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. In combination, these two perspectives, societal and individual aging put a “human face” on the societal challenges that will soon face all of our graduates. Critical reading skills, class discussion and focused writing assignments are designed to engage students in the process of anticipating and reflecting on the challenges that they will encounter on a personal and societal level as more people are living longer than ever.

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 of 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 packet in the Student Affairs Office on the first floor of Annenberg Hall.

**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 **120 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. **Two short (2-3 page) academic papers taking a position on selected policy controversies in an Aging Society:**
   - Paper 1: Age or Need Based Entitlements  
     January 19  
     15 points
   - Paper 2: Is the concept of “retirement” obsolete”  
     February 9  
     20 points

3. **Interview 1:** A 2 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.  
   February 21  
   10 points

4. **Interview 2:** A 2 page summary of a discussion/interview on “what’s it like to be middle-aged?” with a person between ages 40-60.  
   February 28  
   15 points

5. **Interview 3 and Final Paper:** A written summary of an **extensive tape-recorded** research interview with a person 75 or older including your reflections on the **process** of interviewing. This paper must incorporate insights from the readings on personal and psychosocial growth including gerotrancendance and the subjective experience of growing old. Questions and specific guidelines for this interview and paper will be provided. **Length 12-15 pages**  
   March 13  
   40 points

Gaetjens Adulthood and Aging SESP 225-203 Winter 2006
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/uacc/. 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 send the paper to me as an e-mail 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. The point is I want you to be in class whether your paper is done or not!

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: January 3 Key concepts, overview of course, expectations.

Class 2: January 5 The Context for Societal Aging
Moody: Prologue (pp. xxi-xxviii)
The Older Population in the United States: March 2002. U.S. Census Bureau

Class 3: January 10 An Aging Society: Demographic Trends

Class 4: January 12 Should Age or Need be the Basis for Entitlements?
Moody: *Controversy #5: Should Age or Need be the Bases for Entitlements?*

Class 5: January 17 Social Security and Medicare as Age-based Entitlements

Class 6: January 19 Discussion on age versus need-based entitlements.
Due: Paper #1: 2-3 page paper on *Should Age or Need be the Basis for Entitlements?* using the examples of Social Security and Medicare. You have to take one side or the other of the debate and use the readings to support and document your position. The references must be included and noted in APA style. (Note: just copy what I have done for articles. For excerpts from Moody, please cite the specific author, name of article, and pages within Moody, 4th ed.)

Class 7: January 24 Ageism: Positive and Negative

Gaetjens Adulthood and Aging SESP 225-203 Winter 2006
Class 8: January 26  Age Integration:

Class 9 January 31 Retirement: When and why? Panel guests
Moody: Controversy #7 Is Retirement Obsolete? pp. 251-286

Part II: The Aging Individual
Class 10 February 2 Setting the context for individual aging
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?

Class 11: February 7 Cognitive functioning across the life span
Piaget’s Plant Problem: An exercise in hypothetico-deductive thinking

Moody: Controversy #9 Does Creativity Decline with Age? pp. 368-390.
Class 12: February 9 Discussion/debate on “older workers” and retirement policy
Due Paper #2: 2-3 page academic paper arguing whether the concept of “retirement” is obsolete or not. Take into account the readings on ageism, age integration, cognitive functioning, and retirement policy. You are expected to demonstrate your familiarity with the readings and so many references must be included. I really want the same type of organization as the first paper, strong introduction backed up by several substantive points drawn from the literature.

Class 13: February 14 Atypical Aging: Alzheimer’s Dementia
Alzheimer’s Dementia: Societal and Individual Problem
Movie: Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter Meet in 3rd floor Learning Studio
Handouts on Dementia, DSM-IV criteria for dementia and Alzheimer’s, Mini-mental examinations, Functional activities questionnaire

Class 14: February 16 Developmental Theory across the Life-span
Psycho-social Development: Do we improve with age?
Does personality become fixed in cement by age 30? Are there predictable personality changes in middle-age? Is there a mid-life crisis? Do people become more rigid as they age?

Class 15: February 21 Young Adulthood

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 16: February 23 Mid-life and Generativity

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 17: February 28 Late Life

Class 18 March 2 Gerotranscendence: The Theory

Class 19: March 7 The Subjective Experience of Being Old (1)
Note: Focus on Mitch’s development as well as Morrie’s.
Class 20: March 9 The Subjective Experience of Being Old (2)


Selected Poetry and Reflections:

- Wislawa Szymborska Nothing’s A Gift
- Mary Oliver When Death Comes
- Margery William Excerpt from The Velveteen Rabbit
- Paul Tournier Learning to Grow Old
- Stanley Kunitz Passing Through and Touch Me
- William Carlos Williams Wide Awake, Full of Love
- Archibald MacLeish The Old Grey Couple
- Kathleen Raines Old Age

Final Paper is due as a complete package including hard copy of the paper no later than noon (12:00 PM) on Monday March 13th, 2006 in the Office of Student Affairs on the 1st floor of Annenberg. Complete interview package is based on a tape recorded face to face interview with a person 75 or older or someone who is slightly younger but frail (transcript, tape, written summary, ethics protocol, measures and references). It should incorporate a working knowledge of the readings in the second half of the course (Feb 16th and forward). Length: 12-15 pages.