



Course title:	Adulthood & Aging
Course #/term:	SW 690, Fall, 2021
Time and place:	Wed, 9-noon, Zoom
Credit hours:	3
Prerequisites:	N/A
Instructor:	Xiaoling Xiang, PhD, MSW, MPHIL
Pronouns:	She, her, hers
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1. Course Statement

a. Course description

This course focuses on bio-psycho-social development and changes in mid- and late-adulthood. It will cover six major areas.

- (a) Demographic trends globally and in the United States
- (b) Major theoretical perspectives including the life course and life-span perspectives
- (c) Biological and cognitive changes in the second half of life
- (d) Common chronic conditions and their treatment in older adults
- (e) Psychological and social development in mid- and late- adulthood
- (f) Definitions and determinants of positive and healthy aging

Special attention will be paid to diversity and social justice issues, including similarities and differences in the experience of aging related to an individual's position in society (e.g., class, race/ethnicity, immigration status, religion, sex, sexual orientation and

gender identity), and institutional and social factors that marginalize some segments of the older population.

b. Course content

This course will examine psychosocial development and change across the adult lifespan. The focus will be on how various psychological factors influence development and change, as well as the impact of social factors on development and change in family and work roles from adulthood through old age. Special attention will be placed on similarities and differences in adult development and change related to an individual's position in society, including diverse dimensions such as ability, age, class, color, culture, ethnicity, family structure, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), marital status, national origin, race, religion or spirituality, sex, and sexual orientation.

c. Course objectives and competencies

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Assess impacts of demographic trends in the US in the coming decades. (EPAS 4)
- Apply theoretical concepts to understand adulthood development. (EPAS 7)
- Describe biological changes with aging and their health and social implications. (EPAS 6, 7)
- Differentiate normal cognitive change and cognitive impairment. (EPAS 6, 7)
- Analyze psychosocial theories of stress, coping and social relations in later life. (EPAS 4, 7, 8)
- Evaluate concepts of positive and healthy aging (EPAS 4, 6, 7, 8)
- Identify the major ways in which an individual's position in society and the key diversity dimensions affect development and change in mid- and later adulthood. (EPAS 6, 7, 8)
- Analyze the impact of the environment on the health of older adults (EPAS 3)
- Evaluate older adult's physical environment and the impact of social isolation and socio- economic status through the lens of Universal Design. (EPAS 3)

d. Course design

Class sessions will include lectures, small group and class discussions, audiovisuals, and guest speakers. These activities will be integrated at critical points in the semester to facilitate understanding of course content. Students are expected to attend all classes, complete assigned readings for each week, participate actively in class discussion, and complete all course requirements on time.

e. Curricular themes

Multiculturalism and Diversity will be addressed throughout the course through the analysis of differences and similarities across groups on issues such as intergenerational relationships, caregiving, marital status, coping, and psychological well-being.

Social Change and Social Justice will be addressed by investigating topics, such as the impact of income inequality and ageism on retirement and psychological well-being.

Promotion, Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation will be addressed through discussion of how social workers can help bolster informal social support networks to assist individuals and families and enhance psychological well-being across the adult life span.

Behavioral and Social Science Research will be addressed by the inclusion of theoretical frameworks for the understanding of adult development and change. The findings of research on both psychological and structural factors that influence individual functioning will be emphasized.

f. Relationship to social work ethics and values

Values and ethics will be addressed throughout this course. In particular, this will include ethical conduct in research on psychological issues and social factors related to adulthood and aging, as well as an examination of the inequalities linked to social positions in society. Also included will be content on variations in values related to family and work roles among different subgroups in society.

g. Intensive focus on PODS

This course integrates PODS content and skills with a special emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge. Through the use of a variety of instructional methods, this course will support students developing a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self-knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

2. Class Requirements

a. Text and class materials

- Weekly readings will be posted in Canvas and may change within one week prior to class
- Students are expected to read ALL posted articles which may or may not be discussed in class but are identified by the instructor to be a useful resource for future practice
- Additional readings may be assigned. If so, these will be verbalized in class and subsequently posted in Canvas for the appropriate week at least one week ahead of time
- Pre-recorded content modules may be assigned for viewing prior to class to prepare students for in-class work.

