Course Description:
This course will examine psychosocial development and change across the adult lifespan. The focus will be on how various psychological factors influence development and change, as well as the impact of social factors on development and change in family and work roles from adulthood through old age. Special attention will be placed on similarities and differences in adult development and change related to an individual's position in society, including factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Course Content:
This course will address the influence of social and psychological factors on adult development and change. The psychological issues that will be covered include: 1) cognitive development (e.g., memory, problem solving, wisdom, and dementing illnesses such as Alzheimer's Disease); 2) psychological well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, happiness, self-esteem, stress, and coping); and 3) adjusting to death, dying, and bereavement. The social factors that will be covered include: 1) demography of aging (e.g., mortality, morbidity, and general health status); 2) family relationships and social support (e.g., intergenerational relationships, grandparenthood, caregiving, and fictive kin); 3) marital status and family structure (e.g., courtship, marriage, cohabitation, divorce, separation, widowhood, remarriage, and single-parent families); 4) work status, such as employment, unemployment, retirement, and the interrelationship between work and family roles; and 5) other social issues, such as migration among the elderly, religion and aging, and violence as well as other traumas.

Course Objectives:
Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Describe and critique major theories of adult development (e.g., life-span, life course).
2. Describe and analyze research on major aspects of psychological functioning across the adult life span and the impact on aging individuals and their families (e.g., normal cognitive development, dementing illnesses such as Alzheimer's Disease, self-esteem, subjective well-being, and stress and coping).

3. Describe the current trends in marital status and family composition (e.g., marriage, divorce, separation, cohabitation, remarriage, reconciliation, widowhood, and single-parent families) and national demographic trends of the aging population, as well as analyze the implications for social work practice and social welfare policies.

4. Describe and analyze research on the role of informal social support networks in caring for aging individuals, including current research on issues such as intergenerational relationships, grandparenthood, and successes and failures of caregiving to frail elders.

5. Identify the major ways in which an individual's position in society affects adult development and change.

Relation of the Course to Four Curricular Themes:

- *Multiculturalism and Diversity* will be addressed throughout the course through the analysis of differences and similarities across groups on issues such as intergenerational relationships, caregiving, marital status, coping, and psychological well-being.

- *Social Change and Social Justice* will be addressed by investigating topics, such as the impact of income inequality and ageism on retirement and psychological well-being.

- *Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation* will be addressed through discussion of how social workers can help bolster informal social support networks to assist individuals and families and enhance psychological well-being across the adult life span.

- *Behavioral and Social Science Research* will be addressed by the inclusion of theoretical frameworks for the understanding of adult development and change. The findings of research on both psychological and structural factors that influence individual functioning will be emphasized.

Relationship of the Course to Social Work Ethics and Values:

Values and ethics will be addressed throughout this course. In particular, this will include ethical conduct in research on psychological issues and social factors related to adulthood and aging, as well as an examination of the inequalities linked to social positions in society. Also included will be content on variations in values related to family and work roles among different subgroups in society.

Class Design and Expectations for Students:

Class sessions will include a range of activities, lectures, discussions, student presentations, audiovisuals, and guest speakers. These activities will be integrated at critical points in the semester to facilitate understanding of course content. Students are expected to
attend all classes, complete assigned readings for each week, participate actively in class discussion, and complete all course requirements on time.

**Accommodations / Special Needs:**
If you have a disability or impairment that requires an accommodation, please contact the instructor within two weeks of the start of the class to discuss what modifications are necessary.

**Assignments (see description of assignments for details):**
1. Reaction paper (*Tuesdays with Morrie*) (5%)
2. Mid-term exam (30%)
3. Group project presentation (20%)
4. Term paper (30%)
5. Class participation (10%)
6. Attendance (5%)

**Grading Procedure:**
Grades will be determined by adding the scores from all assignments, and converting the numerical grade into a letter grade using the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100% - 96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>95% - 91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>90% - 86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85% - 83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82% - 80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>79% - 76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75% - 73%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>72% - 70%</td>
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**Honor Code:**
You are encouraged to discuss and share reference materials with other students, however, you are not allowed to copy or paraphrase another student’s work. Please be aware of plagiarism which can result in severe penalties. If you have any questions or comments regarding the class or assignments, please feel free to contact the instructor.

