Course Description:
This course examines the sociology of age and aging in U.S. society. A central theme of the course is that older Americans (age 65+) comprise a very diverse population, in terms of their economic status, health status, and daily experiences. To accomplish the goal of understanding diversity in the older population, this course integrates research from the fields of demography, sociology, epidemiology, psychology, and economics. Specific topics will include: the demographic foundations of the aging population; debates concerning the mortality-morbidity tradeoff; the economic status, employment behavior, living arrangements, mental health, social relationships, and medical care receipt of the elderly; and the components of "successful aging."

Prerequisites:
Graduate standing or permission of the instructor is required. Some familiarity with quantitative research methods is also highly recommended.

Readings:
All readings are required except for “Recommended” articles. Recommended articles are included in the coursepack for enrichment, and should not be selected as “precis” articles.

Course Requirements and Grading:
The course is organized as a seminar. Although an overview of each week’s readings is provided in lecture, much instruction will take place in the context of student presentations, guided discussions, and exchanges focused on the readings. Course grades will be based on three major requirements. (1) Leading a discussion section. Each week, a student will be responsible for leading the discussion and preparing summaries of three readings for all seminar participants. [10 percent of class grade]. (2) Participation in weekly discussion. Preparation and active participation in class is expected of all students [20 percent of class grade]. (3) Final research paper or proposal. A brief (2-3 page) description of your research proposal is due NO LATER than October 13. Each student will present a brief synopsis of their research project during the class session [70 percent of class grade]. Incompletes will not be given in the course.
**Paper Requirement:**
The main course requirement is the preparation of an original research paper or research proposal. Topic and data will be chosen in consultation with the instructor. Papers will typically be based on the analysis of pre-existing data, but students may pursue other research strategies with permission of the instructor. The paper should define a research question, review relevant prior studies, and either: (1) analyze suitable data, and present the findings and their implications (research paper) OR (2) propose a detailed strategy for research methodology (research proposal). Students are encouraged to use this class project as the opportunity to develop a dissertation proposal or journal article. A brief (3 pages long) prospectus is due on October 13. This brief prospectus should describe the research question, the data or methodology to be used, and the analyses to be undertaken.

During the final week of the course, members of the seminar will make oral presentations of their empirical research papers and/or original research proposals. The duration of each presentation will be determined based on the number of students in the class. The first draft of each paper is due to the instructor no later than 5 p.m. on Friday December 3. Students are encouraged to revise the paper in light of student and instructor comments. **The final draft of the seminar paper is due by 5 p.m. on Monday December 20.**

For students planning to conduct secondary data analyses, many data sets are available through University of Michigan’s Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR). Among these data sets are the Assets and Health of the Oldest Old (AHEAD), Health and Retirement Survey (HRS), Longitudinal Study of Aging (LSOA), National Long-Term Care Survey (NLTCS), National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), and the Wisconsin Longitudinal Study (WLS). Information on each of these data sets will be made available during the early weeks of the seminar.

**Discussion Requirement**
Each week, one student will serve as discussion leader. During the first class of the semester, students will choose “their week,” based on interest area. The discussion leader will prepare a precis for three of the assigned readings. The leader will decide which articles they will summarize for classmates. A precis is a summary that contains the essential details about the article’s theory, method, and findings. For a 20-page article, a 2-3 page precis should be sufficient. Discussion leaders should distribute these summaries to all seminar participants by the Monday (5 p.m.) prior to the seminar. This is done as a courtesy to your classmates, so that they will have time to prepare for the seminar.

All seminar participants are responsible for all of the assigned readings. Students should read carefully so that they come to class with both insightful comments and questions. Students who read materials that are not on the syllabus but that are germane to the discussion should feel free to contribute this knowledge to the discussion; the class as a whole will benefit from the specialized knowledge of all participants.
Background Reading: These volumes are not required for the course. However, they are excellent references sources for scholars interested in the social, economic, psychological, and medical aspects of aging. Moreover, when choosing a paper topic, these reference sources may help you to narrow your interests.


**READING SCHEDULE**

**September 8: Overview and Theoretical Perspectives**


**Recommended Readings**


**September 15: Demographic Foundations of an Aging Society**


**Recommended Readings**


**September 22: Mortality and Morbidity: Theory and Methods**


**Recommended Readings**


**September 29: Differentials in Health and Mortality: Race, Class, Gender**


**Recommended Readings**


**October 6: Mind-Body Connection: Psychosocial Correlates of Mortality and Morbidity**


**Recommended Reading**


**October 13: Disability and Active Life Expectancy – PROPECTUS DUE**


**Recommended Readings**


**October 20: Work and Retirement**


**Recommended Readings**


**October 27: Family Relations and Living Arrangements**


**Recommended Readings**


**November 3: Caregiving and Intergenerational Transfers**


Recommended Readings


November 10: Poverty and Economic Well-Being


Recommended Readings


November 17: Successful Aging- Coping and Adaptation


Recommended Readings


November 24: Happy Thanksgiving!

December 8: Successful Aging: Psychological Well-Being


**Recommended Readings**


**December 8: Student paper presentations**

*Have a wonderful holiday season!*