

SOCY 498: Sociology of Aging

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:50am-12:10pm, ASY 3207
Fall 2019

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1. Course Description

1.1 Overview

Welcome to Sociology of Aging! This course is based on the premise that population aging will be one of the major demographic changes affecting social institutions throughout the world in the 21st century. This course integrates research from the fields of demography, sociology, economics, epidemiology, psychology and public health in order to help students to develop a broader understanding of the causes and consequences of population aging. A central focus throughout the course will be on the diversity of experiences by age, gender, socioeconomic status and health. This course starts with a careful examination of the demographic foundations of population aging, both by focusing on macro and historical patterns as well as on trends in mortality, health and disability. We then devote the rest of the course to the relationship between aging and social structure, social institutions and society.

1.2 Objectives

After successfully completing this course you will be able to:

- State with confidence the general theoretical, methodological and conceptual approaches to the sociology of aging.
- Understand how social structure and historical forces help to shape the life course in diverse ways.
- Discuss how sociologically informed research can uncover inequalities faced by older adults.
- Develop critical thinking skills by evaluating arguments and explanations

1.3 Course Communication

To contact me, please use my zylin@umd.edu email address. Please always put SOCY498 in the subject line. You can expect a response within 24 hours. And please do NOT use ELMS messages – your message may get lost. It is essential that we all conduct ourselves as professionals, so please visit ter.ps/email for some friendly guidance on writing emails.

1.4 Texts and Materials

Textbook: There will be a textbook for this course. The book is available at the Campus Bookstore.

- Linda K. George and Kenneth F. Ferraro. 2016. *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, 8th Edition. Elsevier Inc.

Other materials: I have compiled a list of articles that complement or supplement the textbook. All other course materials will be uploaded and provided through the course website in ELMS (<https://www.elms.umd.edu/>).

2. Course Policies

2.1 Attendance policy

Your active participation in the course is not only crucial for your own learning but for that of your peers. I will not take attendance in lecture, but I will be mindful of classroom participation, i.e., which students try to engage in a positive manner with the material, and it will impact your final grade.

2.2 Late Work and Grading

All assignments – worksheets (quizzes) and answering discussion questions – should be completed by the due. If you do not complete assignments by 11:59 p.m. of the assigned date, you will only receive up to HALF CREDIT. Late assignments will be graded normally according to the requirements, but the scores will be cut in half. Make-ups and extensions are not granted unless you provide documented proof or pre-approved absence defined by the University Policy (<http://ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>). However, late exams will not be accepted except in the case of documented emergency and should get my approval at least two weeks in advance. There is no extra credit and the grade will not be negotiable. If you experience difficulties, I strongly encourage you to contact me as soon as possible so that I can help you get on track in the early stages of the course.

2.3 Respectful Manner

This course will cover some controversial issues. Therefore, it's imperative that we create and keep a learning environment for all participants of the course and we should be free from judgment. There will be a lot of class discussion throughout this course, so please be ready to openly share your own opinions, experiences and beliefs in an accepting and understanding manner. Do not shoot down the ideas or perspectives of others and try to learn from them. If you disagree with content or comments from the course, I encourage you to express your thoughts respectfully and provide evidence to support your statements. Personal attacks and offensive languages will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will be reported by University Policy.

2.4 Academic Dishonesty

Any of the following acts are considered academic dishonesty and are subject to serious punishment: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. In this class, there will be zero tolerance toward any types of the academic dishonesties and the minimum penalty will be a grade of zero for the assignment; more excessive misconduct will result in a grade of "F" for the course and the filing of charges for academic misconduct. Plagiarism is the borrowing of information, wording, organization, or ideas without acknowledging the source. You must note any sources you use in writing and assignments for this course. When you repeat exact language (even a few words!) you must put the material in quotation marks, followed by a reference to the source. For more information, see the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty (<https://www.studentconduct.umd.edu/academic-dishonesty>).

2.5 Syllabus Revision

This syllabus may be updated based upon the needs of students and the course at any point during the semester. If any changes are made, the updated syllabus will be posted on ELMS so that you can have the latest version of the syllabus.

3. Course Assessments

Grades are not given, but earned. Your grade is determined by your performance on the learning assessments in the course and is assigned individually (not curved). If earning a particular grade is important to you, please speak with me at the beginning of the course so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

3.1 Reading Response Memos (20%): On 10 occasions, students will be asked to write brief (within 2 pages) responses to the readings or other assigned materials (e.g., films). Each Reading Response Memo (RRM) will be due on ELMS by 11:59 p.m. of the assigned date. Further guidelines for each RRM will be provided on ELMS.