b. Class schedule

Date/Time	Agenda & Reading	Major assignments
Week 1 Sept 1	Demography of Aging Explores fertility, mortality, and global aging; variations in mortality by gender, race, ethnicity, and social class; impact of mortality patterns for individuals, society, and public policy	
Week 2 Sept 8	Diversity in Aging Societies Understands the aging process using the socio-cultural perspective; explores ageism in a cross-cultural perspective	
Week 3 Sept 15	Biology of aging Explores the biological process of aging and age-related changes in what are commonly considered a disease of aging	
Week 4 Sept 22	Theoretical perspectives Reviews major types of gerontological theory within the context of theoretical paradigms; practice applying the life course theory to chart and analyze the life trajectories of an older adult	Life course analysis group project and personal reflection paper due Sept 26 at 11pm
Week 5 Sept 29	Chronic disease & Health care Explores common chronic diseases and considerations for care	

Week 6 Oct 6	Functional independence & the disablement process Explores theories related to functional independence in older adults and the disablement process. Discuss the implications for supporting older adults with functional limitations and disabilities.	
Week 7 Oct 13	Psychological perspectives Explores the psychological development and change across the adult lifespan in the broad domains of personality and socio-emotional functioning	
Week 8 Oct 20	Cognitive aging and cognitive impairment Explores the development and change across the adult lifespan in the domain of cognition and how cognitive impairment may occur in later life	
Week 9 Oct 27	How to preserve cognitive functioning Explores theories and programs related to promoting cognitive function in later life. Also discuss resilience.	Covid-19 paper due Oct 31 at 11pm
Week 10 Nov 3	Family relations and aging Explores how family relations and linked lives impact aging	
Week 11 Nov 10	Caregiving Explores caregiving roles and impacts on older adults and families; technology and caregiving	
Week 12 Nov 17	Environmental perspectives Explores how build and physical environment affects older adults; universal design; aging in place	
Week 13 Dec 1	Sexual health and aging Sexuality in later life; attitudes about sexuality and aging	
Week 14 Dec 8	Careers in aging	Universal design paper due Dec 10th at 11pm

c. Assignments

1. Life Course analysis group project (20 pts). Students will divide into groups of 4. Each group will prepare 5 to 10 interview questions. The class will conduct an interview of an older adult during class time using the interview questions prepared by each group. After the interview, each group will chart the life course events and interlocking trajectories of the interviewee. Write in major events and transitions such as family events and transitions, educational events, occupational events, health events, etc. In addition, each student will write a personal reflection paper discussing how the interviewee's experiences are influenced by their environment, historical context, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, education, etc. Each student will turn in a life chart (could be the same or different from your group's chart) and a personal reflection paper (EPAS 3, 6, 7).
2. Mid-term paper (30 pts): Use research and analytical skills to write a short paper focused on COVID-19 and older adults. How does the COVID-19 pandemic affect older adults? What groups of older adults are disproportionately affected? What might be the long-term consequences of the pandemic? You may choose a specific topic area to focus on (e.g., social connections, caregiving, health and health care access, mental health, cognitive outcomes...) or provide an overview of the impacts. Your analysis must integrate PODS concept. This paper requires you to examine your topic using the literature. Your paper should be no more than 6 pages single-spaced, including a bibliography. (EPAS 4).
3. Term paper (30 pts): Use universal design theory to examine a space through the perspective of an older adult. Write a reflection and identify what you might do to improve the space of older adults using the principles of universal design. (EPAS 3, 4, 6, 7, 8)
4. Attendance and participation (20 pts). There will be several scored online course engagement activities and discussion assignments. Each is worth 2 points. Completing ≥ 5 of these assignments will earn you a max of 10 points. In addition, you can earn up to 10 points for attending and participating in class.

d. Attendance and class participation

Students are expected to arrive on time and stay throughout all class sessions. Students are responsible for securing lecture notes and handouts when circumstances require them to be absent. Many opportunities will be given for students to participate, including short, in-class exercises and break-out group discussion sessions. Good attendance and active participation will be rewarded when calculating the final grade.

