

SPRING 2008 / SOCIOLOGY 393-01

- Introduction to *Social Gerontology* -

Young & Old: Social Conflicts of *AGING*

Course Title: Young & Old: Social Conflicts of Aging

Classroom: O'Neil Library Room 247 / Class Hours: M. W. F., 1:00PM – 1:50PM

Instructor: Masa Higo

Office Hours: M. W. F., 3:00PM – 4:00PM Or By Appointment

Office Location: McGuinn 410A / Office Phone: 2x4148 / e-mail: higo@bc.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed primarily as an introductory course to *social gerontology*. Social gerontology is a growing interdisciplinary field of study aiming to systematically examine biological, psychological, social, economic, and political aspects of aging of individual and society. As an introductory course for social gerontology, this course focuses primarily on conflicts and inequalities between generations, young and old, emerged in a variety of social institutions such as work, retirement, health care, family structure, and politics. Particular emphasis will be placed on social conditions affecting societal view of old age, our experiences over the *life course*, and social policies that enhance or diminish the quality of life in old age. Please note that this is NOT a university social science CORE course.

II. WHY STUDYING AGING?:

Age and aging are significant features both on personal and societal levels of our lives. As we move through our life course, we inevitably experience a variety of biological and physical changes as natural phenomena. More importantly, our societies also age. Societal aging powerfully affects individuals' psychological, social, and economic living conditions. In industrial countries including the U.S., we are currently experiencing rapid population aging and are all in need of developing an understanding of its current and projected impacts on individuals, young and old. It is therefore important to study both individual and social aspects of the aging process, the consequences of these for the life course and for how societies are structured, and the implications for social change over time.

III. COURSE PURPOSE & GOALS:

The overall purpose of this introductory course is to provide students with a general overview of the field of social gerontology. To achieve this goal, this course introduces the basic concepts, perspectives, analytical frameworks, and enduring and current controversies in this field. This will provide for students' understanding of the systematic interplay between the social process of aging over the life course and changing social structures. Specific objectives of this course are as follows:

- (1) To understand the basic process and impacts of individual and societal aging from the life course perspective.
- (2) To be familiar with major social gerontological concepts and conceptual frameworks in order to examine how social institutions use age to characterize individuals and position older adults in society.
- (3) To identify the threads of continuity that extend throughout the life course, as well as the contribution of biological, psychological, and social aging to social status and life as an elderly member of American society.

IV. COURSE MATERIALS:

The main materials for this course include: 1) required textbooks, 2) lectures, 3) video presentations, and 4) class discussions. You as students are required to read assigned parts of the textbooks during assigned periods of time. Lectures are delivered mostly in a power point presentation format in order to facilitate your understanding of the required readings and to bring up some sociological issues that are very important for you to be familiar with, but which are not necessarily covered in the readings. Video presentations are provided for the same purposes as those of lectures, in a visually conceivable way. Class discussions are integrated into this course not only to deepen your understanding of the themes in question via exchanging your ideas in class, but also to explore and develop your own sociological perspectives.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Your course grade will be based upon the following four areas of accomplishment:

(1) Class Participation:

Your accomplishment in class participation will consist of your class attendance, your contributions to class discussions. First, the instructor will randomly check your attendance throughout the semester. Second, equally important is your active participation in the learning process of the entire class by sharing with the rest of the class your questions, suggestions and feedback to given material (required readings, lectures, video presentations and in-class discussions). These forms of participation will be highly regarded since participation will effectively enhance other students' learning outcomes as well as yours. For those of you who don't feel comfortable speaking up during class, feel free to express your thoughts, ideas and feedback via email to the lecturer. The instructor may share your email feedback with the entire class, if your feedback is considered significant to be shared with the rest of class. You may achieve 20 points at maximum by performing excellently in class participation.

(2) Six Response Essays:

Throughout the semester, you are required to complete 6 response essays as take-home assignments. Each response essay is worth 5 points at maximum (it will be graded depending on the quality of your writing). Thus, for the *response essays* portion of your grade, you may achieve up to 30 points in total. Each essay will ask you to demonstrate and exercise basic knowledge that you are expected to gain out of reading assigned chapters/pages of the required textbook. The instructor will specifically announce in class what chapters/pages of the textbook you are required to read for each response essay assignment. Specific questions for each of the six response essays will be provided in class as scheduled on this course syllabus.

