Colonnade Connections Proposal Form: Systems

Connections courses are Colonnade's summative learning experiences in which students develop critical competencies through a lens of complex social, global, and systemic issues of concern. Colonnade Connections courses cannot have courses outside of the Colonnade program as pre-requisites.

Systems Colonnade Learning Outcomes

Students will examine systems, whether naturally occurring or created by humans, by breaking them down into their component parts or processes and seeing how these parts interact. Courses will consider the evolution and dynamics of a particular system or systems and the application of system-level thinking. Students who complete this course will:

1. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.
2. Analyze how systems evolve.
3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making. (For example: public policy, political landscapes, economic structures, cultural phenomena, etc.).

Kentucky Graduate Profile Academy Competencies

As part of a CPE initiative, WKU is participating in the Kentucky Graduate Profile Academy which has identified 10 competencies that all Kentucky college graduates should have. Since Colonnade offers students a common learning experience across the university, faculty need to identify which of these competencies students will develop in their class. The 10 competencies are as follows:

1. Communicate effectively.
2. Think critically to solve problems.
3. Apply quantitative reasoning.
4. Interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds.
5. Engage in civic life to improve society.
6. Adapt to change while leading and supporting others.
7. Exhibit professionalism on the job.
8. Collaborate and work in teams.
9. Apply learning to chosen career.
10. Use information for decision making.

*Courses do not have to incorporate ALL of these competencies but must incorporate at least one. Course proponents should identify those which logically fit into their format, material, etc.

Approval Process

Faculty should fill out the proposal form in its entirety, attach a sample course syllabus, and then upload the document onto Course Leaf for approval. The steps for approval are as follows:

New Colonnade Courses

1. Department - faculty should have their department vote on whether or not they approve the course.
2. College - course goes before the College Curriculum Committee.
3. Colonnade - once it has been approved by both the department and the College Curriculum Committee, it then goes to the Colonnade General Education Committee (CGEC).
4. University Curriculum Committee (UCC) - after it has been approved by the CGEC, it then goes before the UCC.
5. Senate Executive Committee (SEC) - following approval at the CGEC and UCC, the course then goes before the SEC.
6. University Faculty Senate - following SEC approval it goes before the full University Faculty Senate.
7. Provost - final approval is the Provost's Office.

Colonnade Connections Course Proposal: Systems

Proposal Date: 2/11/2025

Basic Information

Proposal Contact Name: Andrew Mienaltowski

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College: Science and Engineering

Department: Psychological Sciences

Course Details:

1.1   Course prefix (subject area), number: PSYS 423

1.2   Course Title: Psychology of Adult Life and Aging

1.3   Credit hours: 3

1.4   Any Foundations pre-requisites? None, just standard Connections pre-requisites

1.5   Cross-listed and/or equivalent courses (prefix and number): N/A

1.6   How often will this course be offered? This course has been offered every Fall and Spring term

of late and is sometimes offered over the summer/winter terms

1.7   Is this an existing course? **Yes, and the course is already a Connections Systems course**

    If yes, when was the last semester it was offered? Spring 2025

1.8   Proposed term of implementation? Implement new assessment as of Summer 2025

1.9   Course Modality (In-person, hybrid, online): Is mostly offered in-person and sometimes online

1.10   Does this course include an applied/service-learning component? No

Course Overview

1. Course Description (50-100 words):

   (official course description in course catalog)

   Psychological processes in adulthood and aging. Emphasis on contemporary theories, methodological issues, and interactions of psychological, biological, social, and environmental factors in adulthood and aging.

2. If this is a NEW course, please explain how this course provides a multi-disciplinary learning experience that will appeal to a broad student audience beyond majors.

   N/A, this course is an existing course

3. If this is <u>an existing course</u>, please explain how it will be adapted to appeal to a broad student audience.

   This course is already offered as a Connections – Systems course and appeals to a broad audience. Students enrolled in this course examine the underlying social and natural science that builds the body of research informing our understanding of how humans change in thought, behavior, emotion, and mental health with advancing age. This course cultivates students' knowledge of how psychological systems age. It also explores how, as we age, we: (a) live and care for ourselves and our aging loved ones; (b) relate to others and understand our own lives and those of people around us as a function of age appropriate goals and capabilities; (c) understand the ambitions and limitations of individuals who are the most senior members of our communities; and (d) continue to contribute to our communities ourselves throughout old age. Students evaluate the connections that exist between changes in the constituent components of psychological systems (e.g., sensory processing, physical mobility, speed of information passage within the brain, etc.) and higher level systems' components (e.g., social functioning, complex decision making, integrative processes involved in attention and memory, etc.). The course is well subscribed because there is a focus on the role that psychological science plays in supporting the personal health and autonomy of aging individuals, factors that are vital to gaining the most life we can from improved longevity in modern generations.

