

**LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**Issues in Social Gerontology: Soci/Gero 4515**

**Dr. Sharon-dale Stone**

**Winter 2010**

**Office: RB2038**

**Tues & Thurs 1:00-2:30**

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**Course Description:**

This **advanced seminar** course introduces students to critical and interdisciplinary perspectives in social gerontology, with a focus on critically appraising the role of social factors in shaping views of old age and the experience of old age.

This upper-level course is organized as a combination of lecture and seminar, with primary emphasis on seminar discussion. **In keeping with the advanced nature of the course, students are expected to actively participate in critically discussing issues raised in readings.**

**Evaluation (for details, see Assignments section of outline):**

<b><u>Assignment</u></b>	<b><u>Due Date</u></b>	<b><u>Weight</u></b>
Comment papers (4)	Variable	40%
Seminar participation	Each class	15%
Presentation outline	Variable	10%
Presentation	Variable	25%
Final take-home exam	April 12	10%

**Required Readings**

A coursepack of readings will be available for purchase at the bookstore, although the readings will also be in books that are on reserve at the library.

Books on reserve at the library:

Andrews, Gavin J., and David R. Phillips (eds.). 2005 ***Ageing and Place: Perspectives, Policy, Practice***. NY: Routledge.

Cole, Thomas R., Robert Kastenbaum and Ruth E. Ray (eds.). 2000. ***Handbook of the Humanities and Aging (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.)***. NY: Springer Publishing.

Featherstone, Mike, and Andrew Wernick (eds.). 1995. ***Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life***. London: Routledge.

Hazan, Haim. 1994. ***Old Age: Constructions and Deconstructions***. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Jamieson, Anne, Sarah Harper and Christina Victor (eds.). 1997. ***Critical Approaches to Ageing and Later Life***. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Johnson, Malcolm L. (ed.). 2005. ***The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing***. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Minkler, Meredith and Carroll L. Estes, (eds.). 1999. ***Critical Gerontology: Perspectives from Political and Moral Economy***. Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing.

Sheets, Debra J., Dana Burr Bradley and Jon Hendricks (eds.). 2006. ***Enduring Questions in Gerontology***. New York: Springer Publishing.

Other readings are book chapters or journal articles which are available as PDF and are posted on Web CT. These are starred (\*)

### Schedule of Weekly Topics and Readings

#### 1. Jan. 5-Jan. 7: **Old Age as a Social Construction (1)**

- Degnen, Cathrine. 2007. "Minding the Gap: The Construction of Old Age and Oldness Amongst Peers." *Journal of Aging Studies* 21: 69–80.\*
- Hazan, Haim. 1994. Ch 1 & 2 (pp. 13-32) of *Old Age: Constructions and Deconstructions*\*

**Focus Question:** What does it mean to say that old age is a social construction?  
Can you give examples of how age is socially constructed?

#### 2. Jan. 12-Jan. 14: **Old Age as a Social Construction (2)**

- Fry, Christine L. 2006. "Whatever Happened to Culture?" Pp. 159-176 in Sheets *et al.*, *Enduring Questions in Gerontology* (on reserve)
- Hareven, Tamara K. 1995. "Changing Images of Aging and the Social Construction of the Life Course." Pp. 119-134 in Featherstone & Wernick, *Images of Aging* (on reserve)
- Thane, Pat. 2000. "The History of Aging in the West." Pp. 3-24 in Cole *et al.*, *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging* (on reserve)

**Focus Question:** How have constructions of age changed over time?

#### 3. Jan. 19-Jan. 21: **Critical Approaches in Social Gerontology**

- Kail, Ben Lennox, Jill Quadagno & Jennifer Reid Keene. 2009. "The Political Economy Perspective of Aging." Pp. 555-571 in *Handbook of Theories of Aging*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (article on reserve)
- Kontos, Pia. 2005. "Multi-disciplinary Configurations in Gerontology." Pp. 24-35 in Andrews & Phillips, *Ageing and Place* (on reserve)

Recommended:

- Achenbaum, Andrew. 1997. "Critical Gerontology." Pp. 16-26 in Jamieson *et al.*, *Critical Approaches to Ageing and Later Life* (on reserve)