3.2 Class Participation (10%): Although I will give lecture during this course, you should come prepared to analyze the day’s readings with respect to both substance and method and must participate in the discussion. Class participation includes (but not limited to): 1) contributing to class discussion; 2) actively contributing to small group exercise; and 3) raising and answering questions about the week’s readings.

3.3 Exams (40%). There is one take-home mid-term exam (20%) and one in-class final exam (20%) for this course. The exams are designed to evaluate students’ understanding of the materials. Topics covered in the lectures and readings will both be included in the exams. Further detailed about the take-home mid-term exam will be provided in the class. The final in-class exam will be a combination of multiple choice, true-false, matching, and short essay questions. Review sessions for the exams will be held to help students prepare for the exams. Please ensure you bring your UMD Student ID to the exams and place it visibly on the table.

3.4 Final Paper (30%). You are expected to produce one research paper with at least 20-pages long (excluding references, double spaced, 12-point font size, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). This paper is designed to offer you the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of a particular area in sociology of aging and exploration of current issues in that area. Final paper should be structured like the academic journal articles we read in this class, including a short introduction of your research questions, a literature review, a method section that states what would you like to do to answer your research questions, and a concluding section summarizing your study. Please note that you don’t have to analyze data or do fieldwork in this paper.

3.5 Grading

Final Grade Cutoffs								
+	97.00%	+	87.00%	+	77.00%	+	67.00%	
A	94.00%	B	84.00%	C	74.00%	D	64.00%	F <60.0%
-	90.00%	-	80.00%	-	70.00%	-	60.00%	

4. Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1

August 26 Welcome and Course Overview

- Lecture: introduction; course logistics; requirements
- Readings: syllabus

August 28 Introduction to Sociology of Aging

- Lecture: overview of the scope of sociology of aging; aging in the United States
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 1
 - Mather, Mark, Linda A. Jacobsen, and Kelvin M. Pollard. 2015. "Aging in the United States." *Population Bulletin* 70(2).

Assignment: RRM-01 (due 8/30)

Week 2

September 2 Labor Day (no class)

September 4 Demography of Aging (I)

- Lecture: demographic causes of population aging
- Readings:
 - Goldstein, Joshua R. 2009. "How Populations Age." Pp. 7–18 in *International Handbook of Population Aging*, edited by P. Uhlenberg. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Week 3

September 9 Demography of Aging (II)

- Lecture: introduction to biodemography of aging
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 3

September 11 Demography of Aging (III)

- Lecture: morbidity, disability, and mortality
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 4

Assignment: RRM-02 (due 9/13)

Week 4

September 16 Global Aging (I)

- Lecture: population aging across time and space
- Readings:
 - Rowland, Donald. 2009. "Global Population Aging: History and Prospects." Pp. 37–65 in *International Handbook of Population Aging*, edited by P. Uhlenberg. Dordrecht: Springer.

September 18 Global Aging (II)

- Lecture: population aging in selected countries
- Readings:
 - Chen, Feinian and Guangya Liu. 2009. "Population Aging in China." Pp. 157–72 in *International handbook of population aging*, edited by P. Uhlenberg. Springer Science+Business Media B.V.
 - Angel, Jacqueline L., William Vega, and Mariana López-Ortega. 2016. "Aging in Mexico: Population Trends and Emerging Issues." *The Gerontologist* 57(2):153–62.

Assignment: RRM-03 (due 9/20)

Week 5

September 23 Aging and Life Course (I)

- Lecture: introduction to life course theory
- Readings:
 - Elder, Glen H., Monica Kirkpatrick Johnson, and Robert Crosnoe. 2003. "The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory." Pp. 3–19 in *Handbook of the Life Course*, edited by J. T. Mortimer and M. J. Shanahan. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
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September 25 Aging and Life Course (II)

- Lecture: early life origins of health and aging
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 5

Assignment: RRM-04 (due 9/27)

Week 6

September 30 Social Stratification and Aging (I)

- Lecture: racial/ethnic inequalities in health and aging
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 6

October 2 Social Stratification and Aging (II)

- Lecture: immigration/nativity disparities in aging experience
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 7

Assignment: RRM-05 (due 10/4)

Week 7

October 7 Social Stratification and Aging (III)

- Lecture: gendered patterns of aging and life course
- Readings:

- Carr, Deborah and Susan Bodnar-Deren. 2009. "Gender, Aging and Widowhood." Pp. 705–28 in *International Handbook of Population Aging*.

