READING:


Handouts: Additional articles on aging and “oral communication” will be assigned.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course provides an overview of the significant sociological perspectives, political economy issues, and social science research pertaining to the phenomenon of aging. The course will 1) examine the major theories of social aging, 2) analyze the changing demographic trends, 3) examine the policy issues related to the economic status of the elderly, 4) examine the current issues in health and social service delivery for the elderly, and 5) discuss family relationships, community involvement, and the experiences of retirement and widowhood among the elderly.

The course examines a substantive field, which has major social policy as well as personal significance in contemporary life. It is intended that this course provide a sociological foundation from which interested students can pursue further academic work leading either to a research career, planning and administrative careers, or a clinical career in the field of social gerontology. The course also offers a service learning option where students can volunteer in a long-term care program in order to link the concepts and issues in this course with actual, concrete experiences in our community.

This course is designated for training “Oral Communication” skills. Much of the course objectives will be achieved through oral communication assignments. There will be additional readings and discussions on oral communication.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Students are encouraged to visit the instructor during scheduled office hours regarding any problems in the course or for the purpose of pursuing topics of discussion beyond what is possible during the regular class period.
Attendance is required, and absence from the class will be penalized. (5% of final grade)

Chapter Overview Presentation: The syllabus indicates weekly reading assignments. Every Monday, two students will present chapter overviews for about 10 minutes each. Other students may respond with questions or comments and the presenters will answer the questions. The instructor will give feedback on presentation in class. (10% of final grade)

Group Discussions, Presentations, and Class Participation: Following the student presentations of chapter overviews, probably in every Wednesday students will be divided into groups to discuss the issues related to the chapters and answer the questions to be handed out in the class. Groups take turns to present their answers and other groups may respond with comments. Diverse formats of group discussions will be tried. Active class participation will be rewarded with extra credit. The answer sheets from group discussions should be turned in at the end of the class. (15% of final grade)

Essay Proposal Presentation: Each student should write a term paper related to any issues of aging discussed in class—7 to 10 pages in double space (if tables or figures are presented, the text should be minimum 5 pages) by the end of the semester. Each student will introduce his/her proposal in class in the 8th week and get feedbacks from classmates. The instructor will also give feedback on presentation in class. A guideline on essay writing and sources of data and literature will be given later. (10%)

Final Essay Presentation: A final paper will be presented in class over the final two weeks of instruction, for about 15 minutes each. A presentation schedule will be set earlier in the semester. The instructor will give feedback on presentation in class. A written paper is due by the last class of instruction. (10%; written paper 10%)

Exams: Four Pop Quizzes will be given. A quiz guideline will be distributed at the beginning of the semester. (4X10%=40% of the final grade)

Service Learning Option: Extra-credit will be awarded to students volunteering for aging-related organizations/activities for 10 hours or more during the semester. For example, the score for one pop quiz (i.e., the worst one) may be deleted. The term paper may be based on the experience of service learning.
COURSE OUTLINE

PART I  THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AGING

Week 1  January 10-14  The Social Definitions of Aging; On Oral Communication

Sociology and the study of aging
Effective Oral Communication

Ch. 1  The Field of Social Gerontology  pp. 2-25.

Week 2  Jan 19-21  Biological & Psychological Perspective on Aging

Myths and realities of aging
Psychological models of the life course
Video on Alzheimer Disease

Ch. 6  Biological Perspectives on Aging  pp. 120-147.
Ch. 7  Psychological Perspectives on Aging  pp. 148-174.

Week 3  Jan 24-28  Theories of Disengagement and Continuity

Disengagement theory, activity theory, and continuity theory
Modernization and aging; Age roles, age integration and segmentation

Ch. 3  Theories of Aging: Micro and Macro Theories  pp. 46-69.

Week 4  Jan 31-Feb 4  Demography of Aging; Life-course Perspectives

Social context and the life course
Changes in life expectancy and population structure
Social composition of the elderly category

Ch. 2  Life Course Transitions  pp. 26-45
Ch. 4  Demography of Aging  pp. 70-93.
PART II  POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGING

Week 5  Feb 7-11  The Social Security System

The U.S. Social Security System
The social security crisis and issues

Ch. 5  Old Age and the Welfare State pp. 94-104.

Week 6  Feb 14-18  The Economics of Aging

Economic status of the aged
Public and private income sources

Ch. 14  The Economics of aging, pp. 326-351.

Week 7  Feb 23-25  Retirement

Structural factors in patterns of retirement
The private pension system & Alternatives to economic dependency


Week 8  Feb 28-Mar 4  Research Proposal Presentations

(CURRENT ISSUES—STUDENT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION)
Students Present Research Proposals and Receive Feedbacks

Week 9  March 7-11  Economic Inequality: Class, Ethnicity and Gender

Class, ethnicity and gender among the elderly
Age-related consumption patterns

Ch. 15  Poverty and Inequality pp. 352-375.

Week 10  March 14-18  The Politics of Aging

Political participation of the elderly
Intergenerational politics

Ch. 16  The Politics of Aging  pp. 376-397.
PART III  SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CARE OF THE ELDERLY

Week 11  March 28-30  Family Relationships and Social Support Systems

Retirement transitions and life styles
Family relationships, friendships, and widowhood

Ch. 8  Family Relationships and Social Support Systems, pp. 176-203.

Week 12  April 4-8  Retirement Community Living

Household composition and residential changes
Retirement communities and life care arrangements

Ch. 9  Living Arrangements pp. 204-225.

Week 13  April 11-15  Health Care and the Medical System

Health problems and access to care
Medicare and financing health care
Video on Health Care and Health Disparity

Ch. 11  Health and Health Care pp. 252-275

Week 14  April 18-20  Long-Term Care; End of Life Issues

Issues of quality and cost of Long-term care
Residential-institutional care continuum
Public policy and federal initiatives: The administration on aging

Ch. 12  Caring for the Frail Elderly pp. 276-301.
Ch. 13  Dying, Death and Bereavement pp. 302-325.

Week 15  April 25-29  End of Life Issues; Student Essay Presentation

End of life decision-making and care for the dying

Ch. 13  Dying, Death and Bereavement pp. 302-325.

(CURRENT ISSUES—STUDENT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION)
Week 16 May 2-4 Student Essay Presentation

(CURRENT ISSUES—STUDENT PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION)

Written Essay Due: May 4

FINAL QUIZ: Wednesday May 9, 8:30-10:00