

Sociology of Aging
Sociology 246H1F – Fall 2016

Tuesdays, 10a-12p
Location: RW117

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DESCRIPTION

Lodged as we are in time's grip, all things in our world undergo aging. *Sociology of Aging* examines two consequences of this ubiquitous process: (a) people grow older in a social context and (b) human populations themselves have an age structure, which has important implications for social institutions and individuals.

Aging is tightly connected to many of the core themes in sociology, including social inequality, the overlapping of institutions such as family and the workplace, and the potential for divergent interests to generate political tensions. Throughout the semester, we will visit these (and other) themes, considering the challenges and opportunities embedded in a "graying-society." While most topics we cover will be informed by a broad consideration of the entire life span, special attention will be given to middle- and older-age. Course material is global in scope, though our emphasis will be on the North American context.

PREREQUISITE

Students are expected to have passed SOC101Y1, SOC102H1, or SOC103H1. Students lacking the prerequisite can be removed at any time without notice.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Describe different theoretical orientations to the aging process and articulate the distinctiveness of a sociological approach
- Explain the dynamics of population aging and account for global variability in these processes
- Critically evaluate age-based population forecasts

- Appreciate the multidimensionality of health and the complex connections between aging and health decline
- Explain how changes in family life and work related to aging
- Understand the basic framework of old-age policy and describe the worldwide challenges related to pension funds and financial security
- Recognize the importance of the environment—in its various dimensions—on the aging experience

READING

This course uses a textbook, *Aging and Society: Canadian Perspectives* (7th ed.) written by Mark Novak, Lori Campbell, and Herbert Northcott, as well as supplementary readings drawn from journal articles. The textbook is available in the U of T bookstore. All supplementary readings are available through Blackboard in PDF format.

BLACKBOARD

This course will use Blackboard, an online course management program. Blackboard is accessible through the U of T Portal system.

Please refer to Blackboard on a regular basis—that is the place where you can find announcements, online readings, marks, and other pertinent course information.

STUDENT ACCOMODATIONS

Please see me if you have a disability or other need that requires accommodation or classroom modification. I will be glad to help you in whatever way I can.

DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS

<i>Component</i>	<i>Percent of Final Mark</i>
In-class test	30%
Final exam	30%
Writing assignment I	20%
Writing assignment II	20%
<i>Total:</i>	<i>100%</i>

TEST AND EXAM

Both the in-class test and the final exam in this course will consist of multiple-choice, short answer, and concise essay questions. Questions will be taken from class lectures, assigned readings, and films viewed in class.

The final exam will be administered by the Faculty at a time, date, and location to be announced. The exam will *not* be cumulative, but will only include material covered in Class 7 and onward.

Please let me know ahead of time if you must miss class the day of the test. Missing for unexcused reasons will result in a mark of “o.” Students missing the final exam will need to contact their College Registrar to file a petition.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

The writing assignments for this class are intended to deepen your interest and understanding of the sociology of aging. Each assignment requires precision and brevity; rather than undertaking a single “long-form” term paper, students will submit two tight, focused essays that required different types of engagement with the course material.

Assignment 1: Aging in Film

Instructions: Select two films that deal with older age or the process of aging. Write an essay that compares the films and that interprets them in light of major theories of aging (see Chapter 2 of the textbook, especially **Exhibit 2.2** on page 24). In your essay, you may focus on the social roles of older adults, stereotypes of aging, age norms, life course transitions, macro historical conditions that shape the experience of aging, or any other theme(s) pertinent to the film and relevant to theories of aging. You should let the films guide what themes are relevant to your analysis, using theories of aging as a lens through which you interpret and compare/contrast the two movies.

You may find that your films are best understood in light of one theory of aging; or, you may find that several theories are applicable for the themes addressed in the films. How many theories you include in your essay is up to you, but be sure to demonstrate clear understanding of the theoretical perspectives within the space constraints. *You should consult additional references—particularly those cited in the textbook—to provide additional context about the theoretical perspective you’ve selected.* Additional resources should be used to supplement your understanding of a theoretical perspective so you can better play the ideas; you are **not** being asked to write a research paper about a given theory, and no more than five sources should be incorporated into the essay. One comprehensive resource is provided for you on Blackboard, titled “Theory, Explanation, and a Third Generation of Theoretical Development in Social Gerontology” (see folder for Writing Assignment 1).

Highest marks will be given to papers that (a) demonstrate a thorough understanding and application of theoretical perspectives; (b) give specific examples from film characters and plot points when applying the theories; (c) make insightful comparisons between films, noting both similarities and differences between them; and (d) are written in a clear, engaging, and proficient style.

Length: Papers should be between 1,500 - 2,500 words.

Format: Papers must include a title page that includes your name, student number, and word count. Papers should include a very brief overview of each film, but should focus on how each film relates to one or more sociological theory of aging. Finally, your paper must include a works cited section. Any reference/citation style is acceptable so long as it is used correctly and consistently.

