

PSYCHOLOGY 427
Social Gerontology
Fall 2009

Class Information

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:00 – 2:30

Room: Busch 100

Texts: *Aging: Concepts & Controversies* (5th ed.)
H. Moody

Instructor Information

Brian Carpenter, Ph.D.

Office: Psychology 235G

Office hours: Tues 3-4 or by appointment

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OBJECTIVES

This class takes a multidisciplinary approach in examining the later end of the lifespan. We'll discuss a wide range of issues related to the aging process and older adults. In addition to the psychological facets of aging, we'll explore how biology, sociology, economics, politics, demography, and other academic, scientific, and clinical disciplines bring a unique perspective to our understanding of aging.

By the end of the semester you'll have a broad knowledge about different facets of aging. You will be able to describe common changes in the body and the mind that accompany aging, and you will be familiar with how our society addresses (or, in some cases, fails to address) aging. You will learn about how the scientific method has been, and can be used to explore aging, and you will discover some of the complexities in studying this facet of life.

Aging can be thought of as a state, a phase, a process, a social construction, a biological phenomenon, etc., and this course will reflect the many approaches that gerontology embraces. In the process, you may learn to appreciate the diversity of older individuals and the many different trajectories that people's lives can take as they grow older.

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

This syllabus provides some of the information you will need about class. Another resource is the class web page. You'll need to consult the web page to find out what material you should read prior to each class. In addition, details about written assignments, class updates, and other developments will appear there. Here is the address for the class web page:

<http://artsci.wustl.edu/~bcarpent/gero/home.html>

You should also be familiar with how to use your Wash U e-mail account. I will send e-mail to make announcements about class and to contact you individually. If the e-mail address you prefer is different from the one the university has on file, please let me know.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Reading assignments

Readings come from two sources, your textbook and articles are available on electronic reserve. (The password for our Ares account is “seniors” without the quotation marks.) Consult the class web page for reading assignments. Note that I am updating reading assignments throughout the semester, and it will be important for you to review the schedule on the website to find out the most current assignments. All readings should be completed BEFORE the class to which they apply. During lectures I’ll assume you are familiar with material from the reading. In class I’ll highlight important concepts from the readings and expand on the material, and in order to follow the discussion it will be important for you to be familiar with the readings that have been assigned. Quizzes and exams also will assume you are familiar with material from the reading even if we have not reviewed it explicitly in class.

Class participation and attendance

We’ll have ample opportunity to raise questions, pursue discussions, and be flexible with our time, following up on topics we find interesting. Your active participation is something I encourage. Raise questions, debate (constructively and respectfully) with me and your classmates, and propose new ways of thinking about the information you are learning. Also, feel free to bring in personal stories and experiences, when relevant to the discussion.

Class participation is an admittedly subjective component of your grade. I take notes throughout the semester on participation, so make an effort to speak up. Ask questions, offer comments, and participate in our conversations in class. Being able to articulate your ideas and opinions verbally is an important skill, and I expect each of you to add to our discussions.

Class attendance also is your responsibility and will be counted in your final grade, along with participation.

Quizzes and final exam

During the semester we will have 11 quizzes. They will always occur at the beginning of class, and they will happen at random throughout the semester. Each quiz will cover lecture and reading material since the previous quiz. The format of the quizzes will vary, but most will contain multiple choice questions and an occasional short-answer question. At the end of the semester I will drop your lowest quiz score, so only 10 quizzes will count in your final grade. There will be no make-up quizzes, so if you miss a quiz you can drop that score. We also will have a cumulative final exam.

Writing assignment

You will be responsible for one writing assignment during the semester. For this paper you will interview an older adult (over age 65) and write a brief biography of them. You can interview a family member or any other older adult. While writing about their life history, you also will tie that person’s life to the theories, concepts, and facts you have learned about older

adults throughout the semester. I'll give you more information about the paper later.

Guest speakers and field trips

For a number of classes we will have guest speakers. In addition, we will be making 1-2 field trips. These events will take place during our regular class time to the extent possible.

Missed classes and assignments

If you know in advance that you will miss a class, please let me know the week before. I'll take that into account when figuring attendance into your grade. In the case of unexpected absences, please bring documentation from the appropriate professional. If you miss a quiz you can count that as your lowest quiz score and drop it. Otherwise there are no quiz retests.

If you miss the paper deadline without speaking to me beforehand you'll lose 5 points on the assignment for each class that passes without something turned in.

Course evaluation

The course evaluation you can complete at the end of the semester is an important way for me to learn how to improve the class for future students. I encourage you to complete the evaluation and give me your feedback. The website for evaluations is: <http://evals.wustl.edu> You can earn one extra point toward your final grade by completing the evaluation.

Grading

Grades are assigned based on the number of points you accumulate during the semester. There will be no opportunities for extra credit, so it is important that you concentrate on the assignments throughout the semester. If you have questions about your progress in class please speak to me before they become dire. The maximum points for each assignment are as follows:

Assignment	Maximum	% of total grade
Quizzes (10; 10 points each)	100	25
Biography	100	25
Final exam	100	25
Class attendance & participation	100	25
Course evaluation	1	
Total	401	100

Final grades are calculated as follows:

Your Percentage score range	Letter equivalent	Grade point grade	Grade point equivalent
389-400	98-100	A+	4.0
370-388	93-97	A	4.0
358-369	90-92	A-	3.7

346-357	87-89	B+	3.3
330-345	83-86	B	3.0
318-329	80-82	B-	2.7
306-317	77-79	C+	2.3
290-305	73-76	C	2.0
278-289	70-72	C-	1.7
266-277	67-69	D+	1.3
250-265	63-66	D	1.0
238-249	60-62	D-	0.7
< 237	< 60	F	0.0

A Note on Academic Integrity

As a member of the Wash U academic community you are bound by honor regarding your academic work. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on tests, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used as your own, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Plagiarism is another unacceptable practice. Plagiarism occurs when an individual uses the thoughts or words of another person as if they were their own. In your written work, you must provide adequate citation of other people's work. Identify where your ideas have come from when they are not your own.

Academic dishonesty on any assignment will result in written notification of the charge, a score of 0 on the assignment, and referral to the Dean. If you have questions about what might constitute academic dishonesty, please talk with me or an administrator at the University. Additional information can be found in the University Student Judicial Code or the Academic Integrity Policy (<http://www.wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html>).

Student Educational Services

Wash U provides academic resources for students at Cornerstone: The Center for Advanced Learning. Located on the South 40 at Gregg Hall, the Center offers academic resources such as study groups, peer mentors, academic mentoring, help desks, and course workshops. The Center also offers technological resources such as programs for web design and learning style assessments. Students seeking disability information should contact Disability Resources at 935-5970 or link to Disability Resources from the Cornerstone web site. Contact information for Cornerstone is 935-5970 or <http://cornerstone.wustl.edu> Please let me know in advance of any learning accommodations that have been suggested by the Disability Resources office.