

PSY 324-002 - Psychology of Aging**Fall 2009**

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:00–12:15 pm, SB108

<u>Instructor:</u>	Karen A. Daniels, Ph.D.
<u>Phone:</u>	962-7178
<u>Office:</u>	SB 105I
<u>Office Hours:</u>	Th, 10:00 - 11:00 am or by appointment
<u>E-mail:</u>	danielsk@uncw.edu
<u>Website:</u>	http://people.uncw.edu/danielsk/

Course description:

What does it mean to “grow old”? Which psychological processes change in later life and which do not? Why is it important to study adult development and aging? This course is designed to address these questions by providing students with an overview of psychological development in adulthood and later life. It will cover theory and research relevant to a variety of topics regarding the psychology of aging, including research methods, major theories of aging, physical and mental health in old age, cognitive aging, and social/emotional issues. An overarching goal in this course will be to critically analyze potential methods for achieving healthy, or successful, aging. The class will combine lectures, discussions, and class assignments to help students explore the scientific, personal, and societal relevance of the growth and decline evident in adult development.

The main objectives for this course are to help students:

- Understand the basic concepts and theories of aging across a variety of psychological domains (e.g., personality, cognition, emotion, etc.).
- Critically analyze major empirical contributions in the adult development and aging literature.
- Learn to assess the real-world relevance of the concepts encountered in class.

Textbook and required readings:

Foos, P.W., & Clark, M.C. (2008). *Human Aging* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Additional, outside readings will be assigned periodically to enhance student understanding of important issues. Such readings are available on the course website.

Pre-requisites and Class Format:

This course is designed to build on basic psychological concepts and to focus on age-related changes in such concepts. To ensure that students come into this course with the necessary foundational knowledge, they must have already completed General Psychology (PSY 105), and either Lifespan Human Development (PSY 223) or Introduction to Gerontology (GRN 101). You cannot take this class if you do not have the prerequisites.

This is an upper division course. That means:

- (a) there is quite a bit of reading, discussion of original empirical research, and exams that require integration and application of material. It is the student’s responsibility to keep up with the assigned readings and to ask questions if something is unclear. I am always available during office hours or by e-mail to answer questions and to discuss course material.

- (b) lectures will encourage student participation. My role as the instructor is not to simply lecture to you, but to pose questions and foster class discussion about key concepts and current issues in aging. Participation in this course, either by asking questions or contributing to class discussions, is not required but is strongly recommended and can "influence" your grade. Please be courteous and respectful of other people's ideas!
- (c) students are strongly recommended to attend all classes. Lecture attendance will not contribute directly to your grade. However, exams will draw from both the readings and class lectures. Since I often lecture on challenging topics that are not covered in the readings, failure to attend class generally results in poor exam performance.

Grading: Final grades will be based on a total of 300 points: 200 from 4 exams (50 points each; 67% of your final grade), 40 points from 8 class assignments (5 points each; 13% of grade), and 60 points from a final class project (20% of grade). Grades will be assigned in the following way: A = 93-100%, A- = 90-92%, B+ = 87-89%, B = 83-86%, B- = 80-82%, C+ = 77-79%, C = 73-76%, C- = 70-72%, etc. There will also be extra-credit opportunities offered periodically throughout the semester.

Exams: There will be 4 exams, each worth 50 points. All exams are non-cumulative and will contain a variety of testing formats (e.g., matching, diagrams, etc.), but will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions. Make-up exams will be given only when a scheduled exam is missed due to an unavoidable (e.g., medical) emergency. If this happens, I will request documentation of the emergency.

Assignments: You will complete a total of 8 assignments in this course, two from each of the main sections we will cover (Theories & Methods, Physical & Mental Health, Cognitive Aging, and Social & Emotional Aging). You can earn a maximum of 5 points for each assignment for a total of 40 points toward your final grade. The purpose of these assignments is to (a) help you keep up with the readings and foster class discussion, (b) learn how to critically evaluate psychological research, and (c) encourage the application of concepts learned in class to the "real world." As indicated on the course schedule, assignments will be posted on Tuesdays and are due on Friday by 5 pm the same week. Completed assignments must be submitted electronically to my e-mail account (danielsk@uncw.edu).

