

Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Illinois State University  
*SOA/SWK 211, Social Gerontology (Sec. 1)*

Fall 2018

Meets: T/Th, 9:35-10:50am

Classroom: Schroeder Hall 112

Office hours: Mon. 3:00-4:30; Tu. 2-3:30& by appt. Email: [cwellin@ilstu.edu](mailto:cwellin@ilstu.edu)

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Catalog Description

As the published description states, this course deals with the “*Process and consequences of aging; interplay between social and social-psychological forces and the aged population in society.*” \*This course is an approved elective in the Women & Gender Studies Program (see final page of syllabus.)

Course Overview

Gerontology is the study of human aging. It is a multi-disciplinary, “hybrid” field of study, drawing perspectives and methods from a range of fields including the social sciences, medicine and human development, clinical practice (e.g., by nurses and social workers), and the humanities. Though aging is often (and, too often, negatively) associated with *bodily* change and decline in later life, physical aging will receive little attention in this course. Instead, our focus will be on social and cultural influences. A moment’s reflection will reveal that even the meaning of physical aging (such as wrinkles and graying hair) are highly variable across individuals, cultures, and even between groups within one nation such as the U.S. Furthermore, the meanings and roles we associate with particular life stages, such as childhood, adolescence, “middle-age,” or retirement, vary a lot depending on when we are born (i.e., which “birth cohort,”) and on what particular historical and social events shape our lives. Though later life will be an important focus in this course, we will discuss aging as a *life-long* process. Therefore, the study of *social gerontology* requires that we grapple with the interplay between individual experiences of aging, their social and cultural contexts, and the political and economic policies that shape our choices and well-being as we age. Debates about the economic and political implications of an aging society (concerning Social Security, Medicare, etc.) are ever more vital, as the large cohort of “baby-boomers” approaches retirement age.

Course Goals and Agenda

Our objectives in this course include the development of both *substantive knowledge* about social gerontology, and *intellectual skills* that apply generally to your college work. Another goal is to find personal insights in the material. We will address such substantive questions as the following: How have the formal rules and meanings of chronological aging—i.e., age measured in years—changed historically in the U.S.? What topics of interest have been central in gerontology, and how have they changed over time? What are the major theoretical perspectives and questions guiding research in social gerontology? What methodological approaches and tools have scholars used to study aging in society? How are patterns of aging shaped by social statuses of class, race, and gender? What are the major social welfare policies affecting the aged in the U.S.? How can knowledge of gerontology be relevant to students’ career choices and roles?

Students will also develop intellectual skills and confidence as we engage in *critical thinking* (addressing and reflecting on questions, evidence, and diverse perspectives in the study of aging), *expressing* (both orally and extensively in writing) and *documenting* scholarly arguments about course material, and *integrating* an array of information sources that contribute to our understanding of aging processes and experiences. This approach aims to enhance the relevance of the course for all students.

### Required Texts

There are three books and supplementary readings for this course; *all are required*:

1. Jill Quadagno. **Aging & the Life Course (6th Ed.)**. Published 2014, McGraw-Hill.  
(JQ below)
2. Donna Eder, et al. **School Talk**. Published 1995, Rutgers University Press.  
(DE below)
3. Timothy Diamond. **Making Gray Gold**. Published 1992, University of Chicago Press.  
(TD below)
4. Chris Wellin. **SOC211: Social Gerontolog Readings (CAS-IT Instructor's Folder,)**  
(Supplementary readings are designated by author's name(s) + IF below)

### Teaching Format

We will combine lecture, in-class discussion, guest speakers, and videos. Although it is challenging to sustain discussion among more than 40 people, the benefits of doing so—for a lively learning atmosphere—are well worth the effort. My role as a lecturer will be to *contextualize, clarify, and connect* course readings, *not* simply to summarize them. Therefore, students who fail to keep up with readings will not get the full benefits of class attendance, and will *at best* be able do passing (C-level) work in this course. Class attendance is mandatory. When you cannot avoid missing class, due to illness or other conflicts, please inform me. Students who are repeatedly absent can be penalized or dropped from the course. Consult our Reggie Net site often for SOA/SWK 211 handouts and announcements. *Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at disabilityconcerns.illinoisstate.edu.*

### Assignments, Exams and Grading

Our course objectives are diverse, and any/all modes of assessing students' learning are partial and imperfect. Thus, our ways of evaluating your work will also be varied. An early emphasis on mastering terms, concepts, and perspectives (and an "objective" exam), will be followed by applying the perspectives, both to course readings and to other topics of your choosing. After the first exam, most assignments will be take-home essay form. There are **100 available "points,"** to be earned as follows:

- 1 in-class exam, consisting of multiple-choice and short essay items =25 pts.
- 1 take-home essay exam, based on questions drawn from readings =25 pts.
- 3 short (3-4 page) “response” essays, discussing and/or applying readings =30 pts.
- 1 final in-class exam covering material from the second half of the term =20 pts =100.

[All written work is to be either typed or word-processed. **NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED, UNLESS DISCUSSED AND GRANTED IN ADVANCE.** In formatting papers, please double-space, use one-inch margins and 10-12-point type, with either Times-Roman or Courier fonts preferred. Clarity, spelling, punctuation, word-usage, and continuity—all are essential for college writing, and for full credit in this course. All written work should be original and stated in your own words; any language drawn from other sources must be appropriately noted, and paraphrased material properly noted. The use of any material without citation, from printed, video, or internet sources, constitutes academic dishonesty and will result in zero-credit for the assignment and, if flagrant,, in formal sanctions against the student. See the ISU policy on plagiarism for clarification of responsibilities and regulations.]