October 9 Mid-Term Exam Review

First Draft of Final Paper (due 10/11)

Week 8

October 14 Mid-Term Exam

October 16 Aging and Family Life (I)

- Lecture: family relationships in later life
- Readings:
 - Silverstein, Merrill and Roseann Giarrusso. 2010. "Aging and Family Life: A Decade Review." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 72(5):1039–58.

Week 9

October 21 Aging and Family Life (II)

- Lecture: stability, change, and complexity in later-life families
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 10

October 23 Social Networks in Later Life

- Lecture: social relationships in later life
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 9.

Assignment: RRM-06 (due 10/25)

Week 10

October 28 Economic Status of Older Adults (I)

- Lecture: work and retirement patterns of older adults
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 13

October 30 Economic Status of Older Adults (II)

- Lecture: productive engagement in later life
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 14

Assignment: RRM-07 (due 11/1)

Week 11

November 4 Aging and Health (I)

- Lecture: social determinants of healthy aging
- Readings:
 - Population Reference Bureau. 2008. "Socioeconomic Status and Health Disparities in Old Age." *Today's Research on Aging* (11):1-4.
 - Anon. 2016. "Longevity Research: Unraveling the Determinants of Healthy Aging and Longer Life Spans." *Today's Research on Aging* (34):1-10.
 - Anon. 2013. "The Health and Life Expectancy of Older Blacks and Hispanics in the United States." *Today's Research on Aging* (28):1-8.

November 6 Aging and Health (II)

- Lecture: cognitive health; dementia
- Readings:
 - Anon. 2017. "Dementia Trends: Implications for an Aging America." *Today's Research on Aging* (36):1-10.
 - Population Reference Bureau. 2007. "Cognitive Aging: Imaging, Emotion, and Memory Older." *Today's Research on Aging* (5):1-5.

Assignment: RRM-08 (due 11/8)

Week 12

November 11 End of Life and Death (I)

- Lecture: end of life planning; death and dying in the United States
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 18

November 13 End of Life and Death (II)

- Lecture: end of life as a uniquely contemporary life course stage
- Readings:
 - Carr, Deborah and Elizabeth A. Luth. 2019. "Well-Being at the End of Life." *Annual Review of Sociology* 45:515-34.

Assignments: RRM-09 (due 11/15)

Week 13

November 18 Health Care Organization

- Lecture: introduction to organization and financing of health care
- Readings:
 - Textbook, Chapter 19

November 20 Long-Term Care

- Lecture: overview of long-term care in the United States
- Readings:

- Textbook, Chapter 20

Assignment: RRM-10 (due 11/22)

Week 14

November 25 Q&A Session (No Lecture)

November 27 Thanksgiving Break (No Class)

Week 15

December 2 Student Presentation (I)

December 4 Student Presentation (II)

Final Paper (due 12/9)

5. Others

5.1 Get Some Help

Taking personal responsibility for your own learning means acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and doing something about it. I hope you will come talk to me so that I can help you find the right approach to success in this course, and I encourage you to visit tutoring.umd.edu to learn more about the wide range of campus resources available to you. In particular, everyone can use some help sharpen their communication skills (and improving their grade) by visiting ter.ps/writing and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit counseling.umd.edu or [one of the many other resources on campus](#).

5.2 Technical Support

Technology will never work 100% of the time. Please understand that I am not able to diagnose and fix technical difficulties with campus tools or your personal computer. If you have any problems with course resources please consult with the IT Helpdesk directly (helpdesk.umd.edu). If the problem is limiting access to a course resource, try using a campus computer in the meantime – visit the UMD library website (<https://www.lib.umd.edu>) to find available computers near you.

5.3 Course Evaluations

As members of our learning community, your personal reflection and feedback is crucial to success of this course and our conversations. As instructors, it is particularly valuable for us to collect formative feedback from our students since it can help inform our own teaching choices and strategies. To do this, there will be several opportunities throughout the course to reflect on our class and your learning experience. I also encourage you to meet with me in person (or through video) and feel free to email me if you have any questions, concerns, and suggestions for me as well as for this course.