Social Work 616: Adulthood and Aging  
Winter 2006 (Section 2)

Lydia W. Li, Ph.D.  
Office: SSWB Room 3839  
E-mail: lydiali@umich.edu  
Telephone 734-936-4850

Class time: Monday 4:00 -7:00 pm (3752 SSWB)  
Office Hour: Tuesday 1:00 - 2:00 pm, Wednesday 10- noon  
Or by appointment (sign-up sheet on the door of Rm. 3839 SSWB)

URL: http://ctools.umich.edu/

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, re-marriage, 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 lectures, small group and class discussions, student presentations, audiovisuals, field trips, 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 after the class starts to discuss what modifications are necessary.

Assignments (see description of assignments for details):

1. Analysis of “Having our say: The Delany sisters’ first 100 years” (20%)
2. Three response papers (30%)
3. Activity report (20%)
4. Group project presentation (30%)

Grading Procedure:

Each written assignment is given a letter grade. Grades will be determined based on the following criteria: (1) grades of A are reserved for student work that shows exceptional individual performance—good mastery of content, application of critical thinking, and clear and concise writing. “A” and “A-” distinguish the degree of superiority. “A+” is rarely given, if ever, and it signifies work that is beyond the expertise students are expected to master. (2) A grade of “B+” denotes performance just above the mastery level; (3) a grade of “B” is given to students who meets the basic requirement of the assignment; (4) a grade of “B-” is used for student work that is less than adequate, reflecting only moderate grasp of the material. (5) Variations of the C grade are given to work that reflects a minimum grasp of the material and poor organization. Final grade will be determined by adding the grades and scores from all assignments. The comparability of letter grades and scores is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100% - 96%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>95% - 91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>90% - 86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>85% - 83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>82% - 80%</td>
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<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 and Writing Guide:

Academic integrity should not be taken lightly. In particular, be aware of plagiarism which can result in severe penalties. APA editorial style is required for all written assignments. Refer to “Process of Writing a Research Paper” in Ctools (click Resources) for information about academic integrity and APA style. If you have any questions or comments regarding the class or assignments, please feel free to contact the instructor.

Reading:
(1) Required reading: All required readings are electronically accessible via Ctools (click Resources).

(2) Recommended book: Delany, Sarah and A. Elizabeth, with Hearth, Amy Hill (1993). Having our say: The Delany sisters’ first 100 years. NY: Kodansha International. (For assignment #1 above.)

(4) Supplemental reading: Supplemental readings are not required but listed for those interested in further reading. You can use MIRLYN to search and locate the readings. Most of them are electronically available. Please ask me or librarians for assistance if you encounter any difficulties.

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

**WEEK 1. JAN 9**  
Introduction to Course  
Life-Span and Life Course Perspectives

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


*(WEEK 2. JAN 16, MLK Day, no class)*

**WEEK 3. JAN 23**  
Demography of Aging  
Historical and Cultural Issues  
Ageism

Activities:

1. Select a contemporary or historical culture and research that culture’s ideas about aging. Topics to address include power, prestige, filial responsibility, modernization, and status and roles of older adults in that culture. Document your findings and give a class presentation. (useful website: [http://users.stlcc.edu/vritts/aging.html](http://users.stlcc.edu/vritts/aging.html), or search the web using keywords: culture and aging.)

2. Collect a sample of print ads that make reference to aging or older adults. Analyze the products, the image of the person(s), estimated age, use of stereotyping, race and ethnicity. Conclude how older adults are portrayed in advertising.
Required Reading


Supplemental Reading


WEEK 4. JAN 30

Biological Changes

- Theories
- Age-related diseases
- Longevity

Activities:
1. What are the arguments for and against the view that aging itself is a disease? Pick one side of this issue and then try listing the points that can rebut the opposing point of view. Also discuss the implications of perceiving aging as a disease. The internet (e.g., National Institutes on Health website and sites promoting reversal of aging) is a good source of information regarding the issue.
**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**

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


**WEEK 5. FEB 6**

**Cognitive Changes**

- Memory and learning
- Wisdom, creativity, and intelligence

Activities:

1. Interview two persons who represent the concept of wisdom in your definition. Why are they good examples of wisdom? How do they attain wisdom?
2. Visit a community senior center or a long-term care facility. Observe the types of activities they offer. Note those physical and cognitive activities that promote positive cognitive development. In addition, interview the staff about their experience of offering learning activities for older persons (e.g., What activities have been offered? How were the activities received? What has to be considered when planning learning activities for older persons?).

