

Aging & The Life Course (working syllabus)

Instructor Information

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- Office Location: TBD
- Office Hours: TBD

Course Details

- Days: TBD
- Time: TBD
- Location: TBD

General Information

Description

What is aging? Is aging biological, social, or both? Why do we age? When does aging begin? How do events early in life affect our later life? Can we prevent aging? Do individuals become more valuable or less valuable to society as they age? What problems does a society with an aging population face? These are just some of the many questions we will pose and attempt to answer in this course. During the semester, we will investigate aging from many different theoretical perspectives, including sociology, psychology, economic, demographic, biological, and medical. We will use a life course perspective to understand how each stage of our lives and the social conditions of those events affect us as we get older. We will also discuss the ethics of many of the social problems facing us as we age, including retirement, cost of healthcare, caring for the elderly, as well as death and dying. We will finish with a chance for you to debate these issues facing our aging population.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course, you will have an understanding of the many different approaches to understanding our aging population and the social effects, including:

- Describe what social gerontology is
- Identify and expound on important events and stages across the life course
- Explain the aging process from a variety of scientific perspectives
- Practice interviewing people about their experiences discuss sensitive topics
- Discuss some of the significant social and ethical controversies associated with our aging population
- Assess multiple aspects and perspectives of the debates surrounding our aging population

Course Materials

Required Materials*

Quadagno, Jill. 2017. *Aging and the Life Course: An Introduction to Social Gerontology* (7th Edition).

All other reading and media materials will be provided by the instructor and available on the course website.

Course Requirements & Policies

Requirements

The format of this course is a combination of lecture and discussions based on aging and the life course. It is important that you come to each prepared to participate.

Preparation for the class includes having read the assigned text for each day, taking notes on the main points and key ideas, and having prepared comments and questions related to the readings.

Grading

Your work will be graded on a point system, which will be converted to a percentage. In this course, there are 1,000 cumulative points available, which corresponds to a 100% scale. In some courses, students begin with a full grade, and points are deducted throughout the semester; this is not how I grade. In this course, everyone starts with zero points, and as you complete and turn in assignments, quizzes, and tests, points are added to your total. This is to ensure that students continue to work toward earning their grade, and not merely picking and choosing what assignments to focus on to "keep" their grade.

Grades are distributed as follows:

Attendance	150 points	15% of final grade
Participation	150 points	15% of final grade
Weekly Response	100 points	10% of final grade
DEAL Exercise	50 points	5% of final grade
Exams & Quiz	300 points	30% of final grade
Group Debate	100 points	10% of final grade
Interview Guide	50 points	5% of final grade
Final Paper	100 points	10% of final grade
Total	1,000 points	100%

Late or Missed Work

It is important to stay on task and complete your assignments on time. However, life circumstances sometimes get in the way. I will allow late work to be turned in no later than one class period late but will include a 10% reduction on any work that is turned in

late. Any assignments turned in more than one class period late will not be accepted and will be given zero points.

There are some exceptions to the late work policy. First, if you are aware of an upcoming absence that will conflict with an in-class quiz, test, or assignment, you may complete an excused absence form.

Second, if you experience an unavoidable, verifiable, emergent, and extenuating circumstance preventing you from submitting work on time, you may have the opportunity to submit late work.

**Additional exceptions and policies regarding an inability to complete an assignment on time will be permitted based on college policies.

Attendance Policy

Students may miss a total of three class periods, no questions asked, without penalty. Once a student misses more than three class periods, each period missed beyond three will be a 50-point deduction, up to 150-point deduction, from the final grade.

Students may arrive to class up to five minutes late without penalty, any tardiness beyond five minutes will have a 20-point deduction, up to 100-point deduction, from the final grade. Any tardiness beyond 30 minutes will be considered as an absence.

Participation

It is vital that every student participates in the course to the extent that they are comfortable. This course is designed to function on discussion and debate, for this to work, everyone must come to class prepared and ready to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about your willingness or ability to participate, please let me know.

Weekly Responses

The purpose of these weekly responses is to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading and are prepared to discuss the topics we are covering in class. I will post a question related to the assigned reading for the week ahead, and students must submit a thoughtful response of 2-3 paragraphs making specific reference to the text. For example, the weekly response due at the beginning of week three will cover chapters three and four in the textbook. Weekly responses will be due before class begins on the first day of class for the week.

