

## **The Sociology of Aging**

### **Sociology 4531, Fall 2018**

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### **SOCL 4531 SOCIOLOGY OF AGING (3 credits)**

Prereq.: SOCL 2001

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course will investigate a topic with which we are all at least somewhat familiar: aging. We will pay particular attention to the aging of individuals, the aging of populations and the ways in which the two interact while investigating a variety of empirical topics related to the aging experience. Since growing older is not a unitary experience, we will explore how race, class and gender affect experiences of aging. With a focus on demographic patterns and policy implications, you will discover the complexity of issues surrounding contemporary discussions of aging.

Specific course objectives are to:

- Describe individual-level and social factors associated with aging.
- Articulate the unique contribution of a sociological perspective to the study of aging.
- Examine issues related to contemporary aging while acknowledging the historical context and unprecedented nature of this phenomena.
- Analyze and decipher scholarly research on aging.
- Apply course materials to discussion of data and films.

What should you expect to get out of this course?

- You will be able to analyze and decipher academic research about aging.
- You will work to develop written communication skills.
- You will reflect on current issues related to aging and some of the “hot button” debates about these issues.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Binstock, R. H. & L. K. George (eds). 2011. “Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences.” 7th Edition. London: Elsevier.  
ISBN: 978-0-12-380880-6.

- The library has an e-book of Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences. You can access this title for free using LSU’s licensed copy. All chapters can be downloaded, saved, and printed for

use now or after the class. The title is included here: <http://lib.lsu.edu/ebooks> and a link should appear in the Moodle shell. Additionally, here is a direct link to the title:  
<http://libezp.lib.lsu.edu/login?url=https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/book/9780123808806>

Additional readings will be posted on Moodle in the appropriate module.

### **RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOKS:**

Quadagno, J. 2014. *Aging and the Life Course: An Introduction to Social Gerontology*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York, New York: McGraw Hill.  
ISBN: 978-0-07-802585-0.

Module slides are based on the recommended textbook, so having the textbook is not necessary. However, some students may want more context, so that is why I have listed it here. My suggestion would be to try the first module as is and purchase/rent the optional textbook if you find you would like further information.

### **MOODLE**

This course runs fully on Moodle, which is accessed through your *myLSU* account. I will use Moodle to post announcements, course modules (including readings and multimedia) and assessments. Announcements will be my main form of communication to you and will include important information like: due date reminders, any schedule changes, any changes in my availability, important clarification and feedback. Announcements will be accessible in Moodle and emailed to your LSU email address.

### **GENERAL POINTERS**

I expect students to regularly check into Moodle and/or their email in order to stay up to date on any announcements I send out. If you have a question or issue that is not resolved by information in the syllabus, in the course shell itself or in an announcement, please email me or stop by office hours! I am here to help you through this course and if anything is unclear I am always available to help. I will be available during office hours and by appointment, as well as by email and Skype.

My best advice for doing well in an online class is to manage your time appropriately. I suggest printing out a copy of the course schedule and checking things off as you complete them. I will send reminders about what is due when, but being well aware of the upcoming assignments will help you to do your best in this course. Make sure you give yourself ample time to complete assignments. Last, since this course is online and thus open book/open note, use that to your advantage! For example, look at quiz questions before you do the readings and prepare as you go.

## COURSE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

**Course Modules:** Course Modules are designed to guide you through the material in order to prepare you for the course learning activities. Each module is two weeks long and will open on Sunday. Quizzes are due the following Sunday and the second week of each module will be reserved for discussions. Course activities should be completed in the order that they are listed and by the due dates listed.

- Each module is two weeks. Modules open on Monday and close two Sundays later.
- Week one is devoted to doing course readings and working on the quiz. You will have from Monday-Sunday to complete the quiz.
- Week two is devoted to discussions about prompts, videos, etc. based on course material from the previous week and/or modules. You will have from Monday-Thursday to complete your original posts and reply posts are due on the last Sunday of the module.
- **Scheduling note:** Because of the Fall and Thanksgiving breaks, the due dates for the last module will be compressed into one week. However, I will open the module during the week of Thanksgiving break so that you can work on the material if you choose, although no work will be due that week.

