	9/19
• Happiness practice #1 documentation	9/26
• Spirituality/Faith/Religion map	10/3
• Autobiography Chapter 2	10/10
• Happiness practice #2 documentation	10/17
• Why I got my 'A' revision-Optional	10/17
• Autobiography Chapter 3	10/24
• Adulting skill #2 or Digital Wellness	10/31
• Autobiography Chapter 4	11/7
• Life View presentation	11/21;12/5
• Autobiography/Life View "paper"	12/5

## Course Policies

**Absences:** Class attendance is crucial in this course for your learning and peer community. Your engaged physical presence shows respect for your fellow students and the instructor. That said, **if you are feeling ill or have tested positive for COVID, you should not come to class.** In such a case, you may participate remotely or arrange with Karen to make up the work. Your grade will not be affected. If possible, you should notify Karen in advance of the missed class. Please do not schedule job interviews for Thursday afternoons. Excused absences are allowed for student-athletes according to notices from the student-athlete academic services office. It is your responsibility to contact Karen to arrange make-work. Students who miss class for any other reason should inform Karen in advance. In such cases, you will be asked to complete an additional assignment and the grade might be affected.

**Late work:** Please let Karen know in advance if you need to turn in an assignment late and why. There will be no penalty for late work because of illness or emergency. Assignments that are delayed without such reasons conflict with adult learning contracts and might affect the semester grade.

- Grading:** Grades will be negotiated with students on the basis of individual learning contracts. Students will set their own goals for the semester and specify what evidence they will demonstrate by the end of the semester as indicating success in making progress toward these goals. Goals include personal attainments, engagement in class materials and assignments, and effective contributions to the class learning community. Students will confer with the instructor in individual meetings at the end of the semester about their own goal achievement set out in the “Why I’m going to get an ‘A’” paper (due in the second week of the semester, discussed with the instructor at the draft stage and optionally revised at midsemester).
- Integrity** The Boston College community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. BC promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity, and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the associate dean and the Committee on Academic Integrity. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see [Boston College’s academic integrity policy](#).
- Use of AI** The assignments in this course are designed for reflecting on your own opinion and experience, so the use of AI is probably irrelevant and unhelpful in this class. You may use AI programs such as ChatGPT to help generate ideas, brainstorm, or design visuals. However, you should be aware that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Beware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). In addition to citation when using AI-generated material, please write a note to clarify where in your process you used AI and which platform(s) you used.
- Weather:** In the event of a heavy snowstorm or other emergency necessitating cancellation or delay of a class, please call (6

552-INFO for information on an emergency closing. Announcements will be posted on the BC home page as well as the BC/Prepared website at [www.bc.edu/prepare](http://www.bc.edu/prepare). I will hold class in person if the university is open. If BC cancels classes, there will be an online class.

Disability: I want to make sure you succeed in this course! If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with Kathy Duggan [[kathleen.duggan@bc.edu](mailto:kathleen.duggan@bc.edu)] (for learning disabilities), or the Disability Services Office [[disabsrv@bc.edu](mailto:disabsrv@bc.edu)] (all others). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations. If you have a less-formal special need, I welcome a conversation to discuss your learning needs.

