SC 525: Social Gerontology
Spring 2011

Friday 12:00 - 2:20 pm
415 McGuinn Hall

Professor: Sara Moorman
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Office hours: Mondays 1:00-3:00 pm or by appointment
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About the Course
This course provides thorough coverage of current topics in social gerontology. We’ll begin the class by discussing theories of aging and the life course from multiple social scientific disciplines. Then we will cover specific topics in four general areas of sociology: roles and relationships (e.g., within the family), inequalities (e.g., ageism), institutions (e.g., health care), and social change (e.g., the aging of the population). By the end of the course, you will have comprehensive knowledge of classic and current social gerontological literature, and you will be able to identify emerging topics of importance for future basic research and applied practice.

Required Readings
There are no materials to purchase for this class. All readings are available on course reserve. To access them, visit the BC library website (http://www.bc.edu/libraries/). On the left side of the page under “Find Library Materials” click on “Course Reserves.” Log in, and search by course number, course name, or instructor’s last name. Files are in .pdf format.

Assessment
Grading scale
A+ none at Boston College      A  93 – 100%
B+  87 – 89%       B  83 – 86%
C+  77 – 79%       C  73 – 76%
D+  67 – 69%       D  63 – 66%
F  below 60%

Task                  Due date                  Percentage of grade
10 weekly responses   January 28-April 29    50 (5 each)
Class presentation   Choose a class period on February 11 15
Literature review proposal  February 25  5
Literature review draft April 1 15
Literature review April 29 15

Weekly responses: Starting January 28, there are readings required for each class meeting. After you complete the readings, write two to three pages (typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, one-inch margins on all four sides, 12 point font, no cover page, last name on each page) of summary
and reaction. The summary should integrate the week’s readings but be concise, taking up no more than a third of the paper. The remaining two-thirds of the paper should be devoted to your evaluation. You may go in one or two of many directions with your evaluation, for example: What were the strengths and/or weaknesses of the readings? How do these readings relate to theories (either from this or other courses)? What research questions occurred to you when reading, and how might they be answered? What are the implications of these readings for social policy and/or professional practice? Do these readings support or contradict popular, “layperson” ideas about the topic? Be creative! If you have another idea for evaluation but are uncertain if it would be acceptable, just ask me.

Writing these responses is intended to prepare you for class meetings, which will be largely discussion based. Through analyzing the readings, you will have developed questions and ideas to talk through with the class. Come ready to talk!

Note that there are 12 weeks of readings but only 10 required responses. I will drop your lowest two grades. You may decide to write every week, or you may skip a week or two—but proceed with caution: Papers are due in hard copy in class, or if you must, electronically by 11:59 pm Eastern time Wednesday, and I do not accept late papers.

Class presentation: Your job is to present additional information on one week’s topic from three to five additional articles, book chapters, or reputable online sources (e.g., the Census Bureau; BC’s Center for Retirement Research). Your additional information should have a focus: For example, perhaps you’d like to explore how race and ethnicity are related to the week’s topic, or you are interested in how the topic plays out for elders in other parts of the world.

On February 11, come to class prepared to choose one date to present. I will give the presentation on February 11 and model what you should do. Your grade will be based on the relevance of your chosen focus and the organization and clarity of your presentation. On the day you present, submit to me any handouts or powerpoint slides you prepare for your presentation and your bibliography of additional sources.

Literature review: A literature review is like the introduction to an empirical article, except it gives greater detail about prior work and does not present hypotheses to be tested. In writing this paper, your objective is to either (a) delve more deeply into a topic we covered in class or (b) to review one of the many topics we did not have time to cover in class. Choose your topic wisely. I hope that this exercise can further your work on an honors or masters thesis or otherwise afford you an opportunity to learn things you will use in your future career. If you want to write on a topic we cover in class, it would be a good idea to choose that topic for your presentation. In other words: Doubling up is good, not bad.

On February 25, submit a one-page proposal including a brief (one to two paragraph) description of your topic and a list of five references you intend to use. (Your plans may change as the paper develops, and that’s perfectly fine.)

On April 1, submit a draft of your paper – or part of your paper – that is at least seven pages long. At this point, I’ll make sure you’re on the right track and give you some feedback. (Also, this check keeps you from writing it all at the last minute!) You will respond to my comments as you would respond to a reviewer’s comments in a peer review; that is, you must either incorporate my suggestions or justify (in text or in a separate memo) why you have chosen not to.
On April 29, you will submit a complete (~15 page) literature review (typed, double-spaced, spell-checked, one-inch margins on all four sides, 12 point font, no cover page, last name on each page) that cites at least 15 readings that were not required for class.

**Academic Honesty**
Your work must be *your* words and ideas. When writing papers, use quotation marks around someone else’s exact words and identify whose words they are. If you come across a good idea, by all means use it in your writing, but be sure to acknowledge whose idea it is. Do not allow another student to copy your work. Failure to comply will result in (a) automatic failure of the assignment, and (b) a report to the Dean and the Committee on Academic Integrity. For further information, please review the College’s policies on academic integrity here: http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/resources/policy.html#integrity

**Schedule**

January 21: The Aging Population / Methods of Studying the Life Course
No reading for this session.

January 28: Life Course Theories I


February 4: Life Course Theories II


February 11: Age Stratification


February 18: Age Discrimination


February 25: Aging Well


March 4: Health Disparities


***March 11: Spring Vacation, no class***

March 18: Health Economics


March 25: Family Caregiving


April 1: Family Relationships


April 8: Work, Retirement and Social Security


April 15: Religion


***April 22: Good Friday, no class***

April 29: Wisdom

