Social Work 616: Adulthood and Aging  
Winter 2003

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Telephone 734-936-4850  
Office Hours:  
Tue. 11:30-3:30 P.M.  
Or by Appointment  

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), 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, such as mortality, morbidity, and general health status, 2) family relationships and social support (e.g., intergenerational relationships, grand parenthood, caregiving, and fictive kin), 3) marital status and family structure (e.g., courtship, marriage, cohabitation, divorce, separation, widowhood, remarriage, and mother only 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 and 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, 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 one-parent families) and national demographic trends of the aging population and analyze the implications for social work practice and social welfare policies.

4. Describe and analyze research on the role of informal social support networks and failures in social support in caring for individuals, including current research on issues such as intergenerational relationships, grandparenthood, and 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 on 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 members 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 tied to social position 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. The above activities will be integrated at critical points in the semester to facilitate a better understanding of the 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 instruction of assignments for details):**
1. Group project (40%)
2. Individual paper (40%)
3. Discussion leader (10%)
4. Attendance and class participation (10%)

**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 question or comment regarding the class or assignment, please feel free to contact the instructor.

**Reading:** On reserve in SSW Library. An on-line version is in process.


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

**SESSION 1. JAN 6**
Introduction to Course
Demography of Aging

**Reading**


**SESSION 2. JAN 13**
Ageism
Diversity in Aging Experience
Life Course Perspectives

**Reading**


*Jan 20 MLK Day, no class*

**SESSION 3. JAN 27**
Biological Changes

- Why do we age? Theories
- Age-related changes
- Effects of biological changes
Reading


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 4. FEB 3</th>
<th>Cognitive Changes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Memory and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intelligence, creativity, and wisdom</td>
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Reading


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SESSION 5. FEB 10</th>
<th>Health and Disease</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mortality and morbidity</td>
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<td>Influences on health</td>
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<td>Maintaining and improving health</td>
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Reading


**SESSION 6. FEB. 17  Intimacy and Sexuality**

**Reading**


*(Feb 24 Spring Break, no class)*

**SESSION 7. MAR 3  Social Relations**

➢ Social theories of aging
➢ Social networks and social support

**Reading**


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**SESSION 8. MAR 10**

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<th>Productive Aging</th>
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<td>Work and retirement</td>
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<td>Nonpaid roles</td>
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<td>Ideology of old age</td>
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**Required Reading**


**Hooyman, N. & Akiyak, A. (2002). Patterns and functions of nonpaid roles and activities. In *Social gerontology: A multidisciplinary perspective* (pp. 386-406)


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**SESSION 9. MAR 17**

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<th>Caregiving</th>
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<td>Who cares?</td>
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<td>Intergenerational relations</td>
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***Group Project Report Due***
Reading


**SESSION 10. MAR 24**

Personality and adaptation

- Stability or change?
- Stress and coping

Reading


**SESSION 11. MAR 31**

Mental Health and Mental Disorder

- Mental disorders in later life
- Utilization of mental health services

Reading


**SESSION 12. APR 7**  
**Death and Bereavement**
- Bereavement
- End-of-life decision
- Hospice care

***Individual Paper Due***

**Reading**


**SESSION 13. APR 14**  
**Spirituality and Meaning**

**Reading**

