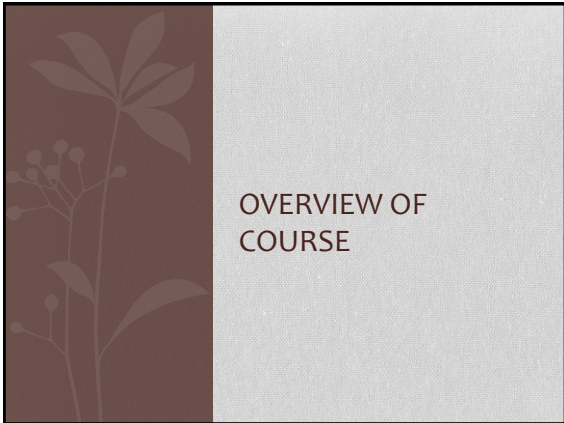# COMM 601– LIFESPAN COMMUNICATION THEORY AND RESEARCH

Inaugural Class
Fall 2011
Dr. Tom Socha

OVERVIEW OF COURSE

Course Basics

1. **URL:** www.odu.edu/~tsocha
2. **Guiding Texts:**
   a. **Salkind– Theories of human development**
   b. **Pecchioni et al.-- Lifespan communication**
   c. **Sunwolf– Peer group communication**
   d. **Harwood– Communication and aging**

Course Basics

3. **Assignments:**
   a. **Lifespan communication short assignments**
      i. **Lifespan communication stages**
      ii. **Effects of peer group communication**
   b. **Professional development**
      i. **Curriculum vita**
      ii. **Getting to know COMM Professional associations**
   c. **Lifespan Communication Development paper**
   d. **Lifespan Communication Group Project**
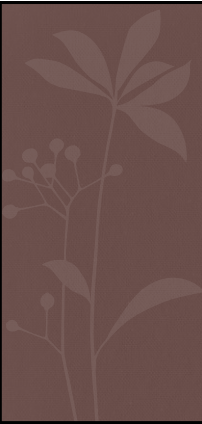   e. **Final Exam**

GET ACQUAINTED EXERCISE

ASSUMPTIONS OF A LIFESPAN PERSPECTIVE TO COMMUNICATION
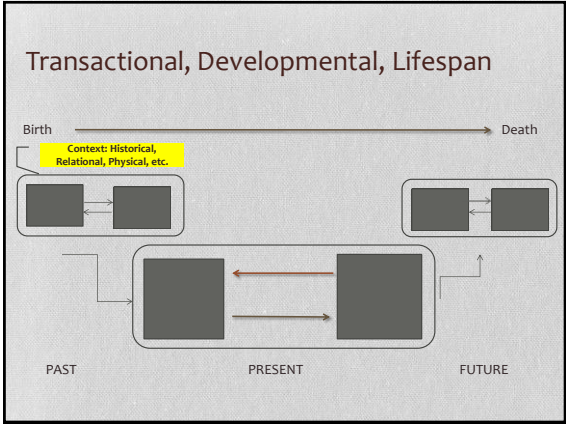
Assumptions

Pecchioni et al (2005, p.10)

1. Nature of communication is fundamentally developmental
2. Comprehensive understanding of communication is dependent on multiple levels of knowledge occurring simultaneously

Assumptions

Pecchioni et al

3. Changes in communication can be qualitative and quantitative
4. All existing theories can be adapted to a lifespan framework as long as they can be tested
5. Unique methods needed to assess communication changes across the lifespan

GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR LIFESPAN COMMUNICATION: MODEL, ISSUES/QUESTIONS

Transactional, Developmental, Lifespan

Birth ——————————————→ Death

Context: Historical, Relational, Physical, etc.

PAST   PRESENT   FUTURE

Defining "Development"

Qualities
• Global to discrete
• **Simple to complex**
• Integration to differentiation
• Self-oriented to other-oriented
• Dependency to autonomy

Major Theory Groups (Salkind, 2004, p. 17)
• Biological
• Psychodynamic
• Behavioral
• Cognitive-Developmental
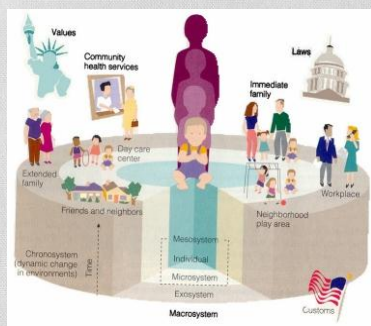
Questions/Issues in Communication Development (adapted from Salkind, 2004, p. 29)

1. What are the major forces that influence the course of communication development?
2. What are the underlying processes that are primarily responsible for changes in communication development (maturation, learning)?
3. What role does age play as a general marker of changes in communication development?
4. Are there critical periods during communication development and if so how are they related to rate of change?

Questions/Issues Continued

5. Is communication development smooth and continuous or do changes occur in abrupt stages?
6. How do theories of communication development explain differences in development between different individuals of the same chronological-age peer-group?
7. What methods are used to study communication development?

ECOLOGY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Urie Bronfenbrenner's

"Bio-ecological" model

Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2000)

Proximal Processes and Communication Development (Bronfenbrenner)

- Individual as an active contributor
- Activities need to occur on a regular basis, over extend period of time
- Activities become more complex over time (must change to continue to spur future changes)
- There is reciprocal influence– influencing and influenced by
- Interactions with people most important, but also person-object interaction influential
- Importance and role of processes changes over time with the individual and the environment