

Sociology of Aging
Soc 3322

Summer I A 2009

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HOURS	

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Social gerontology goal is to examine the experience of aging based on the social issues experience in all times of life including gender, race/ethnicity and social class. This course will also examine the controversial issues in aging including government funding, medical treatment, and future for the older population. This class will examine these issues from both the individual and the global perspective.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To examine the major theoretical perspectives, research methodologies, and concepts in the area of gerontology
2. To explore the work of a number of the major authors in the study of gerontology;
3. To identify a foundation for your further study and research in the field of gerontology;
4. To have hands-on experience of carrying out your own study of people who are different from you.
5. To develop analytical thinking skills related to the issues in later life.
6. To examine issues of adaptation to retirement including financial, social and personal.
7. To evaluate issues in interpersonal relationships including changing relationships with spouse and children. Including caregiving, grand children, and grief and loss issues.
8. To develop case based analytical thinking about the family in later life.
9. To develop an understanding of issues by working with older adults in the community through the collection of a life history.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Quadagno, Jill (2008) *Aging and the Life Course*, 4th edition. McGraw-Hill, New York.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- ◆ Apply critical thinking skills within the context of professional social work practice (EP 3.0.1).
- ◆ Practice without discrimination and with respect, knowledge, and skills related to clients' age, class, color, culture, disability, ethnicity, family structure, gender, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexual orientation (EP 3.0.3).

- ◆ Understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice (EP 3.0.4).
- ◆ Use theoretical frameworks supported by empirical evidence to understand individual development and behavior across the life span and the interactions among individuals and between individuals and families, groups, organizations, and communities (EP 3.0.7).
- ◆ Analyze, formulate, and influence social policies (EP 3.0.8).
- ◆ Evaluate research studies, apply research findings to practice, and evaluate their own practice interventions (EP 3.0.9).
- ◆ Use communication skills differentially across client populations, colleagues, and communities (EP 3.0.10).

Special Circumstances: Any students with documented psychological or learning disorder or other significant medical conditions, please work through Mr. William Chabala to provide the instructor with the appropriate letter so that any particular needs can be met.

Grading:

<i>Grading Scale</i>		<i>Grade Descriptions</i>	
A	94-100	A Level	Exceeds expectations. Content & technical merit is outstanding. Reflects mastery of material.
A-	90-93		
B+	87-89	B Level	Meets expectations. Content & technical merit is good. Reflects acceptable grasp of material.
B	83-86		
B-	80-82		
C+	77-79	C Level	Borders expectations. Content & technical merit is adequate. Reflects familiarity with material with gaps in application.
C	73-76		
C-	70-72		
D+	67-69	D Level	Below expectations. Content & technical merit is marginal. Reflects inadequate understanding & use of material.
D	63-66		
D-	60-62		
F	< 60	F	Failure

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to submit original work. Where resources and sources of information are used, credit must be given to the original source. Any form of cheating may result in failure of the course. Additional information concerning academic honesty can be found in the *Mounties Manual*.

General Education: This course is part of the general education program at MU and meets a requirement of general education group 5. Assignments in this course are used to measure the goals of general education and may be used for evaluation of the general education program.

All assignments will be accepted by blackboard assignment and are expected by 8 p.m.; late assignments will not be accepted.

BLACK BOARD DISCUSSIONS	200
Assignment Images of aging	50
Guided Autobiography	200
PAPER	100
EXAMS	100 each

BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION 200 points

Students will be responsible for participation in electronic discussions with colleagues and for submitting reactions on various assignments. The assignments are related to the course objectives 1-4. These discussion questions will be posted on Blackboard on almost a daily basis. Response to questions will need to be completed in 24 hours. **It is critical that students who aim at doing well in this course keep current with the readings and projects as indicated on Blackboard.**

Assignment 1: Images of aging 50 points

Spend one hour watching television. Watch for the images of older adults. Evaluate the attitude and analyze the content of the program and advertisements.

Next chose a current popular magazine and evaluate the content and advertisements for images of older adults.

