SOC 370.001  SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY  2:30-3:45 pm MW  McGee 343

Instructor:  J.B. Watson, Jr., Ph.D.  
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Office Hours:  
M  11:45 am - 1 pm  
M  3:45 - 4:45 pm  
T  11:15 am - 12:30 pm  
T  3:15 - 4:45 pm  
Other days/times available by appointment

2. Other readings as assigned.

Course Description:  The analysis of age & aging as a social phenomena. Suggested background: SOC 137

Program Learning Outcomes  
This course is designed to expose you to the sociological perspective in terms of the major theories, &  
concepts of Social Gerontology. The following Department of Anthropology, Geography, & Sociology  
Program Learning Objectives (PLO’s) are also relevant for this class:

- PLO1. The student will be able to identify, compare, and contrast classical/contemporary theories of Gerontology.
- PLO2. The student will be able to identify the principles of good social scientific research design in Gerontology. Such principles include validity, reliability, precision in measurement, and sampling methodology.
- PLO3. The student will possess sociological knowledge as evidenced by the identification of the major concepts involved with aging, demography, ageism, age discrimination, & aging policy.
- PLO4. The student will be able to apply sociological knowledge and skills to a variety of settings related to aging.
- PLO5. The student will be able to read theoretical arguments and to identify their major strengths
and weaknesses.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Student learning outcomes for this class include (but are not limited to):

1. Students will possess knowledge of Gerontology as a multidisciplinary field.
2. Students will be able to identify distinctive features of the field of Gerontology that set it apart from related basic and applied academic disciplines.
3. Students will be able to identify, compare, and contrast three major gerontological theories to aging phenomena.
4. Students will be able to identify the principles of good sociological research. Such principles include common criteria for choice of research method, validity, reliability, and research ethics.
5. Students will possess sociological knowledge as evidenced by the identification of the major concepts involved with an understanding of major social institutions, including religion, the marriage/family system, the economic system, and the political order, & their influence on the social processes of aging.

**Program Learning Outcomes**

*This course addresses the following of these objectives:*

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**Grading Information**

A. **Grading Scale:** A 10-point grading scale is in effect in this course. Any allocation of “bonus points” is at the discretion of the instructor. Typically, **additional points are added only when the class average is below 70 on a major exam.**

B. **Exams (80%):** Three exams will be given during the semester. Exam #1 is worth 25% of your grade. Exam #2 is worth 25% of your grade. Exam #3 is worth 30% of your grade. Exams will cover the assigned reading and lectures. Tests will be closed-book, in-class, and the format includes both objective and subjective questions. Typically, major exams include multiple choice questions & one essay question (drawing on both text & lecture). Do not expect class lectures to cover all of the significant aspects of the topic; 2 ½ hours of class time per week is an inadequate amount of time to cover all course material in an upper-level course. Remember that exams cover 100% of the lecture material, and 100% of the text material. It is therefore your responsibility to learn the text material and read the chapters in a timely manner. It is useful to think of the text and lecture as separate “learning paths.” To perform well on exams, attend class regularly, read the text chapters when assigned, take careful lecture notes, & review them frequently. Regular class attendance is important in this class. Lecture outlines are available from the instructor should you miss class. Copies are available at the next class meeting should
Typically, a review sheet is distributed during class prior to an exam.

**Tentative Exam Dates Are:**

- **Exam 1 -** WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27
- **Exam 2 -** MONDAY, OCTOBER 29
- **Exam 3 -** WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Make-up exams will be given during Dead Week. If you miss an exam for any reason, please plan to take the exam at that time. Check with the instructor on the specific time to make up your exam (make-up session time to be announced in class). No make-up exams are given after the end of Dead Week.

**C. Service-learning Project (20%):** The details of this requirement will be presented on a separate handout by the end of the second week of classes. The Service-learning Project involves a community-based, structured “volunteer” experience related to the course topic, & writing reflection papers relating your field experiences to class concepts, etc. This project is due at our last class meeting during Dead Week. Class presentations (towards the end of the semester) related to your projects may also be included in this requirement.