4. Identify the Colonnade assessment artifact for this course. Please keep in mind that artifacts must demonstrate how students have met all of the Colonnade Learning Outcomes (CLOs) included in the course proposal and are measurable. Each student in the class should complete this assignment and faculty will submit them for assessment at the end of each semester. Each course should produce only ONE artifact that is completed by all students in the class. **NOTE: multiple choice exams, videos/interviews without transcripts, etc. cannot be used for Connections artifacts.**

   Students will write a 1200-1500 word paper evaluating psychological systems affected by aging, connecting the findings from an empirical article to their construct under study, and proposing a follow-up study or intervention to apply the knowledge gained from the empirical article. To successfully complete this paper, a student will:

- Demonstrate cultural competence in the impact that aging has on psychological systems
- Review the research design of an empirical article and link to its resulting data
- Effectively communicate the main issues contributing to the motives for the study conducted in the empirical article
- Think critically to extend the research in the empirical article to a future study or intervention

Sample instructions:

Extensive Empirical Article Analysis (Colonnade Connections Artifact)

Assignment Overview: You will analyze an empirical article related to the psychology of aging. Your essay should demonstrate an understanding of a psychological construct discussed in class, connect it to age-related changes, and critically evaluate a research study that explores this relationship. You will also propose a follow-up study to extend or apply the findings. Your response should be well-organized, clearly written, and supported by both the empirical article and concepts from class discussions.

Assignment Instructions:
Section 1 – Setting up your focus (at least two paragraphs)
Begin your essay by introducing a psychological construct that has been discussed in class (e.g., memory, personality, relationships, or personal striving/goals). Define this construct and explain how it is typically measured in psychological research. This introduction should provide the foundation for understanding how the construct changes over time.

Then discuss how changes in aging impact the psychological construct you introduced. Draw from at least two of the following four areas: biopsychology, socioemotional experiences, cognitive functions, and mental health systems. Explain how specific changes in these areas influence the construct and use concepts from class to support your discussion.

Section 2 – Analysis of Empirical Article (at least three paragraphs)
Introduce an empirical article that examines the relationship between the psychological construct and at least one of the four aging-related areas. Summarize the authors' motivations for conducting the study and describe their hypotheses based on prior research findings. This section should demonstrate an understanding of why the study was conducted and what the researchers expected to find.

Next, describe the research methods used in the study. Clearly explain how the study was conducted, including information about the participants, the research design, and the measures or tasks used to assess the psychological construct. Discuss how the research methods were designed to test the study's hypotheses and ensure that you clearly connect these methods to the construct you introduced at the beginning of your essay.

Then, summarize the study's key findings and explain whether the results supported the authors' hypotheses. Discuss what these findings suggest about the psychological construct and how they contribute to our understanding of how aging influences this aspect of human behavior or experience.

Section 3 – Critically Extend or Apply Findings from Empirical Article (at least one paragraph)

Finally, conclude your essay by proposing a follow-up study or intervention that could build on the empirical article you analyzed. This study could extend the findings by examining another aspect of aging, focusing on a different psychological mechanism, or applying the knowledge gained in a way that benefits older adults. Explain why this follow-up study would be valuable and how it could further our understanding of aging and psychology. Your proposed work should clearly describe what you would manipulate and/or measure to evaluate the meaningfulness of your study or intervention.

Your essay should be in APA style, 1200-1500 words in length (5-6 double spaced pages), well-organized, clearly written, and address all of the aforementioned points. Be sure to properly cite both the empirical article and any relevant class materials.

5. Please explain how the assessment artifact demonstrates that students have met the Systems CLOs. Colonnade artifacts in the Systems category will be further evaluated by an assessment committee using a common rubric supplied by the Colonnade Directors to determine if the artifact demonstrates student proficiencies with the CLOs. The Colonnade artifact assessment rubrics are available on the Colonnade website.

This assessment artifact demonstrates that students have met the Systems learning outcomes by requiring the students to engage in systems-level thinking when analyzing how aging influences psychological constructs. When students examine how changes in biopsychology, socioemotional experiences, cognitive functions, and mental health systems impact a given construct, they will analyze how interconnected components evolve over time, addressing the **first CLO (Analyze how systems will evolve)**. The assignment moves beyond studying isolated variables by emphasizing the relationships between different domains of aging, prompting students to compare the analysis of individual components to the broader system-level interactions that shape human development, fulfilling the **second CLO (Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems)**. Additionally, the final section of the assignment requires students to propose a follow-up study or intervention that applies empirical findings in a meaningful way, encouraging them to consider **how systems-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, or sustainable approaches to aging (third CLO)**. This critical extension ensures that students evaluate the implications of research beyond individual studies, demonstrating their ability to think holistically about complex, interdependent systems in human psychology.

6. Which of the 10 Kentucky Competencies are incorporated into this class? Please explain how they have been incorporated.

    Students will demonstrate 4 of the 10 competences listed in CPE's Kentucky Essential Skills (KYES):
    - Communicate effectively
    - Think critically to solve problems
    - Interact effectively with people from diverse backgrounds
    - Use information for decision making (information literacy)

7. Does this course have a service/applied learning component? If so, please explain what it is and how it will help students meet the CLOs and 10 competencies.
    No, it does not

This proposal form, and a sample course syllabus, must be uploaded to Course Leaf. The course syllabus must contain the Systems CLOs on the front page. Additionally, the artifact must be included in the syllabus.