(3) Final Examination:

The final exam is scheduled to be conducted on the 10th of May (Friday) at 12:30pm in the regular classroom. The specific format and a study guide will be announced on the 18th of April (Friday). The content of the final exam will include all the material (required readings, lectures, video presentations and class discussions) provided throughout the semester. As on the final exam, you may achieve up to 40 points at maximum.

(4) Term Paper & In-Class Paper Presentation:

Students will be required to compose and submit a term-paper and to provide an oral presentation of the paper in class during the period from the 23rd of April (Wednesday) through the 30th of April (Wednesday). Approximately 6 students will present their term papers in class each day during this period. You may achieve up to 15 points for your term paper and up to 5 points for your in-class presentation. The specific format for writing the paper and guidance for the in-class presentation will be announced on the 26th of March (Wednesday). The deadline for submitting the term-paper is the 23rd of April (Wednesday) regardless of the date of your oral presentation.

VI. REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

Moody, Harry R. (2006). *Aging: Concepts and Controversies* (5th Edition). Pine Forge Press.

This required textbook is available for purchase at the BC bookstore.

VII. EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS:

Each of you as a student is responsible for preparing yourself for class by closely reading all the assigned materials specified beforehand in the syllabus. Please be aware of all dates, deadlines, and assignments and adhere to them at your own responsibility. You are also responsible for being clearly aware of the BC academic integrity policy that will not tolerate academic dishonesty including cheating, abetting, fabrication and plagiarism. Personal chatting and use of cellular phones during class are prohibited. Penalties for absence may only be compensated by showing the lecturer a legitimate proof of absence (e.g., a doctor's appointment).

VIII. COURSE GRADING POLICY:

Your overall course grade will be determined by the total sum of the points you achieve out of the following six components:

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|---|------------------|
| (1) Class Participation: | Up to 20 points |
| (2) Six Response Essays: | Up to 30 points |
| (3) Final Examination: | Up to 40 points |
| (4) Term-Paper & In-Class Presentation: | Up to 20 points |
| Total: | Up to 110 points |

Your total sum of points will be translated into a letter grade as shown below:

| Total Points | Letter Grade |
|--------------|--------------|
| 95 and above | A |
| 94 – 90 | A- |
| 89 – 85 | B+ |
| 84 – 80 | B |
| 79 – 75 | B- |
| 74 – 70 | C+ |
| 69 – 65 | C |
| 64 – 60 | C- |
| 59 – 55 | D+ |
| 54 – 50 | D |
| 49 – 45 | D- |
| 44 and below | F |

Note:

No extra-credit work opportunity will be provided in the semester. Therefore, if you would like to achieve a high overall course grade, please be ready to make a high achievement in the “class participation” part as a safety net.

IX. COURSE & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE:

Please keep in mind that the course schedules (and reading assignments) will remain subject to change throughout the semester. Changes may be necessary (and even desirable) depending on the availability of some course materials, such as video programs, and your interests in particular sociological subjects.

The 1st Week:

January 14th, Monday

Topic: Introducing SC393-01 Young & Old: Social Conflicts of Aging

January 15th, Wednesday

Topic: Preliminary Lecture: What is Social Gerontology / Sociology of Aging?

January 16th, Friday

Video Presentation #1: *Myths and Realities of Aging*

The 2nd Week:

January 21st, Monday

Martin Luther King Day – No Class

January 23rd, Wednesday

Topic: America as an Aging Society

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. xxi-xxix.

January 25th, Friday

Topic: Ageism: Getting Older and Being Old in Youth-Oriented Culture, Part 1

Video Presentation #2: *Aging: Growing Old in a Youth-Centered Culture*

The 3rd Week:

January 28th, Monday

Topic: Ageism: Getting Older and Being Old in Youth-Oriented Culture, Part 2

January 30th, Wednesday

Topic: The Life-Course Perspective on Aging in Society, Part 1

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp.1-10.

February 1st, Friday

Topic: The Life-Course Perspective on Aging in Society, Part 2

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 10-25.