**D. Attendance:** Regular and punctual class attendance is extremely important, so that you may gain exposure to course material to the fullest extent possible. In an upper-level Sociology course, class discussions provide a valuable opportunity for “peer teaching,” as class members contribute to scholarly discourse. There are no “excused” absences in this course. Grade reductions may be made for excessive absences, e.g., 3 or more total absences. Absences related to late registration, drop/add, or pre-registration count in the total. Class meets on a regular schedule immediately before and after University holidays. There is no provision for “making up” an absence. The official SFA Attendance Policy (Policy 6.7) may be viewed here: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/class-attendance-and-excused-absence-6.7.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/class-attendance-and-excused-absence-6.7.pdf)

**E. Withheld Grades Policy:** At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic unit head, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F, except as allowed through policy [i.e., Active Military Service (6.14)]. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average. Full details on the SFA Withheld Grades Policy is available here: [http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf](http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades.pdf)

**F. Other Important Matters:**

**Use of Cell Phones:** Please limit cell phones usage during class, including text messaging. It is disruptive to general class decorum & distracting to other students.
**Written Communication Skills**: In a 300-level course students should possess adequate written communication skills. As a minimum standard, spelling/grammatical errors, or other writing problems (on any work in the course) may result in a grade reduction, with a 20-point maximum per assignment/exam for writing-related errors.

**Accommodation for Disabilities**: To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For more detailed information, please go to: http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**: Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways, including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism. More details on academic integrity & academic dishonesty are included below.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty** - Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one’s own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper without giving the author due credit.

The availability of the Internet is a double-edged sword: it greatly assists in the research process, but it is a tempting source of seemingly “ready-made” information. When a student uses three (3) or more words from another source without proper attribution, it is generally considered plagiarism. Cheating & plagiarism, including failing to properly attribute work, is a serious breach of academic integrity & can lead to failure on an assignment. Please read the complete Academic Integrity policy at: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp
Tentative Course Outline

Chapter & Topic

Week of 8-27
1. INTRO TO THE FIELD OF GERONTOLOGY
   Modernization & Aging
   The Older Adult Population in the U.S.

Week of 9-3
   The Older Adult Population in the U.S. (continued)
   Social Theories of Aging

Week of 9-10
   Social Theories of Aging (continued)
4. AGING & SOCIETY
   Generational Differences & Intergenerational Relationships
   Ageism
   Age stereotypes

Week of 9-17
6. THE MEANING OF OLD AGE
   Leisure, Spirituality, & Civic Engagement
   Constructing Meaning in Old Age

Week of 9-24
   Constructing Meaning in Old Age (continued)

EXAM #1 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Week of 10-1
2. THE AGING BODY
   Senescence

Week of 10-8
3. THE AGING MIND
   The Psychology of Aging

Week of 10-15
   Mental & Emotional Well-Being
   Successful Aging

Week of 10-22
   Family, Friends, & Informal Support
EXAM #2  MONDAY, OCTOBER 29

5. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGING
   Employment, Retirement, & Poverty
   Policies to Promote Older Adult Well-Being

EXAM #3  WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

Week of 11-5
5. THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AGING
   Employment, Retirement, & Poverty
   Policies to Promote Older Adult Well-Being

Week of 11-12
Housing Options & Aging

Week of 11-19*
*THANKSGIVING BREAK (11-19 to 11-23)

Week of 11-26
GUEST SPEAKERS

Week of 12-3
GUEST SPEAKERS
PROJECT REFLECTION PANELS

SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5

Selected Quotes on Aging

If all our misfortunes were laid in one common heap,
    whence everyone must take an equal portion,
most people would be contented to take their own
    and depart.
~Socrates

Learn to get in touch with silence within yourself
and know that everything in this life has a purpose.
There are no mistakes, no coincidences.
All events are blessings given to us to learn from.
~Elisabeth Kübler-Ross
In the deserts of the heart,
Let the healing fountain start.
~W.H. Auden

Death is not the greatest loss in life. The greatest loss is what dies
inside us while we live.
~Norman Cousins

Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter. ~Mark Twain

Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. ~Samuel Ullman

You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt; as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear; as young as your hope, as old as your despair. ~Douglas MacArthur

Growing old is mandatory; growing up is optional. ~Chili Davis

In youth the days are short and the years are long; in old age the years are short and the days long. ~Nikita Ivanovich Panin

Age does not diminish the extreme disappointment of having a scoop of ice cream fall from the cone. ~Jim Fiebig