Film Sources: Your essay will require use of the course textbook and two films from the list below. All films are available from Robarts Library Media Commons (3rd floor) and can be checked out for home use or viewed in the Commons’ film screening area. Most of the films can

also be obtained through streaming websites such as Amazon.ca or through iTunes. Please see the instructor if there is a film you do not see on the list but would like to use.

Films:

- About Schmidt
- Amour
- Another Year
- Autumn Spring
- Away from Her
- The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel
- The Curious Case of Benjamin Button
- Central Station
- Floride
- Gran Torino
- Harold and Maude
- Harry and Tonto
- King Lear
- Madadayo
- Nebraska
- Quartet
- The Savages
- A Separation
- Sunset Blvd.
- Starlet
- Still Mine
- The Stone Angel
- St. Vincent
- Tokyo Story
- Trouble with the Curve
- Umberto D.
- Up
- Wild Strawberries
- While We're Young
- White Angel (Beyaz Melek)

The due date for Assignment 1 is 11 October; a hard copy of your paper must be handed in during class on that day. In the case of late papers, five percentage points will be deducted per business day. **Late assignments should be turned in at the Sociology drop box**, Room 225, Department of Sociology (725 Spadina Avenue; Open Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Be sure to time stamp your late assignment before dropping it in the box.

Assignment 2: Critical research review

Each student should identify a research question related to the sociology of aging. Your research question should assess the state of knowledge about a particular topic, ideally one that is not

covered extensively in class. A few examples include: aging and criminal behavior; the social networks of older adults; immigration and aging; aging and leisure activity; transnational intergenerational families; the performance of gender in later life. This is but a small sample of potential topics—you should choose a question that interests you. Please see the instructor if you are unsure whether a topic would be appropriate for your paper.

Important: You must phrase your research interest as a question. Formulate your research question and identify 3 studies that address it. These studies should be peer-reviewed journal articles or scholarly books. If you are unsure as to whether a source qualifies as such, please contact the TA or course instructor.

From your review of these 3 studies, refine your research question (your research question will become more focused after having read the literature). Then, add at least 5 additional studies to your reference list. Using your expanded list of articles, write a critical review of the state of the literature on this particular question. Essays should be between 1,500 and 2,500 words. Your essay should address:

- 1) what is agreed upon in the literature (empirical consistencies);
- 2) inconsistencies or debates in the literature;
- 3) why there are inconsistencies or issues of uncertainty; and
- 4) if appropriate, what type of research could resolve these inconsistencies or enlighten the debate.

In sum, your assignment **must have the following components** which reflect the *process* and *outcome* of your critical research review.

- A title page that includes your name, student number, and word count (Pg. 1)
- A page that articulates your initial research question and the references for 3 relevant studies (Pg. 2).
- A page that articulates your revised research question and the 5 (or more) additional studies (Pg. 3)
- Your critical research review (Pgs. 4 onward)

The due date for Assignment 2 is 29 November; a hard copy of your paper must be handed in during class on that day. In the case of late papers, five percentage points will be deducted per business day. **Late assignments should be turned in at the Sociology drop box**, Room 225, Department of Sociology (725 Spadina Avenue; Open Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Be sure to time stamp your late assignment before dropping it in the box.

Both assignments are to be written in clear English prose with appropriate spelling, punctuation, grammar, and in the tone of an academic essay. Students are encouraged to take advantage of the University's excellent Writing Centers (<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/centres/arts-and-science>). There, knowledgeable and helpful instructors will work with you to hone your essay. The goal is to express your ideas competently and compellingly, and there are excellent resources at the U of T to help you do just that.

Further details for the paper (e.g., evaluation rubrics) can be found in a supplemental folder on Blackboard entitled “Sociology of Aging: Essay Guidelines.”

MISSED DEADLINES, TESTS & FINAL EXAM

If you miss a test or a paper deadline, **do not** contact the instructor or a TA unless you have followed the steps described here. Telling the professor or TA why you missed a deadline or a test will not be considered.

In case of **illness**, you must supply a duly completed **Verification of Student Illness** or Injury form (available at www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca). A doctor’s note is not acceptable. **The form must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work** at class or during my office hours.

If a **personal or family crisis** prevents you from meeting a deadline, you must get a letter from your college registrar (it is a good idea anyway to advise your college registrar if a crisis is interfering with your studies). **The letter must be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the instructor, and submitted with your work** at class or during my office hours.

Missed test/examination/deadlines: You must take the test and the final exam as scheduled. The only exception is when a student meets conditions that will be accepted by the University. Students with valid medical documentation may make up Test 1 on 27 October from 2-4p in Room 225 of the Sociology Department. Making up the final exam requires an application through your registrar.

Please notify me **promptly** if you miss the test/assignment deadlines and provide documentation as soon as possible. Under university regulations I am not required to give make-up tests or provide extensions if the student informs me of her/his circumstance more than 7 days after the missed test or assignment due date or gives me a medical excuse more than 7 days after the missed test or assignment due date.