The 4th Week:

February 4th, Monday

Topic: Why Getting Older? – Causes of Aging

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 27-41.

■ An essay question sheet for your Response Essay #1 will be provided.

February 6th, Wednesday

Topic: Why Aging Matters? – Meanings of Old-Age

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 109-118

February 8th, Friday

Video Presentation #3: *Societal and Political Aspects of Aging*

☑ Due for Response Essay #1

The 5th Week:

February 11th, Monday

Topic: Social Outlook of the Aging Society

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 133-144.

February 13th, Wednesday

Topic: The Economic Status of Older Americans

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 144-155.

February 15th, Friday

Topic: Public Policy on Aging

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 155-162.

The 6th Week:

February 18th, Monday

Video Presentation #4: *Age Discrimination: You Be the Judge*

February 20th, Wednesday

Topic: Young vs. Old: Generational Equity?, Part 1

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 163-168.

February 22nd, Friday

Topic: Young vs. Old: Generational Equity?, Part 2

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 168-176.
■ An essay question sheet for your Response Essay #2 will be provided.

The 7th Week:

February 25th, Monday

Topic: Social Security, the Basics

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 199-206.

February 27th, Wednesday

Topic: The Future of Social Security

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 206-213.

☑ Due for Response Essay #2

February 29th, Friday

Video Presentation #5: *Work and Retirement and Economic Status*

The 8th Week:

March 3rd, Monday *Spring Vacation – No Class*

March 5th, Wednesday *Spring Vacation – No Class*

March 7th, Friday *Spring Vacation – No Class*

The 9th Week:

March 10th, Monday

Topic: Work and Retirement, Part 1

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 231-237.

March 12th, Wednesday

Topic: Work and Retirement, Part 2

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 237-246.

■ An essay question sheet for your Response Essay #3 will be provided.

March 14th, Friday

Topic: Epidemiology of Aging

Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 267-277.

The 10th Week:

March 17th, Monday *Instructor's Research Trip – No Class*

March 19th, Wednesday *Instructor's Research Trip – No Class*

March 21st, Friday *Easter Weekend – No Class*

The 11th Week:

March 24th, Monday *Easter Weekend – No Class*

March 26th, Wednesday

Topic: Economics of Health Care, Part 1
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 277-293.
 Due for Response Essay #3

March 28th, Friday

Topic: Economics of Health Care, Part 2
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 293-298.

The 12th Week:

March 31st, Monday

Topic: Age-Based Health Care Rationing?, Part 1
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 299-309.
■ An essay question sheet for your Response Essay #4 will be provided.

April 2nd, Wednesday

Topic: Age-Based Health Care Rationing?, Part 2
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 309-314.

April 4th, Friday

Topic: Long-Term Care: Abandonment or Independence?
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 329-333.
 Due for Response Essay #4

The 13th Week:

April 7th, Monday

Topic: Financing Long-Term Care – Medicaid
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 333-338.
■ An essay question sheet for your Response Essay #5 will be provided.

April 9th, Wednesday

Video Presentation #6: *A Desperate Act: Suicide and the Elderly*

April 11th, Friday

Topic: End of Life – A Right to Die?, Part 1
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 389-392.
 Due for Response Essay #5

The 14th Week:

April 14th, Monday

Topic: End of Life – A Right to Die?, Part 2
Assigned Reading: Moody's *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*, pp. 3392-399.
■ An essay question sheet for your Response Essay #6 will be provided.

April 16th, Wednesday

Video Presentation #7: *Mademoiselle and the Doctor*

April 18th, Friday

Topic: In-Class Discussion: The Future of Your Life in an Aging Society
 Due for Response Essay #6

The 15th Week:

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|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>April 21st, Monday</i> | <i>Patriot's Day – No Class</i> |
| April 23 rd , Wednesday | Term-Paper Presentation #1 |
| April 25 th , Friday | Term-Paper Presentation #2 |

The 16th Week:

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| April 28 th , Monday | Term-Paper Presentation #3 |
| April 30 th , Wednesday | Term-Paper Presentation #4 |

May 10th, Saturday – The Final Exam 12: 30pm