

## **PSY 324-002 - Psychology of Aging**

Spring 2013

Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays, 11:00–11:50am, TL1011

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### **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 learning 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* (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Child Psychology (PSY220) or Adolescent Psychology (PSY221) or Lifespan Human Development (PSY 223). Students must seek instructor approval if you do not have the prerequisites for this course.

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), 50 points from 10 class assignments (5 points each; 16.67% of grade), and 50 points from a final class project (16.67% 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 11 assignments in this course, each worth a maximum of 5 points. They are designed 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. Unless otherwise indicated, assignments will be posted on the course website on Mondays and are due on Friday by 5pm the same week. Completed assignments must be submitted to me electronically. Lab assignments turned in 1 to 2 days late will be awarded 50% of the earned points. Lab assignments will not be accepted beyond 2 late days. I will drop your lowest assignment score and base your final grade on your top 10 assignments.

**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 50 points. This project will be due to me electronically by **5pm on Friday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>**. Additional information on this project is available on the class website.

**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 5 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.

**Attendance:** 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 topics that are not covered in the readings, it is strongly recommended that you attend all classes. As well, there will be extra-credit opportunities offered periodically throughout the semester. They will be unannounced and no make-ups will be given. On days for which an extra-credit quiz or assignment is given, they will be handed out at the beginning of the class and you will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz. Students coming to class late will not be given extra time.

**Participation.** 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 participate!

**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. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions about academic honesty.

**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/wsrc/crisis.html>

**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 paper or to simply improve your writing skills before you graduate. You can get more information at <http://www.uncw.edu/ulc/writing/index.html> or 962-7857.

**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.

	Monday		Wednesday		Friday		Readings	Assignments
Week 1			Jan 9	Orientation to Course	11	Demographics & Defining Old Age	Ch. 1	
Week 2	14	Demographics & Defining Old Age	16	Lifespan Perspective & Successful Aging	18	Lifespan Perspective & Successful Aging	Ch. 2, pp. 21-26	1
Week 3	21	MLK Day (no class)	23	Theories of Aging	25	Theories of Aging	Ch. 4	2
Week 4	28	Methods & Issues	30	Methods & Issues	Feb 1	Methods & Issues	Ch. 2, pp. 26-37; Salthouse	3
Week 5	4	Exam 1	6	Physical Aging	8	Physical Aging	Ch. 3	4
Week 6	11	Physical Aging	13	Health & Longevity	15	Health & Longevity	Ch. 5	5
Week 7	18	Mental Health (Psychopathology)	20	Mental Health (Psychopathology)	22	Mental Health (Psychopathology)	Ch. 12	6
Week 8	25	Healthy Environments	27	Healthy Environments	Mar 1	Exam 2	Ch. 13	
Week 9	4	Spring Break (no class)	6	Spring Break (no class)	8	Spring Break (no class)		
Week 10	11	Sensation & Perception	13	Sensation & Perception	15	Sensation & Perception	Ch. 6	7
Week 11	18	Memory & Cognition	20	Memory & Cognition	22	Memory & Cognition	Ch. 7	8
Week 12	25	Intelligence	27	Intelligence	29	Easter Break (no class)	Ch. 8	9
Week 13	Apr 1	Metacognition	3	Metacognition	5	Exam 3	Hertzog & Hultsch	
Week 14	8	Personality	10	Personality	12	Personality	Ch. 9	10
Week 15	15	Relationships & Social Support	17	Relationships & Social Support	19	Relationships & Social Support	Ch. 10	11
Week 16	22	Life Transitions	24	Life Transitions	26	Course Summary	Ch. 14	
Week 17			May 1	FINAL EXAM: 11:30	3	Project due by 5pm		