In a man's middle years there is scarcely a part of the body he would hesitate to turn over to the proper authorities. ~E.B. White

The years teach much which the days never knew. ~Ralph Waldo Emerson

Inflation is when you pay fifteen dollars for the ten-dollar haircut you used to get for five dollars when you had hair. ~Sam Ewing

Wrinkles should merely indicate where smiles have been. ~Mark Twain, “Following the Equator”

Youth is a wonderful thing. What a crime to waste it on children. ~George Bernard Shaw

Old age isn't so bad when you consider the alternative. ~Maurice Chevalier

Old Time, that greatest and longest established spinner of all!...his factory is a secret place, his work is noiseless, and his hands are mutes. ~Charles Dickens

Do not regret growing older. It is a privilege denied to many. ~Author Unknown

A man's age is something impressive, it sums up his life: maturity reached slowly and
against many obstacles, illnesses cured, griefs and despairs overcome, and unconscious risks taken; maturity formed through so many desires, hopes, regrets, forgotten things, loves. A man's age represents a fine cargo of experiences and memories. ~Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Wartime Writings 1939-1944*, translated from French by Norah Purcell

Live as long as you may, the first twenty years are the longest half of your life. ~Robert Southey, *The Doctor*

A man is not old until regrets take the place of dreams. ~John Barrymore

How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were? ~Satchel Paige

Father Time is not always a hard parent, and, though he tarries for none of his children, often lays his hand lightly upon those who have used him well; making them old men and women inexorably enough, but leaving their hearts and spirits young and in full vigor. With such people the grey head is but the impression of the old fellow's hand in giving them his blessing, and every wrinkle but a notch in the quiet calendar of a well-spent life. ~Charles Dickens

The first sign of maturity is the discovery that the volume knob also turns to the left. ~Jerry M. Wright

When I was younger, I could remember anything, whether it had happened or not; but my faculties are decaying now and soon I shall be so I cannot remember any but the things that never happened. It is sad to go to pieces like this but we all have to do it. ~Mark Twain

Thirty-five is when you finally get your head together and your body starts falling apart. ~Caryn Leschen

Forty is the old age of youth; fifty the youth of old age. ~Victor Hugo

Everyone is the age of their heart. ~Guatemalan Proverb

There is always a lot to be thankful for, if you take the time to look. For example, I'm sitting here thinking how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt. ~Author Unknown

Youth is a disease from which we all recover. ~Dorothy Fulheim

There was no respect for youth when I was young, and now that I am old, there is no respect for age - I missed it coming and going. ~J.B. Priestly

I still have a full deck; I just shuffle slower now. ~Author Unknown

Age is a high price to pay for maturity. ~Tom Stoppard

By the time I have money to burn, my fire will have burnt out. ~Author Unknown
There is more felicity on the far side of baldness than young men can possibly imagine. ~Logan Pearsall Smith

We are young only once, after that we need some other excuse. ~Author Unknown

The key to successful aging is to pay as little attention to it as possible. ~Judith Regan

Grow old with me! The best is yet to be. ~Robert Browning
Youth would be an ideal state if it came a little later in life. ~Herbert Asquith

Old age is fifteen years older than I am. ~Oliver Wendell Holmes

I advise you to go on living solely to enrage those who are paying your annuities. It is the only pleasure I have left. ~Voltaire

I was wrong to grow older. Pity. I was so happy as a child. ~Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras, 1942*, translated from French by Lewis Galantière

Age is opportunity no less,
Than youth itself, though in another dress,
And as the evening twilight fades away,
The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.
~Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Morituri Salutamus*

To be seventy years young is sometimes for more cheerful and hopeful than to be forty years old. ~Oliver Wendell Holmes

The soul's dark cottage, battered and decayed,
Lets in new light through chinks that time hath made.
~Edmund Waller

The great secret that all old people share is that you really haven't changed in seventy or eighty years. Your body changes, but you don't change at all. And that, of course, causes great confusion. ~Doris Lessing

There is still no cure for the common birthday. ~John Glenn

Does age poison us, or do we poison age? ~Astrid Alauda

Some people, no matter how old they get, never lose their beauty - they merely move it from their faces into their hearts. ~Martin Buxbaum

There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometime lose sight of this force when there is suffering, and too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways. ~Mother Teresa