**Quizzes:** By the first Sunday of each module, you will be required to complete an assessment in order to show how well you understood the required readings. Quizzes will be based on slides and required readings. Quiz questions will be multiple choice, true/false and short answer questions. Quizzes will be made available to students when each new module opens.

Your answers **MUST** be in your own words and should illustrate a full understanding of the material that the question is asking about.

**Discussion Boards:** During the second week of each module, there will be at least one discussion board. Discussion boards will correspond to documentaries, TED talks, articles, or prompts. On each discussion board, you will be responsible for writing ONE original post and TWO reply posts. Thus, if there are two discussion boards in a module, you will be responsible for two original posts (one on each board) and four reply posts (two on each board). Original posts will be due on the second **Thursday** of each module and reply posts are due on the last day of the module (second Sunday).

**Short Writing Assignment:** At the end of the course, you will be asked to write a letter to your elected official of choice in order to advise them about policy that is important for the aging population and society in general. This assignment will ask you to draw upon information from the whole semester in order to discuss a new policy, advocate for changes to an existing policy or in order to support an existing policy. This assignment should be 2-3 pages, include in-text citations and a reference page, and will be due on the first day of finals. More information is available in Moodle along with a rubric that will be used for grading.

**Absence and Make-Up Policy:** In order to make up missed work you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week's time (see **LSU Policy Statement 22**, posted on the course website, for a list of valid reasons for student absences). No assignments (quizzes, etc.) can be made-up without such documentation.

## HOW YOU WILL BE EVALUATED

### 1. Quizzes (52.5% of the final grade)

- There will be seven quizzes, each worth 7.5 points.
- Quizzes are NOT timed and will be available for a full week (Monday at midnight-Sunday at 11:59pm CST). Quizzes are due at 11:59pm on the first Sunday of the module. You will have a week to complete the quiz with full access to readings, slides and films. I highly encourage you to READ THE QUIZ QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU BEGIN READING to help focus your reading.
- Quizzes will be in the form of multiple choice and short answer questions.
- Your answers MUST be in your own words (nothing word-for-word from slides, readings, Wikipedia or other students, etc. will be tolerated). You may NOT work with or communicate with other students while you are they are taking the quiz.
  - You should use in-text citations using ASA format where appropriate (i.e. if you quote material or paraphrase). See the Moodle homepage for information about ASA formatting.
- I also strongly encourage writing your quiz short answers in a word document and then copying and pasting them into Moodle at the end so you don't lose work if your connection goes out. Save often!

### 2. Discussion Board Posts (35 percent of your final grade)

- You will receive a score out of 5 points for discussion board. In order to receive 5 points for the discussion board component of a module, you will need to do the following:
  - Post an original post for EACH board in the module that summarizes and reflects upon questions posed in the board using materials from the current module and/or previous modules. You should also end your original post with a question to inspire further discussion. This is worth 3 points.
  - Post TWO reply posts for each board in the module. Reply posts should be thoughtful, use course materials to respond to another student's post. Each reply post is worth 1 point.
- All of your postings for the module should be QUALITY posts that are thoughtful and use information from readings, films, etc to synthesize and form your post.
- For specific grading information, please see the grading rubric.
- Your grades on all discussion boards will be equally weighted and averaged to comprise 35% of your final grade.

### 3. Short Writing Assignment (10 percent of your final grade)

- This assignment will be graded out of 10 points and will be a 2-3 page letter to your elected official using course materials to advise them about a policy that will be important for the aging population and society as a whole. More information is above and on Moodle, including a grading rubric.

### 4. Syllabus Quiz (2.5 percent of your final grade; 2.5 points)

- During the icrebreaker module, you will complete a short, 10 item Syllabus quiz to make sure that you are familiar with course requirements. This will be worth 2.5 points on your final grade.

## GRADING

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Quizzes                  | 52.5% |
| Discussions              | 35%   |
| Short Writing Assignment | 10%   |
| Syllabus Quiz            | 2.5%  |

Based on the cumulative score earned on these four components, letter grades will be assigned as follows:

|            |    |
|------------|----|
| 97-100     | A+ |
| 93-96      | A  |
| 90-92      | A- |
| 87-89      | B+ |
| 83-86      | B  |
| 80-82      | B- |
| 77-79      | C+ |
| 73-76      | C  |
| 70-72      | C- |
| 67-69      | D+ |
| 63-66      | D  |
| 60-62      | D- |
| 59 & below | F  |

**Note:** Any extra credit assignments will be available to the entire class and will be based on the grade distribution of the course. No special extra credit assignments will be given to individual students.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All Louisiana State University students are responsible for observing the highest standards of academic and personal integrity. The penalties for academic misconduct are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable excuse. All cases of suspected academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students.