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings/Tasks</u>
<u>Week 1</u>		
Aug. 21	Course introduction	Syllabus; student support/resources
Aug. 23	Basic concepts/Topics in aging	Ch. 1, JQ; Longino, IF
<u>Week 2</u>		
Aug. 28	Theories of aging	Ch. 2, JQ; Riley & Riley, IF
Aug. 30	Theory II & Studying aging	Ch. 3, JQ; Charon; Ragin, IF Morgan & Kunkel IF <i>suggested</i>
<u>Week 3</u>		
Sept. 4	Critical approaches to sociology	Mills; Moody, IF
Sept. 6	Demography/population aging.	Ch. 4, JQ; <i>Video</i>
<u>Week 4</u>		
Sept. 11	Catch up—no new reading	
Sept. 13	Psychology of Aging/Aged	Ch. 6, JQ; <b><u>1<sup>st</sup> Response Essay Due</u></b>
<b><u>Discuss Sample Questions for 1<sup>st</sup> (in-class) Exam: Oct. 2nd.</u></b>		
<u>Week 5</u>		
Sept. 18	Symbolic interactionism & the self	Karp, IF
Sept. 20	Studying childhood & youth	Thorne; Fine, IF <i>video</i>
<u>Week 6</u>		
Sept. 25	Ethnography of middle school	Eder, 1-59
Sept. 27	Ethnography of middle school II	Eder, 61-170 ( <i>exam review</i> )

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings/Tasks</u>
<u>Week 7</u>		
Oct. 2	<b><i>In class exam: 25 multiple choice questions*</i></b>	
Oct. 4	Family & social supports	Ch. 8, JQ; <i>Video</i>
<u>Week 8</u>		
Oct. 9	Living arrangements	Ch. 9, JQ; Atchley, IF
Oct. 11	Care-giving for the aged/disabled	Ch. 12, JQ; Cancian & Olicker, IF; <b><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Response Due*</i></b>
<u>Week 9</u>		
Oct. 16	The “aged” welfare state	Ch. 5, JQ
Oct. 18	Work and retirement	Ch. 10, JQ; Savishinsky, IF <i>Video</i>
<u>Week 10</u>		
Oct. 23	Baby boomers/new retirement trends	<i>No new readings</i>
Oct. 25	Economics of/and aging	Ch. 14, JQ
<b><i>Receive questions for take-home essay exam, due November 21<sup>st</sup>..</i></b>		
<u>Week 11</u>		
Oct. 30	Economics of/and aging, II	Ch. 14, JQ
Nov. 1	Poverty and inequality	Ch. 15, JQ; Newman, IF
<u>Week 12</u>		
Nov. 6	Health care system & aging	Ch. 11, JQ; <i>Video</i>
Nov. 8	Challenges of chronic illness	Conrad; Wellin, IF
<u>Week 13</u>		
Nov. 13	Nursing home care	Pp. x-9; 13-74, TD
Nov. 15	Critique of NH care/work	Pp. 75-167, TD
<u>Week 14</u>		
Nov. 20	<b><i>No Class: Thanksgiving Break</i></b>	<b><i>Essays Due by Tuesday the 20th</i></b>
Nov. 22		
<u>Week 15</u>		
Nov. 27	Culture Change in NH Care	Thomas; Rahman & Schnelle, IF
Nov. 29	Professional Panel on LTC	TBA
<u>Week 16</u>		
Dec. 4	Aging, cohorts, community	Myerhoff, IF; <i>Video</i>
Dec. 6	The disability perspective	Murphy; Rosenblum; Todis, IF <b><i>3<sup>rd</sup> Response Due</i></b>
<u>Week 17</u>		

*Final Exam—Time to be announced*

**This course counts for the WGS Minor:** The minor in Women's and Gender Studies enhances any undergraduate major by integrating a working knowledge of gender issues with the student's field(s) of study. The **21 credit hours required for the minor** are drawn from diverse academic disciplines. For more information please contact our WGS advisor. Or, visit our webpage: <http://wgs.illinoisstate.edu/academics/undergrad/>

**Sexual Assault Awareness Language for Syllabus: Sexual Assault Survivor's Resources:** The University is committed to both supporting students' well-being and safety and acting to ensure the safety of our campus community. All university faculty and staff are mandated by Federal law to report acts of sexual violence/assault, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking and sexual harassment so the University can respond and investigate. Only Student Counseling Services staff and the university psychiatrist are not required to report. Victims of such incidents are free to choose their level of involvement in University and/or police investigations. There is an extensive network of support resources for survivors of such incidents; talking with someone about what happened aids recovery and adjustment.

- Reporting options: ISU Police 911 or (309) 438-8631
- Non-criminal reporting options: Equal Opportunity Office (309) 438-3383  
EqualOpportunity.IllinoisState.edu
- Sexual Assault Prevention and Survivor Services (Student Counseling Services) at (309) 438-3655 or [counseling.illinoisstate.edu](mailto:counseling.illinoisstate.edu). (free and confidential)

**WGS Librarian:** Alexis Shpall Wolstein, Subject Librarian for Women's & Gender Studies. Email: [aswolst@ilstu.edu](mailto:aswolst@ilstu.edu).

**Soc/Anthro Librarian:** Vanette Schwartz. Email: [vmschwa@ilstu.edu](mailto:vmschwa@ilstu.edu).