DEAL Exercise

For the DEAL Exercise, you should turn in a reflection of at least 500 words, but not more than 750 words. This entry will require you to DEAL with the documentary. That is, you will: Describe, Examine, and Articulate what you are Learning. Further instructions and a rubric are on the course website.

Exams & Quiz

Exams and the quiz will cover the chapters listed next to each exam on the course schedule. Even if we do not discuss a specific topic or section of the reading in class, it will be on the test. In addition to the readings, exams will also cover anything covered in class discussion.

Group Debate

At the beginning of the term, we will form debate teams. Each team will be responsible for researching, presenting, and debating your issue before the class. Students will debate one of the following issues; should we ration healthcare for older people, should families provide for their own, should people have the choice to end their lives, should older people be protected from bad decisions, should age rather than need be the basis for entitlement, and should social security privatize? For each issue, there will be a pro and a con side. The team research will include resources from the textbook, class discussion, academic/scientific articles, books, as well as periodicals and other relevant media approved by the instructor. At the end of the semester, debates will be during class.

Students will evaluate each member of their group for participation and assistance during the assistance. Class members and the instructor will also grade their peers' in-class debates. Each member of the group will receive the same grade, so be sure to work together.

Interviews & Final Paper

During the course, we will discuss and learn about techniques for interviewing and coding interviews. Students will get a research question related to aging approved by the instructor and will write a research paper on that topic. Each student will conduct at least three interviews with people who are at least 55 years of age. Students will then code and analyze the interviews and include them as part of their final paper. We will take time in class to learn about preparing interview guides, practice interviewing, as well as coding interviews. Final papers will be 8-10 pages in length. More information, including specific requirements and rubrics, are available online and covered during the class.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Due
Week 1			
Class 1	Review syllabus and course introduction	Syllabus	
Class 2	The Field of Social Gerontology	Ch. 1	
Week 2			
Class 1	Life Course	Ch. 2	Weekly Response
Class 2	Life Course	Ch. 2	

Week 3			
Class 1	Theories of Aging	Ch. 3	Weekly Response
Class 2	Demography of Aging	Ch. 4	
Week 4			
Class 1	Learning to Interview	Brinkman Ch. 4 Galletta Ch. 2 <i>Additional resources posted on course website***</i>	Weekly Response
Class 2	Old Age and the Welfare State	Ch. 5	
Week 5			
Class 1	Biological Perspectives on Aging	Ch. 6	Weekly Response
Class 2	Psychological Perspectives on Aging	Ch. 7	
Week 6			
Class 1	Interview Guides/Practice	In-class exercise/review	Interview Guide
Class 2	Exam 1	Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	
Week 7			
Class 1	Family Relationships and Social Support Systems	Ch. 8	Weekly Response
Class 2	Living Arrangements	Ch. 9	
Week 8			
Class 1	Work and Retirement	Ch. 10	Weekly Response
Class 2	Health and Health Care	Ch. 11	
Week 10			
Class 1	Caring for the Frail and Elderly	Ch. 12	Weekly Response
Class 2	Dying, Death, and Bereavement	Ch. 13	
Week 11			
Class 1	Group Debate Work		
Class 2	Exam 2	Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13	
Week 12			
Class 1	Coding Interviews	In-class exercise	Transcribed Interviews
Class 2	Screening: "Coming of Age in America"		
Week 13			
Class 1	The Economics of Aging	Ch. 14	Weekly Response
Class 2	Poverty & Inequality	Ch. 15	DEAL Exercise on "Coming of Age in America"
Week 14			
Class 1	The Politics of Aging	Ch. 16	
Class 2	Group Debate Work or Group Debates depending on time		Quiz on Chapters 14, 15, 16
Week 15			
Class 1	Group Debates		
Class 2	Group Debates		Final Paper Due

*Other possible texts include, but are not limited to: *Aging: Concepts and Controversies (9th Edition)*, Harry R. Moody & Jennifer R. Sasser; *Unequal Childhoods*,

Annette Lareau; *Children of the Great Depression*, Glen Elder, Jr.; *Age and Inequality*, Angela O’Rand & John C. Henretta

***Online interviewing resources: “Conducting In-Depth Interviews.” 2006. Boyce & Neale; “The Great Interview Guide: 25 Strategies for Studying People in Bed.” 2002. Hermanowicz; Interviewing in Qualitative Research PDF