

Fall 1996

A. Regula Herzog, Instructor

Psychology 459: The Psychology of Aging

This Psychology of Aging course takes a broad view of aging. It is based on the premise that individual aging is a lifelong process which cannot be understood as an isolated phenomenon but is a function of the physical and social changes that accompany psychological development as well as the social and historical context in which an individual ages. The course will draw information from the traditional specialities of the psychology of aging (such as memory; perception; intelligence; personality; psychopathology and treatment) as well as from health and social gerontology (such as biology of aging; health behaviors; social roles and relationships; work and retirement; housing, community and institutions).

Classes consist of lectures, guest speakers, movies, class exercises and discussions. The text is John C. Cavanaugh, Adult development and aging, 2nd edition, Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, California, 1993, available in local bookstores. A coursepack contains additional required readings; it is available from Michigan Document Services. The required (asterisked) readings for each topic plus optional readings are listed in a separate reading list.

There are two types of home assignments and two in-class exams. The assignments include (a) several visits with an older person and a report about the life situation of this person, and (b) four short papers that provide an opportunity to pursue in more detail an issue raised in class and/or by the readings. The first assignment is spelled out in more detail in a separate handout. Short papers should address the topic by summarizing and integrating information on a specific topic, drawing conclusions and implications, and/or applying course information to a specific situation or problem. Typical length is 4-8 pages. Topics for possible short papers are announced each week, and papers are due two weeks later. Two of them must be handed in before the midterm, two after. The two exams cover the first and second part of the course, respectively. They consist of multiple choice and essay questions. A special review session for each exam may be scheduled outside of the regular class sessions if at least one quarter of the students request it; otherwise questions about the materials may always be raised during office hours and sometimes during class sessions. Students are responsible for keeping up with the assigned readings, for attending class and participating in class exercises and discussions, and for completing assignments and exams by the specified dates.

Grading is based on the paper about visiting with an older person (20%), on the four short papers (10% each), on the two exams (15% each), and on class attendance and participation (10%).

The class meets on Mondays and Wednesdays, 4-5:30 PM in 1060 East Hall. Office hours are on Tuesday (2:00-3:00 p.m.) in Room 1312 ISR or by special arrangement (Phone: 763-5890).

Course Outline

Introduction	Sept. 4
The phenomenon of age: Fact and fiction	
Research models and methods	Sept. 9
The aging body	Sept. 11, 16
Health and aging	Sept. 18, 23
Information processing	Sept. 25, 30
Memory	Oct. 2, 7
Intellectual development	Oct. 9, 14
Midterm Exam	Oct. 16
Personality	Oct. 21, 23
Psychopathology & treatment	Oct. 28, 30
Social relationships	Nov. 4, 6
Work, leisure, & retirement	Nov. 11, 13
Communities, housing, & institutions	Nov. 18, 20
Stratification, ethnicity, culture	Nov. 25, 27
Death & dying	Dec. 2
Successful aging	Dec. 4
Final Exam	Dec. 9

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