Write a short (not more than 3 pages) reaction to what you have viewed.

Guided Autobiography: 200 points

What is a guided autobiography?

There are many words that describe this project. It could be considered a collection of life stories, a life review, reminiscences, selected memories, memoirs, and more. The goal of this project is to gain access to an older adult's memories and help them organize the events to create a memory folder to pass on to their family.

What should be included in this autobiography?

That decision is up to the older adult you are working with; this is a joint project and should be built through your meeting with the older adult and the understanding of the aging families that you are building in this class.

These are some themes you may want to consider

1. Their family
 - a. Their parent and grandparent and the relationship they had
 - b. The birth of siblings
 - c. Their marriages
 - d. The birth of children
2. The role of money
3. Their major life work
4. Their health and body
5. Their experiences with and ideas about death
6. The changes they have experienced in their life

7. The humor of life
8. Their goals and dreams
9. Their spiritual life

Why should an older adult create a life story?

1. To learn more about themselves
2. to leave a legacy for family members
3. to enhance growth and development
4. to contribute to history
5. to enjoy the collection of memories.
6. to have greater meaning in their life
7. to give direction for the future

Why should a student be involved in this process?

1. To learn about the past from someone who has lived through it
2. to build a relationship with an older adult
3. to better understand the past to better understand the present
4. to understand the role of family in one's life
5. to enhance your growth and development
6. to share in history
7. to learn about someone of a different age and background

How do I begin?

The first step is to locate an older adult who wants to complete this project. Your instructor will probably be working with a number of groups that work with older adults and can help you locate a volunteer or contact a local senior program. If you have to find an older adult on your own, consider the following guidelines.

- The adult should want to create a history.
- The goal should be to share good memories. Though guided autobiographies can be used to deal with family problems, it is beyond the capabilities of beginning level students to do so.
- The student should find some one who is open and willing to share information.
- For this project, do not use family. In many family situations, information shared would be limited to not hurting feelings of the interviewer. Other things that could be shared may not be what you want to hear. I would recommend that you complete this project with older adults in your family but not at this time.

Time can become an issue. This project will take at least 10 hours. The older adult needs to have the time to work with you and develop a schedule that can work with yours. Some older adults are just as busy as you are and being able to meet regularly may be difficult. Others may feel uncomfortable meeting you in their home and may only want to work with you when they are at the senior center or other facility they attend, will

your schedule work with that? You may want to find a public place like a restaurant to meet every week.

The older adult needs to be willing to talk about their past. This requires a fair memory. That does not mean you should not work with someone who has memory loss; however older adults with severe memory loss should not be considered. Many adults with memory loss at a less severe level can benefit from this project even more. One older adult in this project who had a stroke found memories he thought he had lost forever. The project was even greater valuable for him.

Again how do I begin?

Meet with the older adult you are doing your project with. Introduce yourself and find out what they want you to call them (i.e. Mr., Mrs., first name nickname). Begin with causal conversation and determine a regular schedule to meet. Remember that this project will take most of the semester even if you met together every week for an hour. Find out the level your older adult is working from. Do they read and write? Were they a college professor? Students have been assigned older adults at these levels and in between. You cannot make assumptions about the adult get to know them first!

In the next meeting determine the goal of the project together. Clarify your role as collector-facilitator and emphasize that the role of leader remains with them older adult. They set the rules and limits on the information they share and include in this project. Your role requires confidentiality. Some of this information will be shared in class discussion but it should go nowhere else. The older adult will finalize the project information. Your role includes:

- Refreshing and recalling the memories and events of their lives
- Organizing their life stories
- Directing them to writing and homework assignment that will help in the collecting of memories
- Listening completely to their stories
- Offering support and encouragement
- Asking open ended questions
- Reframe from interpretations by asking more questions they will provide the interpretation
- Be sincere

What do I do with the information?

