Course Description:
Designed for School of Education and Social Policy students, Adulthood and Aging provides an introduction to social policy in an aging society and an interdisciplinary study of adult development and aging, incorporating perspectives from life-span developmental psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and other social sciences. The first part of the course explores societal aging, that is, a society where the proportion of older people relative to other age groups is growing rapidly and requires the rethinking of social policies and the reallocation of government resources. The second part focuses on individual aging, with an emphasis on cognitive and personality changes in adulthood and later life and on the subjective experience of being “old.” An appreciation of the common patterns as well as the enormous variation in individual aging, by gender, social class and ethnicity is emphasized. Finally, the last section addresses the issue of ageism in contemporary Western societies. In combination, these perspectives put a “human face” on the societal and personal challenges that will soon face all of our graduates.

Content Objectives:
1. To introduce students to the contributions of various academic disciplines to our understanding of adult development and aging;
2. To engage students in the process of thinking about social policy issues related to an aging society and to individual aging that will impact their lives as adults;
3. To make students aware of the tremendous variation and diversity in aging and the experience of old age, by gender, social class, ethnicity, and historical cohort;
4. To acquaint students with the research methodologies as well as the major obstacles encountered in conducting research in adult development and aging;
5. To explain why the results of longitudinal and cross-sectional research on adult development vary so greatly, including the impact history, culture, cohort effects and time of testing have on each type of research;
6. To demonstrate familiarity with the research in the areas of cognitive functioning (intelligence, memory, every-day cognitive competence and wisdom), and personality changes (stage theories, trait theories, activity and disengagement perspectives, life review and gerotranscendence) in the second half of life.

Skills Objectives:
1. To demonstrate a command of basic qualitative interviewing technique needed for scholarly research including using an ethics protocol statement for interviews;
2. To prepare and submit a summary of interviews with a young, middle-aged and older adult;
3. To serve as a contributing class member of a research team by discussing one's own and others' experiences in the field, analyzing data gathered in all interviews, summarizing findings, and developing tentative generalizations based on the total sample.
Value Objectives:
1. To sensitize students to their own and others’ ageism at multiple levels (individual, institutional and societal);
2. To reduce the tendency to stereotype and objectify “old people” as a group separate and different from people of younger ages;
3. To explore the anxiety held about growing old, and death and the dying process in modern society.

Course Readings: (Required) Books may be purchased at Norris Bookstore.
3. A course packet containing selected readings in adult development and aging must be purchased from Quartet Copies on Clark Street in Evanston.

Course Requirements and Grading:
The written assignments for this course include three papers and three interviews. Attendance is taken and used as a proxy for participation (anyone can miss two classes for free, after that points are deducted). The final grades will be determined on a curve based on the number of points you earned out of a possible total of 140 points. In general, coming to class regularly, doing the readings and turning in your assignments on time will result in an A or B depending on the quality of the work and the improvement shown over the course of the term.

1. Class attendance and informed participation. 20 points
2. One 5-6 page academic paper taking a position on selected policy controversies concerning Age or Need Based Entitlement in an aging society using the examples of Social Security and Medicare. April 23 30 points
3. Interview 1: A 2-3 page written summary of a discussion/interview held with a young adult in his or her late 20’s or early 30’s on what was expected and unexpected about living this decade in the areas of work and relationships. Explore the interviewee’s positive and negative perceptions and experiences related to age. May 1 10 points
4. Interview 2: A 2-3 page summary of a discussion/interview on “what’s it like to be middle-aged?” with a person between ages 40-60. Explore the interviewee’s positive and negative perceptions and experiences related to age. May 7 15 points
5. Interview 3: A written summary of an extensive tape-recorded research interview with a person 75 or older including your reflections on the process of interviewing. Explore the interviewee’s positive and negative perceptions and experiences related to age. May 17 25 points
6. Final paper 8-10 pages. Using the interviews, course readings on ageism and the book What Are Old People For?, write a paper on whether or not you think ageism is a legitimate concern or not, and what might (or might not) be done on a personal,
institutional, and societal/cultural levels to address this issue. This paper must display your command of the readings and class discussion with appropriate references.

Read this carefully:
School of Education and Social Policy Academic Integrity Statement, March 2004. Students in this course are expected to comply with the policies found in the booklet, “Academic Integrity at Northwestern University: A Basic Guide”. All papers submitted for credit in this course must be sent to Blackboard as well as delivered in hard copy. Your written work may be electronically tested for plagiarized content. For details regarding academic integrity at Northwestern, visit: http://www.northwestern.edu/uaac/. If you need a copy of the booklet visit the SESP Student Affairs Office on the 1st floor of Annenberg Hall.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: In compliance with Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, Northwestern University is committed to providing equal access to all programming. Students with disabilities seeking accommodations are encouraged to contact the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 467-5530 or ssd@northwestern.edu. SSD is located in the basement of Scott Hall. SSD also has an excellent website viewable at: http://www.stuaff.northwestern.edu/ssd/

General guidelines for papers (not interviews): All papers, whether short or long, should be well organized, with an introductory paragraph that states your general position and the points or ideas you will make in support of your position. Then follow that introductory outline exactly in the body of the paper. The tone of the paper should be academic (not folksy). Remember your name is on the paper so the reader knows that what you write is what you think, believe, or feel. In other words, avoid personal pronouns, “I” and “we” as much as possible.