**Reading:** (All of the following can be accessed from SSW library.)
2. **Recommended book:** *Tuesdays with Morrie: An old man, a young man, and life’s greatest lesson*. NY: Doubleday. (For reaction paper, assignment #1 above.)
3. **Required coursepack:** Available from Excel Coursepacks & Copies, 1117 South University, (734) 996-1500.
(4) **Supplemental reading:** In addition to a complete set on reserve in SSW Library, a second set can be found in a box outside the instructor’s office (Rm. 3839). (Please make copies and return the original set to this box promptly.)

*Additional reading may be assigned during the semester.*
Course Outline

WEEK 1. JAN 12
Introduction to Course
Myths and Realities of Aging

Supplemental Reading


(WEEK 2. JAN 19, MLK Day, no class)

WEEK 3. JAN 26
Demography of Aging
Life Course Perspective
Historical and Cultural Issues

Required Reading


Supplemental Reading


**WEEK 4. FEB 2**

### Biological Changes
- Why do we age? Theories
- Age-related changes
- Effects of biological changes

DUE: REACTION PAPER

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**

(1) NIA (n.d.). Physiological clues. In Aging under the microscope: A biological quest (pp. 30-42).


### Week 5. Feb 9

**Health and Disease**
- Health disparity
- Health prevention
- Disease management

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


### Week 6. Feb 16

**Cognitive Changes**
- Memory and learning
- Intelligence, creativity, and wisdom
- Alzheimer’s disease and other dementia

DUE: TERM PAPER QUESTION AND INTERVIEWEES

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


*(Week 7. Feb 23, Spring Break, no class)*

**Week 8. Mar 1**

**Intimacy and Sexuality**

- Sexuality in old age
- Illness, disability and intimacy
- Gay and lesbian elders

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 9. MAR 8</th>
<th>Social Relations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social theories of aging</td>
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<td>Social networks and social support</td>
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<td>Positive and negative social support</td>
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<td>Social support and well-being</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**DUE: MID-TERM EXAM**

**Required Reading**

Hooyman, N. & Kiyak, A. (2002). Social theories of aging (Ch. 8), and The importance of social support: Family, friends, and neighbors (Ch. 9). In *Social gerontology: A multidisciplinary perspective (6th ed.)*

**Supplemental Reading**


**WEEK 10. MAR 15**  
**Productive Aging**
- Work and retirement
- Nonpaid roles
- Successful aging

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


**WEEK 11. MAR 22**  
**Caregiving**
- Who cares?
- Intergenerational relations
- Grandparenthood
DUE: GROUP PROJECT TITLE AND OUTLINE

Required Reading


Supplemental Reading


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 12, MAR 29</th>
<th>Personality and Mental Health</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personality: Stability or change?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stress, coping, and adaptation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mental disorders in later life</td>
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<td>Successful aging</td>
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Required Reading


**Supplemental Reading**


**WEEK 13. APR 5**

**Death and Bereavement**

- Bereavement
- End-of-life decision making
- Elder Suicide
- Hospice care
- Religion and spirituality

DUE: TERM PAPER

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


**WEEK 14. APR 12**  
Group Project Presentation (I)

**WEEK 15. APR 19**  
Group Project Presentation (II)
Description of Assignments:

1. Reaction paper (5%) – Due Feb. 2 (page limit: 3)

   “Aging is not just decay, you know. It’s growth. It’s more than the negative that you’re going to die, it’s also the positive that you understand you’re going to die, and that you live a better life because of it.” (Morrie Schwartz)

   After getting to know the unique and powerful story of a dying man named Morrie Schwartz through the eyes of Mitch Albom, you’ll no doubt have personal reactions that raise questions about life, aging, and death. Write a reaction paper to the book that demonstrates the ways you have been influenced by this man’s life and philosophy, and how you plan to use these ideas in your personal and professional lives. Possible reflection topics could include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following: What are the most important concepts Morrie has to teach about aging, dependency, and dying? How do these ideas fit or not fit with contemporary US beliefs and attitudes about life and death? In what ways did Morrie’s ideas influence your personal thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes about your own aging and views of death?