The guide autobiography can be completed in many forms. You and your older adult may want to develop a script and videotape the information. This can be done by the older adult talking about the stories they have shared with you in an order approach. Or they may want it to be more like television news interview with you as a reporter, asking the questions keeping them on track. Sharing pictures of their family, important stories, and humorous situation create a memory for the family. Other may not want to be taped for the process. You will want to work with them to create a memory book. The following guide will help you create this. This is only the beginning and you can grow from this basis information.

This project can begin before the class with instructor approval. More information on guided autobiographies will be available on the course Blackboard site.

Research Paper Guidelines

100 pts

Topic

Select a topic in an area of sociological issue of aging that interests you. Then ask yourself, what specific question do I want to investigate? For example “Caregiving in the US who does it?” or “Widowhood” or “Grandparents raising grandchildren”. These are merely ideas to underscore the need to be as specific as possible in the formulation of your question. If it is too broad it will overwhelm you. Some other questions may be very interesting but impossible to research effectively in the time you have and the length of the paper. Examine your text to determine possible topics.

Method

Once you have a tentative topic, go to the library and investigate what data is readily available on your topic. Ask the librarian for assistance. Your computer will be a great resource in your work. Some resources to examine are:

1. *SocIndex*
2. *JSTOR*
3. Major Journals such as *the Gerontologist*, *Journal of Gerontology*, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, etc.

Find **at least five peer reviewed research journal articles**. You will probably want **more peer reviewed journal articles** that are pertinent to your topic. Review those articles and summarize what they are saying. Begin to compare and contrast them.

After you have finalized your topic but before you begin writing contact with me about your paper and your goals..

Format for the paper

Use **APA guidelines**. See <http://lib.mansfield.edu/citation.html#apa> for additional details and assistance with APA.

This paper should be not longer than 7 pages. It should be no shorter than 5 pages. It must be typed in a normal size font (10-12) and double-spaced consecutively. It must include a reference page. Cover page and abstract do not count as pages in the paper.

Content of the Research Paper

You should develop an outline to present the facts you have uncovered in your research. A good research paper will begin with an introduction, a presentation about the specific questions in your research, what hunches/ hypotheses you have about the answers to this question, why it is important sociologically, how your information was collected (by examining current research, etc) and how your paper is organized. The next part of the paper should be the bulk of the paper, the facts you have uncovered presented in a logical organized way. You will be reviewing the literature in the area. Present the

information you found. Do not interpret the findings. Generally, paraphrase in your own words what others have found, **integrate the information you have found**. You are not just writing a review of each article but answering a question, addressing an issue, articles should be integrated. **REMEMBER ALWAYS TO CITE THE AUTHOR** so you give **credit to the authors**. What is important is to remember to separate your results from your interpretation of the findings.

The next section should be your discussion of the facts you have found and presented in the previous section. This part of the paper is devoted to an analysis of the original hypothesis in the light of the results that you have reported. You should state if your original hypothesis was supported or why it should be rejected. Complete the paper by including a summary. If you see policy implications of your review add that as a section. You may also add a separate section where you can express your opinions (short) and the experiences you have had.

Please remember that writing center is on campus to help you. If you have questions contact me early. No plagiarism will be tolerated. Please consider turning in rough drafts, these will be accepted at anytime prior to 6/20/07

Midterm and Final

100 pts each

These will be short essay exams. They will be posted to Blackboard two days prior to due date. Exams are to be completed independently.

Research Paper:

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:

day 1	Introduction to Social Gerontology
day 2	Theories of Aging Quadagno Ch 1 and 2
day 3	Demography Quadagno Ch 3 and 4
day 4	Interdisciplinary Perspective Quadagno Ch 5 Assignment due
day 5	Interdisciplinary Perspective Quadagno Ch 6 and 7
day 6	Social Aspects of Aging Quadagno Ch 8 and 9
day 7	Social Aspects of Aging

Quadagno Ch 10 and 11

Midterm due

day 8 Racial and Ethnic Aging
Quadagno Ch 16

day 9 Care of the Aging
Quadagno Ch 12 and 13

day 10 Aging and Society
Quadagno Ch 15 and 17

day 11 Quadagno Ch 14

Paper Due

day 12 Life History Due and Discussion

Exam Due