Final Project: A fundamental component of scientific psychology is designing and reporting experimental research, as well as using scientific knowledge for the purposes of treatment and rehabilitation. To give you first-hand experience in this process as it relates to aging, each student will be required to complete one of the following projects worth 60 points (20% of your final grade).

Option 1 - Literature Review: Write a comprehensive literature review of any topic within the area of Psychology of Aging. The review should include at least 10 relevant articles (both seminal and current), integrate findings from the various sources, and critically evaluate the reviewed literature.

Option 2 - Research Proposal: Write a proposal for a research project designed to examine a specific issue in the area of Psychology of Aging. A good proposal includes an introduction and rationale, proposed methods, and expected results. Further instructions for research proposals are provided on the class website.

Option 3 - Cognitive Enhancement Program for Older Adults: Design a program to enhance the cognitive abilities of older adults. This may be a memory training program, a program to teach older adults a particular skill (such as using computer software), or anything that enhances the cognitive functioning of older adults. The description of your program should be very specific and include the activities and materials to be used (e.g., a lesson plan or instructor manual). Be sure to clearly reference empirical research that supports your program.

Academic Honesty: The academic honesty policy of UNCW will be strictly followed in this course. Please consult the Undergraduate Catalogue or Student Handbook for specifics about this policy. In brief, neither cheating nor plagiarism will be tolerated in this course.

Campus Violence and Harassment: UNCW practices a zero-tolerance policy for violence and harassment of any kind. For emergencies contact UNCW CARE at 962-2273, Campus Police at 962-3184, or Wilmington Police at 911. For University or community resources visit <http://uncw.edu/wrc/crisis.htm>

Learning Center; The Learning Center provides writing services with free one-on-one consultations for all students for any academic writing purpose. Consultations are led by faculty-recommended and trained peer tutors or professional tutors that help students identify areas to improve and develop specific revision plans. Students taking PSY324 might find this service useful for helping to produce a strong final project or to simply improve your writing skills before you graduate. You can get more information at <http://www.uncw.edu/stuaff/uls/writing.htm>.

Class Schedule:

The following is a tentative outline of the course schedule, including course topics and corresponding readings. Changes to this schedule may occur; however, if changes become necessary, they will be announced with as much notice as possible.

Week	Topic	
Theoretical & Methodological Issues		
8/20	Course overview	
8/25	Demographics & defining old age	Chapter 1 [Assignment 1 posted]
8/27	Lifespan perspective & successful aging	Chapter 2 pp. 21-26
9/1	Theories of aging	Chapter 4
9/3	CLASS CANCELLED	
9/8	Methods & Issues	Chapter 2 pp. 26-37 [Assignment 2 posted]
9/10	Methods & Issues	Salthouse (2000)
Exam 1: Tuesday, September 15th		
Physical & Mental Health		
9/17	Physical Aging	Chapter 3
9/22	Physical Aging	Chapter 3 [Assignment 3 posted]
9/24	Health & Longevity	Chapter 5
9/29	Mental Health (Psychopathology)	Chapter 12 [Assignment 4 posted]
10/1	Mental Health (Psychopathology)	Chapter 12
10/6	No class: Fall Break.	
10/8	Healthy Environments	Chapter 13
Exam 2: Tuesday, October 13th		
Cognitive Aging		
10/15	Sensation & Perception.	Chapter 6
10/20	Sensation & Perception.	Chapter 6
10/22	Memory & Cognition.	Chapter 7
10/27	Memory & Cognition.	Chapter 7 [Assignment 5 posted]
10/29	Intelligence.	Chapter 8
11/3	Intelligence.	Chapter 8 [Assignment 6 posted]
11/5	Metacognition	Hertzog & Hultsch (2000) pp. 417-434
Exam 3: Tuesday, November 10th		
Social & Emotional Aging		
11/12	Personality	Chapter 9
11/17	Personality	Chapter 9 [Assignment 7 posted]
11/19	Relationships & Social Support	Chapter 10
11/24	Work & Retirement.	Chapter 11 [Assignment 8 posted]
11/26	No class: Thanksgiving Break	
12/1	Death & Bereavement.	Chapter 14
Exam 4 (Final Exam): Tuesday, December 8th at 11:30 a.m.		