When in doubt, CITE! You should use ASA citation formatting for this course and should always cite when drawing information from a source (this includes quotes and paraphrasing). If you have questions please let me know!

## OUTSIDE MATERIALS

NO OUTSIDE MATERIALS SHOULD BE USED FOR QUIZZES. I have designed the course in such a way that you should not need to consult any materials other than what has been assigned. If concepts or questions are unclear, please ask me! If you use outside materials in your quiz answer, you will receive a 0 for that question.

## **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Louisiana State University is committed to promoting an atmosphere to end discrimination against individuals with special needs, to bring persons with special needs into the social and economic mainstream, and to provide enforceable standards to address discrimination against individuals with special needs. In order to ensure reasonable accommodations, students with special needs should register with the Office of Disability Services. If you anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please contact me early in the semester so that we can reach a mutual understanding on how to best set you up for success.

## **IMPORTANT NOTES**

**1) If you are concerned about your course performance, contact me as soon as possible.**

Together we can identify why you are having problems and how you can better position yourself for success. If you wait until the end of the semester to contact me about your status in this course it will be too late! Please also note that new academic policies have been put in place that put serious restrictions on the ability of students to drop and retake classes. These changes make it more important than ever that you take personal responsibility for your course performance.

**2) Be respectful of others.** This course will require you to participate in class discussions. Your participation helps you and your classmates to learn, practice, and actively engage the class materials. We will sometimes be discussing controversial and sensitive topics. BE RESPECTFUL to your fellow students when posting original posts or reply posts. It is my job to make the classroom a learning environment where all viewpoints are respected and, thus, I will not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, or other insulting comments. Offensive posts will be taken down and the student will be contacted with a warning and will need to rewrite the post. Students who have been warned and make a SECOND offensive post will not receive credit for any of the discussion boards for the current module. In the event of a THIRD offensive posting, the student will receive a failing grade for the course.

**3) Writing/Email Communication:** Since this course is fully online, the only thing I have to go by is your written word. Do your absolute best to make sure you are being clear, concise and precise in your language. I always recommend finishing assignments a day early, taking a break, and then coming back to them and reading them out loud. You may feel funny proofreading this way, but it will help you to more easily catch grammatical errors and/or assess whether important information is missing.

Any work as well as email communications, whether to me or to other students, should use appropriate grammar. Use spell check and always proofread. Make sure you are being professional in your wording.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

| <u>Module</u>                                 | <u>Start</u> | <u>End</u>   | <u>Assignments Due</u>  |
|---|--------------|--------------|---|
| Icebreaker Module                             | August 20    | August 22    | Icebreaker Tasks<br>Syllabus Quiz Due   |
| Module 1<br><br>Introduction, Aging Theory    | August 20    | September 2  | *Read slides for Module 1<br><br>Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Riley 1986</li> <li>• Bengston et al. 1997</li> <li>• Riley 1999</li> <li>• Elder et al. 2003</li> </ul><br>Quiz Due: August 26<br><br>Discussion board: What will aging be like for future generations?<br><br>Watch PBS Frontline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation Like</li> </ul><br>Original post (1) due: August 30<br>Reply posts (2) due: September 2  |
| Module 2<br><br>Demographic Patterns of Aging | September 3  | September 16 | *Read slides for Module 2<br><br>Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOA Chapter 3</li> <li>• Wilmoth &amp; Longino</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 4 (p. 47-51 only)</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 5</li> <li>• Profile of Older Americans</li> </ul><br>Quiz Due: September 9<br><br>Discussion Board: What is aging like for individuals now, given recent demographic changes? What are some of the consequences?<br><br>Watch PBS Frontline: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living Old</li> </ul><br>Discussion Board: Will Future Elderly Experience More Years of Disability?<br><br>Watch TED Talks: |