If you miss a test or the final exam without proper documentation, you will receive a mark of zero for the missed test or final exam. This zero will be included in your total mark.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to know and adhere to the University’s principles of academic integrity. Any act of plagiarism or other unethical behavior will be addressed in accordance with University guidelines. Students should be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second course, is considered an academic offense. Please see the “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” (<http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/The-rules/code/the-code-of-behaviour-on-academic-matters>) for specific information on academic integrity at the U of T.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Class 1, September 13

Topic: Introduction to the course; conceptualizing age and aging

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 1

“The Seductiveness of Agelessness”, Molly Andrews, *Ageing and Society*, 1999. (BLACKBOARD)

Class 2, September 20

Topic: Influential theoretical perspectives in the study of aging

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 2, up to page 37 (ending at “Time to Review”); Chapter 6, pages 144 (starting with “The Life Course Perspective”) up to page 146 (ending at “Personality and Social Context”)

Class 3, September 27

Topic: Population aging in international context, I

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 3, stopping at page 61

“Misconceptions and Misapprehensions about Population Aging”, Ellen M. Gee, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 2002. (BLACKBOARD)

“Global Population Aging: Facts, Challenges, Solutions & Perspectives”, David E. Bloom, David Canning, and Alyssa Lubet, *Daedalus*, 2015. (BLACKBOARD)

Class 4, October 4

a. Topic: Population aging in international context, II

b. Topic: Aging and health, I

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 5, pages 98-104 (starting at “Seniors’ Health Status” and ending at “Changes in the Environment”); page 120-121 (section “The Impact of Income and Health on Quality of Life”)

“Aging, Natural Death, and the Compression of Morbidity”, James F. Fries, *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 1980. (BLACKBOARD)

Class 5, October 11

***ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE**

Topic: Aging and health, con’t

Reading:

“Constructions of Frailty in the English Language, Care Practice, and the Lived Experience.” Grenier, Amanda, *Ageing and Society*, 2007. (BLACKBOARD)

Class 6, October 18

IN-CLASS TEST

Class 7, October 25

a. Topic: Families as an intergenerational system

Reading:

“Exchange and Reciprocity among Two Generations of Japanese and American Women”, Hiroko Akiyama, Toni C. Antonucci, and Ruth Campbell, 2009 (in *The Cultural Context of Aging*, 3rd Ed., web book). (BLACKBOARD)

“Generation Boomerang.” CBC. <http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/episodes/generation-boomerang> (LINK is also on BLACKBOARD)

b. Topic: Family and intimate relationships in later life, I

Class 8, November 1

a. Topic: Family and intimate relationships in later life, con’t

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 12, page 284 (“starting at “Marital Status in Later Life”) up to page 295 (ending at “HIV/AIDS in Later Life”)

b. Topic: Work, employment, and retirement, I

Reading:

“No Career for You: Is that a Good or Bad Thing?”, David J. Ekerdt, 2008 (in *Social Structures and Aging Individuals*, Springer Publishing) (BLACKBOARD)

“A Life Course Perspective on Information Technology Work”, Victor Marshall, *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, 2010. (BLACKBOARD)

“Ageism, Age Relations, and Garment Industry Work in Montreal,” Julie Ann McMullin and Victor W. Marshall, *The Gerontologist*, 2001. (BLACKBOARD)

FALL BREAK – NO CLASS NOVEMBER 8

Class 9, November 15

a. Topic: Work, employment, and retirement, con’t

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 9, page 224 (“starting at “Changing Patterns of Retirement: The Trend toward Later Retirement”) until the end of the chapter

b. Topic: The welfare state, financial security, and aging

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 8

Class 10, November 22

Topic: Aging and the environment – homes, cities, neighbourhoods, and care-taking institutions, I

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 11, up to pg. 273 (stopping at “Transportation”)

“Conceptualizing Age-Friendly Communities”, Verena H. Menec, Robin Means, Norah Keating, and Graham Parkhurst, *Canadian Journal on Aging*. 2011. (BLACKBOARD)

Class 11, November 29***ASSIGNMENT 2 DUE**

Topic: Aging and the environment – homes, cities, neighbourhoods, and care-taking institutions, con't

Reading:

“Reimagining Nursing Homes: The Art of the Possible”, Robert L. Kane, *Journal of Aging and Social Policy*, 2010. (BLACKBOARD)

“The Need for A Social Revolution in Residential Care”, Kristine Theurer, W. Ben Mortenson, Robyn Stone, Melinda Suto, Virpi Timonen, and Julia Rozanova, *Journal of Aging Studies*, 2014 (BLACKBOARD).

Class 12, December 6

Topic: Death and dying

Reading:

Aging and Society (textbook): Chapter 14

“Historical and Cultural Variants on the Good Death”, Tony Walter, *British Medical Journal*, 2003. (BLACKBOARD)

FINAL EXAM, time and date TBA