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


### WEEK 6. FEB 13

**Dementias**

- Alzheimer’s & other dementia-related diseases
- Dementia care
- Dementia caregivers

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


### WEEK 7. FEB. 20

**Promoting and Managing Health**

- Acute and chronic conditions
- HIV/AIDS in older persons
- Health promotion

Activities:

1. Select a specific condition facing older adults, e.g., fall, arthritis, driving accident, stroke, and address the specific causes of the condition, the potential for social stigma, and adaptations that can be made to prevent or alleviate the

2. Design a health promotion program for residents living in low-income senior housing apartments. Take into account motivation and long-term lifestyle factors in developing the program.

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


*(Week 8. FEB. 27, SPRING BREAK, no class)*

**Week 9. Mar 6**

**Intimacy and Sexuality**

- Sexuality in old age
- Illness, disability and intimacy
- Sexual orientation

Activities of the week:

1. How do nursing homes respond to the sexual needs of their residents? Talk to nursing home administrators and staff about their policy and practice related to sexuality of their residents.
2. Visit a senior center or a long-term care facility and examine their inclusiveness of elderly persons with different sexual orientations.

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


**WEEK 10. MAR 13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Relationships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital relationship</td>
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<td>Divorce &amp; remarriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intergenerational relationship</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sibling relationship</td>
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Activity of the week:
1. Interview a couple who have married for a long time. Ask about changes in their marital relationship and their perspectives of what makes a long-lasting marriage.
2. Interview an older person about his/her relationship with siblings. Ask about frequency of interaction, satisfaction with the relationship, and feeling of closeness with the siblings, as well as changes in these aspects across adulthood. Examine whether the gender, proximity, and birth order of the sibling make a difference in the relationship.

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


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**WEEK 11. MAR 20**

**Informal Caregiving**

- Informal caregivers of disabled elderly
- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Supportive services for caregivers
- Elder abuse

**Activity:**

1. Interview an informal caregiver of a disabled elder. Ask about his/her motivation of providing care, and the gains and loss of caregiving. Based on the interview, suggest ways (e.g., policy and services) to support informal caregiving.

2. Interview a grandparent who is caring for his/her grandchildren. Ask how he/she takes up this role, the challenges he/she faces in performing this role, and his/her outlook for the future.

**Required Reading**


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**Supplemental Reading**


### WEEK 12. MAR 27

**Social Support**
- Social networks and social support
- Positive and negative social support
- Friendship
- Homelessness

Activities:
1. Interview an elderly person about his/her friendship. Ask about the history of the relationship, the interaction (e.g., frequency, activity), exchange of support and satisfaction with friends. Based on the interview, analyze the role of friends in his/her subjective well-being.
2. Design a program to bolster social support networks of older persons who live alone. What services would you provide? What resources would you need?

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


**WEEK 13. APRIL 3**

**Productive Aging**

- Employment and retirement
- Nonpaid roles
- Income security & poverty

**Activities:**

1. Some people believe that if there are not enough jobs to go around for everyone, it makes sense to encourage older people to retire and 'get out of the way' to make room for the young. What are the arguments for and against this approach to older people in the labor force? What are the costs and benefits of encouraging or discouraging early retirement?

2. Talk to the staff of a senior center (or any organization) that has a successful volunteer program. Ask about their strategy of recruiting and retaining older adults as volunteers. If possible, talk to older volunteers about the benefits they derive from volunteering.

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


### Week 14. April 10

**Death and Bereavement**

- End-of-life decision making
- Hospice care
- Bereavement
- Widowhood

Activities:

1. Present the pros and cons arguments of the right to die. Include religious views, US Supreme Court cases, and public policy issues in your arguments.
2. Interview a social worker of a bereavement support program. Ask what services are offered, and his/her perspective about stages of bereavement, the skills required to do the job, and the challenges in working with bereaved individuals.

### Required Reading


### Supplemental Reading


**WEEK 15. APRIL 17**  
**Religion, Spirituality, and Successful Aging**

- Psychosocial theories of aging
- Stress and coping
- Successful aging

Activity:
Interview two elders with different cultural or ethnic background. Ask about their ideas of aging well (e.g., what is aging well and how to age well) and compare the two perspectives (e.g., similarities and differences).

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental Reading**


-End-