Formatting: All papers, including interviews, should be formatted as follows: double-spaced, size 12 font, and at least one inch margins on all sides. Your first and last names must be in the upper right hand header on each page along with the page number. Papers without correct headers in the top right corner will not be graded. All references must be cited in the text in American Psychological Association (APA) approved style and included in the reference list at the end of paper. Don’t obsess about this, just do it by following the format examples in the syllabus, the course packet and the APA guideline sheet that is handed out.

Warning: Take a few extra minutes to read in hard copy, not on screen for typos, sentence fragments, misspellings, singular and plural mismatches, repetitiveness and general lack of clarity. If you have a friend that is willing to read it, have s/he do so. Two sets of eyes are always better than one. The spell-check on your computer is helpful but does not replace proofreading of hard copy. Careless errors in writing and presentation detract from good conceptual work and will be reflected in the grade awarded your paper.

Note: If a paper is due on a class date, come to class whether the paper is done or not! You may drop the paper in the Digital Dropbox as a Microsoft Word attachment any time until midnight the same day. No points will be deducted if the paper is received on the day it is due regardless of the time.
Tentative Class Schedule

Guidelines for Reading: In the following schedule the expectation is that you will have read the assigned readings below each date for that class.

Part I: The Aging Society

Class 1: March 27 Key concepts, overview of course, expectations.

Class 2: March 29 The Context for Societal Aging
Moody: Prologue (pp. xxi-xxix)

Class 3: April 3 An Aging Society: Demographic Trends

Class 4: April 5 Should Age or Need be the Basis for Entitlements?
Moody: Controversy #4: Should Age or Need be the Bases for Entitlements? Pp. 163-196.

Class 5: April 10 Age or Need based entitlements continued


Class 6: April 12 Social Security and Medicare as examples of Age-based Entitlements

Class 7: April 17 Health Care in an Aging Society


Class 8: April 19: Discussion on age versus need-based entitlements.
Due by April 23 Paper #1: 5-6 page paper on Should Age or Need be the Basis for Entitlements? using the examples of Social Security and Medicare.

Part II: The Aging Individual

Class 9: April 24 Setting the context for individual aging
Moody: Basic Concept I: A Life Course Perspective on Aging. pp. 289-316.


**Class 10: April 26 Cognitive functioning across the life span**

Cognitive Functioning: Can old dogs learn new tricks? Why does it matter? What is intelligence and how is it measured? Do people become less intelligent as they age? Are there distinct stages in intellectual development beyond adolescence? What factors promote high levels of intellectual functioning in late life? Are older people “wiser” than younger people? Do practice effects withstand the aging process (expertise)? Does creativity decline with age?

Moody: Overview of Cognition pp. 75-84.
Piaget’s Plant Problem: An exercise in hypothetico-deductive thinking

**Class 11: May 1 Young adulthood**

Do our personalities change with age or are they fixed in “cement by age 30?” Are there predictable personality changes in adulthood and late life? Is there a “mid-life crisis?” Do people become more themselves as they age? Are there changes in personality in the very last year or months of life.

**Class 12: May 3 Mid-life and Generativity**

**Due:** A 2 page written summary of your interview with a person in his/her late 20’s or early 30’s on what s/he has learned in the past ten years, what was expected and unexpected from his or her point of view about this period of development in work and relationships.

Class 13: May 8    Late life  
**Due:** A 2-3 page written summary of the interview you had with a middle-aged person (age 45-60). Is the concept of “middle-age” relevant or meaningful?


Class 14: May 10    The Subjective Experience of Being Old  

Selected Poetry and Reflections:  
Wislawa Szymborska                  Nothing’s A Gift  
Mary Oliver                           When Death Comes  
Archibald MacLeish                  The Old Grey Couple

Class 15: May 15    Alzheimer’s Dementia: Societal and Individual Problem  
**Movie:** *Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter* shown in class.
Handouts on Dementia, DSM-IV criteria for dementia and Alzheimer’s, Mini-mental examinations, Functional activities questionnaire

Part III: Ageism
Class 16: May 17    Ageism: Positive and Negative  
**Due:** A 5 page written summary of the interview you had with an older person.


Class 17: May 22  
*Movie: To Live until I Die. In class*

Class 18 May 24  
Ageism continued


Class 19: May 29  
Ageism continued

Thomas, W. H. (2004). *What are Old People For?*

Class 20: May 31  
Ageism continued.

Thomas, W. H. (2004). *What are Old People For?*

Final Paper is due as a complete package including **hard copy** of the paper no later than noon (12:00 PM) on Monday June 4th, 2007 in the Office of Student Affairs on the 1st floor of Annenberg.