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|   |                     |                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A Roadmap to End Aging</li> <li>• Experiments that Hint at Longer Lives</li> <li>• The Coming Neurological Epidemic</li> </ul> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOA Ch. 4 (pp. 51-55)</li> </ul> <p>Original Posts (2) Due: September 13<br/>Reply posts (4) Due: September 16</p>   |
| <p>Module 3</p> <p>Heterogeneity and Inequality</p> | <p>September 17</p> | <p>September 30</p> | <p>*Read Slides for Module 3</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crystal &amp; Shea</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 7</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 9</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 23</li> </ul> <p>Quiz Due: September 23</p> <p>Discussion Board: How is aging seen in popular culture?</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lee et al. (2007)</li> </ul> <p>Discussion Board: What is an intersectional approach and why is important?</p> <p>Watch:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Urgency of Intersectionality (TED)</li> </ul> <p>Original Posts (2) Due: September 27<br/>Reply posts (4) Due: September 30</p> |
| <p>Fall Break</p>                                   | <p>October 1</p>    | <p>October 7</p>    |  |
| <p>Module 4</p> <p>Social Psychology</p>            | <p>October 8</p>    | <p>October 21</p>   | <p>*Read Slides for Module 4</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOA chapter 11</li> <li>• Atchley</li> <li>• Levy</li> <li>• Logan et al.</li> </ul> <p>Quiz Due: October 14</p> <p>Discussion Board: What is the relationship</p>  |



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|  |                   |                    | <p>between aging and happiness?</p> <p>Watch TED talk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Older People are Happier</li> </ul> <p>Original Post (1) due: October 18<br/>Reply Posts (2) due: October 21</p>  |
| <p>Module 5</p> <p>Family</p>              | <p>October 22</p> | <p>November 4</p>  | <p>*Read Slides for Module 5</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uhlenberg</li> <li>• Silverstein &amp; Bengston</li> <li>• Umberson et al.</li> <li>• Ward &amp; Spitze</li> <li>• Spitze &amp; Ward</li> </ul> <p>Quiz Due: October 28</p> <p>Discussion Board: Who should care for the elderly?</p> <p>Watch PBS Frontline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life and Death in Assisted Living</li> </ul> <p>Original Post (1) due: November 1<br/>Reply Posts (2) due: November 4</p> |
| <p>Module 6</p> <p>Work and Retirement</p> | <p>November 5</p> | <p>November 18</p> | <p>*Read Slides for Module 6</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOA: Chapter 13</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 14</li> <li>• Cahill</li> <li>• Easterlin</li> <li>• Morrisey &amp; Sabadish</li> </ul> <p>Quiz Due: November 11</p> <p>Discussion Board: Prospects of Retirement for the Baby Boomers</p> <p>Watch PBS Frontline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Retirement Gamble</li> </ul> <p>Discussion Board: Understanding Social Security and its future prospects.</p>            |

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|   |             |             | <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Posted web links from the SSA website; slides.</li> </ul> <p>Original Post (1) due: November 15<br/>Reply Posts (2) due: November 18</p>  |
| Thanksgiving Break                          | November 19 | November 25 |   |
| Module 7<br><br>Healthcare, Death and Dying | November 19 | December 1  | <p>*Read Slides for Module 7</p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HOA: Chapter 21</li> <li>• HOA: Chater 22</li> <li>• Blauner (skim)</li> <li>• HOA: Chapter 17</li> <li>• Leinbach</li> </ul> <p>Watch TED talk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for a Good End of Life</li> </ul> <p>Discussion Board: Should the elderly be allowed to end their own lives?</p> <p>Read:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State by State guide to PAS</li> </ul> <p>Watch PBS Frontline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Suicide Plan</li> </ul> <p>Original Post (1) due: November 29<br/>Reply Posts (2) due: December 1</p> <p>Quiz Due: December 1</p> <p>*Please note that although the module will open on Nov. 19, no work is due in order to accommodate Thanksgiving break. All assignments (quiz &amp; discussion board) are due in the second half of the module.</p> |
| Short Writing Assignment                    | August 20   | December 3  | <p>Refer to instructions for short writing assignment and begin thinking about your policy EARLY.<br/>*Assignment Due on the first day of finals</p>  |