2. Mid-term exam (30%) – Due March 8.

   The mid-term exam will cover all topic areas prior to the due date. It has two parts. The first part (10%) is administered on line (accessed through coursetool) which includes multiple choice, true/false, and fill in the blanks questions. The second part (20%) is a take home assignment that requires you to answer two questions with short essays. You’ll receive the exam on March 1.

3. Group project presentation (20%) – Due April 12 or April 19

   The last two weeks of the class are devoted to group project presentations that focus on a minority group and a particular topic. Each presentation should be no more than 30 minutes and will be rated by the audience (10%) and the instructor (10%). All members of a group will receive the same grade. No written report required.

   To complete this project successfully, you need to do the following:
   (a). Form a group of 4-5 members before the third week of the class.
   (b). The group should choose a topic (or sub-topic) of shared interest from the syllabus (consult with the instructor if your topic is not in the syllabus), and identify a minority group (minority being broadly defined, e.g., by race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, urban/rural residence, migration/refugee status, or, you may justify why the group is minority), which will serve as a lens to explore and analyze your topic.
   (d). Your project is to examine the topic with a focus on the minority group you’ve chosen. Some examples are: stress and adaptation of older prisoners, caregiving in older gay and lesbian community, sexuality in nursing homes, successful aging among minority groups or people with disability, death and dying in Asian Americans, religion and well-being among older African Americans, social support systems of Mexican Americans, etc.
   (e). Your presentation should include the following parts:
      ➢ A brief introduction of the minority group.
What are the issues (questions) that you want to address?
What does the research literature (or other sources) have to say about these issues? Utilize the literature to elucidate the issues you want to address, or identify gaps in the research in this regard.
What are the implications for social work (you may pick a micro or macro level implication to explore, or engage a combination of both.)

(g). A good presentation requires preparation. Some suggestions for making it successful are as follows: First, as a group, you should outline the organization of your presentation and allocate time for different parts. Second, individuals responsible for presenting a particular part should identify the main points that they want to cover and have ideas formed before the presentation. Third, to feel comfortable with the materials to be presented, practice before the assigned time and ask for feedback from other group members or classmates. Fourth, consider using audio-visual aides (e.g., power point) to enhance your presentation. The evaluation of your presentation will be based on the content, as well as clarity and style.

Please submit your group project title and an outline for presentation by March 22.

5. Term paper (30%) – Due April 5 (page limit: 10)

The term paper is designed to help you integrate theory and real life experience on the one hand, and explore how social positions may influence the aging experience on the other hand. You should start with a question that is of interest to you. For example, you may ask: What are the biggest gains and losses of aging? How to live to 100 years old and be happy? Why do persons who are well over their retirement age still working? Why do African Americans have the shortest life expectancy? Who cares for the childless older adults? If social activities are good for health and psychological well-being, why do many older people sit in front of the TV all day? Why do families care for their elderly relatives? Are older people more stubborn and rigid than younger people? Why are minority group members less likely to use hospice care?

This assignment requires you to answer your question first from a theoretical perspective (i.e., use the literature, particularly theories and concepts, to help you develop theoretical propositions), and then from interviews with two informants who are in different social positions (e.g., vary in socio-economic status, sexuality, age, gender, or ethnicity, etc.). Your paper should include a discussion of the theories, the findings from the interviews, the fit and misfit between theories and your empirical findings, the influence of your informants’ social positions in society on their life experiences, and the implications for social work.

Please submit your question and potential interviewees by Feb. 16.

6. Leadership and Class participation (10%)

You are expected to prepare for and participate actively in class. Particularly, your performance in small group and class discussion of the supplemental reading will be evaluated as an important indicator of your leadership and participation.
7. Attendance (5%)

You are important therefore your attendance counts. However, life events are not always predictable and you may have to miss a class with regret. You have the allowance to miss two classes without penalty, then each absence will cost you 1 point. Note that attendance means being on time and staying throughout the whole class.