

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

A. Department Information:

Division: Social Science
Department: Sociology
Course ID: SOC 150
Course Title: Introduction to Gerontology: Social Aspects of Aging
Units: 3
Lecture: 3 Hours
Laboratory: None
Prerequisite: None

- B. Catalog and Schedule Description: This course examines aging and the life course. It explores how the aging process is influenced and shaped by societal forces, covering physical, psychological, and economic as well as social aspects of aging. This course will examine these processes of aging as they affect individuals, families, cohorts and societies.

II. NUMBER OF TIMES COURSE MAY BE TAKEN FOR CREDIT: One

III. EXPECTED OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS:

Upon successful completion of the course the student should be able to:

- A. Demonstrate understanding of the social construction of aging.
- B. Explain the major social theories of aging.
- C. Examine the dynamic relationships between historical and cultural forces and the individual life course.
- D. Dispute common misconceptions about aging.
- E. Demonstrate more sensitivity toward issues and concerns of older people.
- F. Demonstrate an understanding that aging is a life-long process, that it does not start at a specific age.
- G. Critically analyze the information presented and apply this information to an understanding of their own lives and the lives of those around them.

IV. COURSE CONTENT:

- A. The definition and perspective of the sociology of aging
 1. The scope of social gerontology
 2. The demography of aging
 3. The history of aging in the U.S.
- B. Basic aspects of individual aging
 1. Physical aging and health
 2. Psychological aspects of aging
 3. Social aspects of individual aging
 4. Personal adaptation to aging
- C. Aging in domains of everyday life
 1. Family, friends, and social support
 2. Employment and retirement
 3. Activities and lifestyles
- D. Aging affects needs and resources
 1. Income and housing
 2. Health care and long-term care
 3. Community social services
- E. Aging and society

1. Aging in contemporary U.S. society and culture
2. Social inequality
3. The economy
4. Politics and government
5. Aging and the future

- F. Theoretical Analysis of Aging
1. Structural-Functional Analysis : Aging and Disengagement
 2. Symbolic-Interaction Analysis : Aging and Activity
 3. Social-Conflict Analysis : Aging and Inequality

V. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

- A. Lectures in basic theories, concepts and data
- B. Read text, other reading materials as assigned, CD's, DVD's, and other media sources
- C. Class and group discussion of significant issues and topics
- D. Analytical/critical thinking/writing exercises. Writing assignments/Application of concepts
- E. Use internet to find information

VI. TYPICAL ASSIGNMENTS:

- A. Read text and other sources; read the information on the sociological perspective of aging.
- B. Class and group discussion
 1. Class discussion: Identify your family's oldest members. Pinpoint the social forces and attitudes that have influenced your view of these family members.
 2. Group discussion: Identify some taken-for-granted, deeply held cultural assumptions about aging and elderly people in the U.S. today.
- C. Analytical/critical thinking/writing exercises
 1. Read in the text the section pertaining to stereotypes and images.
 - a) List the first 10 words that come into your mind upon seeing the words aged, middle-aged, adult, adolescent.
 - b) Analyze your words.
 - c) Do they reveal your personal biases and judgments about these age groups?
 2. Ask three people, preferably representing different age cohorts, to list the first ten words that come into their minds when they see the words aged, middle-aged, adult, adolescent.
 - a) Compare your own list, from the first assignment, with the lists of these three other people.
 - b) What are the common patterns and language used?
 - c) What differences do you see?
 - d) What conclusions can you draw from your comparisons?
 3. Browse several card shops, including one at a local grocery store and another at a stationery store.
 - a) Develop a list of the number and type of birthday cards that you find.
 - b) How many do you find that joke about physical age? Memory? General negativity about age?
 - c) How would you characterize the general tone of the greeting card sections?
 - d) Find an example of a birthday card directed to adults that is particularly

- meaningful to you, and one that is particularly offensive.
e) Using the information derived from your readings and class discussions, critically analyze why you hold these views.

VII. EVALUATIONS:

- A. Methods of evaluation:
1. Objective and subjective examinations (for lecture and reading assignments).
Typical questions include:
 - a) Which theory states that a high level of activity enhances personal satisfaction in old age?
 - i. unequal activity theory
 - ii. activity theory
 - iii. disengagement theory
 - iv. age-based hierarchical theory
 2. Subjective evaluation of student writing and application of concepts.
Students are evaluated on their ability to apply course concepts to what they read or experience.
 3. Analysis of critical thinking and analytical essays. Evaluation is based on Clarity of thought and expression, the ability to present and analyze well reasoned arguments supported by evidence.
- B. Frequency of Evaluation:
1. One mid-term examination
 2. One final examination
 3. A minimum of written assignments, approximating a total of 10 pages.

VIII. TYPICAL TEXT(S):

- Atchley, Robert C. *Social Forces and Aging: An Introduction to Social Gerontology*, 9th Ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2000..
- Atchley, Robert C. and Amanda Barusch. *Social Forces and Aging*, 10th Ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2004.
- Clausen, J. *The Life Course: A Sociological Perspective*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1986.
- Cockerham, William C. *This Aging Society*, 2nd Ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997.
- Cox, Harold G. *Later Life: The Realities of Aging*, 5th Ed., Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2000.
- Gilleard, Chris and Paul Higgs. *Cultures of Aging: Self, Citizen, and the Body*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001.
- Hillier, Susan and Georgia M. Barrow, *Aging, the Individual and Society*, 7th Ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1999..
- Lassey, William R. and Marie L. Lassey. *Quality of Life for Older People: An International Perspective*, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2001.
- Quadagno, Jill. *Aging and the Life Course: An Introductoin to Social Gerontology*, 2nd Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill Publishers, 2002.

TYPICAL SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS:

- Cruikshank, Margaret. *Learning to Be Old.*, New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003.

San Bernardino Valley College
Curriculum Approved: February 02, 2004
Last Updated: October 9, 2002

Heilbrun, Carolyn G. *The Last Gift of Time: Life Beyond Sixty*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1997.

Kidder, Tracy. *Old Friends*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1993.

IX. OTHER SUPPLIES REQUIRED OF STUDENTS: None