For reference, the [Policy on Class Attendance](#) can be found in the MSW Student Guide.

e. Grading

The criteria for each grade are as follows:

Grade	Description
A+: ≥99	The grade of A+ will rarely be used and, in general, students should not expect to receive this grade on an assignment. This grade signifies work that goes beyond the content of the course and the expertise students are expected to master. An A+ is rare to obtain but not impossible.
A: 95-98.9 A-: 90-94.9	The grade of A is used for assignments that demonstrate <u>excellence</u> . These grades are reserved for student work which not only demonstrates excellent mastery of content, but which also shows that the student has undertaken a complex task, has applied critical thinking skills to the assignment, and/or has demonstrated creativity in his or her approach to the assignment. The difference between these two grades is determined by the degree to which these skills have been demonstrated by the student.
B+: 88-89.9	A grade of B+ is given to work determined to be very good. This grade denotes that a student has demonstrated a more-than-competent understanding of the material.
B: 83-87.9	A "B" grade is given to student work meeting the basic requirements of the assignment. It denotes that the student has done adequate work and meets basic course expectations.
B-: 80-82.9	The grade of "B-" denotes that a student's performance was less than adequate on an assignment, reflecting only a moderate grasp of expectations and/or content.
C+: 78-79.9 C: 73-77.9 C-: 70-72.9	A grade of C reflects a minimal grasp of the assignment, poor organization of ideas and/or several significant areas requiring improvement.
D+ to F (below 70)	Grades between D+ and F reflect a failure to meet the minimum standards, reflecting serious deficiencies in all aspects of performance on the assignment.

Notes on Grading:

1. Since virtually all of you were “A” students as undergraduates there will be a natural and necessary redistribution at the graduate level.
2. All written assignments must be submitted via Canvas-Assignment (attached as a MS word document). The submission closes at 11pm on the due date. With legitimate reasons, late submission may be accepted but points may be deducted. In general, rewriting of a graded assignment is not allowed but you are welcome to discuss the assignment with the instructor before it’s due.
3. In general, challenges to grades are accepted. However, challenges must be in writing (not verbal); must be specific and must be based on substantive arguments not on nebulous references to “fairness.” The instructor reserves the right to re-read, and re-grade, the work in its entirety in the case of a challenge. The grade may be adjusted up or down.

For reference, the MSW Student Guide policies on [Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction](#) as well as [Student Grievance procedures](#) and the [policy for grading in special circumstances](#) can be found at these links.

f. Class Recording and Course Materials

Audio and video recording of in-class lectures and discussions is prohibited without the advance written permission of the instructor. Students with an approved accommodation from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities permitting the recording of class meetings must present documentation to the instructor in advance of any recording being done. The instructor reserves the right to disallow recording for a portion of any class time where privacy is a special concern. If the instructor chooses to record a class, they will decide which classes, if any, are recorded, what portion of each class is recorded, and whether a recording is made available on the course management website. On days when classes are recorded, students will be notified a recording is occurring. Class recordings and course materials may not be reproduced, sold, published or distributed to others, in whole or in part, without the written consent of the instructor.

g. COVID-19 Statement

For the safety of all students, faculty, and staff on campus, it is important for each of us to be mindful of safety measures that have been put in place for our protection. Your participation in this course is conditional upon your adherence to all safety measures mandated by the state of Michigan and the University, including [properly wearing a face covering in class](#) and compliance with the [University COVID-19 Vaccination](#)

Policy. Other applicable and additional safety measures may be described in the Campus Maize & Blueprint. Your ability to participate in this course may be impacted by failure to comply with campus safety measures. Individuals seeking to request an accommodation related to the face covering requirement under the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact the Office for Institutional Equity and those seeking an exemption related to the vaccination requirement should submit an exemption request through WolverineAccess. I also encourage you to review the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the COVID-related Addendum to the Statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

h. Health-Related Class Absences

Please evaluate your own health status regularly and refrain from attending class and coming to campus if you are ill. You are encouraged to seek appropriate medical attention for treatment. School of Social Work students who miss class due to illness of any kind will be given opportunities to access course materials online or provided with alternative learning opportunities. Please notify me by email about your absence as soon as practical, so that I can make accommodations. Please note that documentation (a doctor's note) for medical excuses is *not* required.

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: <https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources>.

They include:

- *Safety and emergency preparedness*
- *Mental health and well-being*
- *Teaching evaluations*
- *Proper use of names and pronouns*
- *Accommodations for students with disabilities*
- *Religious/spiritual observances*
- *Military deployment*
- *Writing skills and expectations*
- *Academic integrity and plagiarism*