**Focus Question:** How does a critical approach to social gerontology complicate understandings of old age?

#### 4. Jan. 26-Jan. 28: **The Problem of Ageism (1)**

- Bytheway, Bill. 2005. "Ageism." Pp. 338-345 in Johnson, *Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing* (on reserve)
- Hausdorff, Jeffrey M. *et al.* 1999. "The Power of Ageism on Physical Function in Older Persons." *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* 47: 1346-1349\*
- Ellis, Shannon R and Todd G. Morrison, "Stereotypes of Ageing." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 61 (2005): 57-73\*
- Nussbaum, Jon F. *et al.* 2005. Ageism and Ageist Language Across the Life Span." *Journal of Social Issues* 61(2): 287-305.\*

Recommended:

- Palmore, Erdman B. 2004. "Ageism in Canada and the United States." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 19: 41–46.\*
- NACA, "The Myths of Aging." *Expression* 16 #2 (2003).\*

**Focus Question:** What is ageism and how is it supported in popular culture?

5. Feb 2-Feb. 4: **Attitudes, Images, and the Role of Media**

- Donlon, Margie M. *et al.* 2005. Re-Vision of Older Television Characters: A Stereotype-Awareness Intervention. *Journal of Social Issues* 61 (2): 307-319.\*
- Featherstone, Mike & Mike Hepworth. 2005. "Images of Ageing." Pp. 354-362 in Johnson, *Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing* (on reserve)
- Lee, Monica M. *et al.* 2007. Representations of Older Adults in Television Advertisements. *Journal of Aging Studies* 21: 23-30.\*

Recommended:

- Bytheway, Bill & Julia Johnson. 2005. "Cataloguing Old Age." Pp. 176-187 in Andrews & Phillips, *Ageing and Place* (on reserve)

**Focus Question:** How are YOU affected by the images of old people that you do (or do not) see on a daily basis?

6. Feb 9-11: **The Problem of Ageism (2) – Age Segregation**

- Hagestad, Gunhild O. & Peter Uhlenberg. 2005. The Social Separation of Old and Young: A Root of Ageism. *Journal of Social Issues* 61 (2): 343-360.\*
- McHugh, Kevin. 2003. "Three Faces of Ageism: Society, Image and Place." *Ageing & Society* 23: 165 -185.\*

**Focus Question:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of age-segregation? Who benefits and how? Who does not benefit and why not?

### Feb 16-18: Study Break

7. Feb 23-25: **The Aging Enterprise and the Medicalization of Old Age**

- Estes, Carroll L. 1993. "The Aging Enterprise Revisited." *The Gerontologist* 33: 292-298.\*
- Estes, Carroll L. and Elizabeth A. Binney. 1989. "The Biomedicalization of Aging." *The Gerontologist* 29: 587-596.\*
- Marshall, Barbara L. & Stephen Katz. 2002. "Forever Functional: Sexual Fitness and the Aging Male Body." *Body & Society* 8 (4): 43-70.\*

**Focus Question:** How are the aging enterprise and the medicalization of old age linked, and how does this shape popular understandings of old age?

8. Mar 2-4: **Social Creation of Dependency**

- Aronson, Jane. 2002. "Elderly people's accounts of home care rationing: missing voices in long-term care policy debates." *Ageing & Society* 22: 399-418.\*
- Grenier, Amanda. 2007. Constructions of Frailty in the English Language, Care Practice And the Lived Experience. *Ageing & Society* 27: 425-445.\*

**Focus Question:** How does the biomedicalization of old age encourage us to see dependence as inevitable? How can we reduce the incidence of frailty?

9. Mar 9-11: **Consumer Culture: Cultivating Youth and Anti-Aging**

- Calasanti, Toni. 2007. "'Bodacious Berry,' 'Potency Wood,' and the 'Aging Monster': Gender and Age Relations in Anti-Aging Ads." *Social Forces* 86 (1): 335-355.\*
- Gilleard, Chris. 2005. "Cultural Approaches to the Ageing Body." Pp. 156-163 in Johnson, *Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing* (on reserve)
- Lund, Anne & Gunn Engelsrud. 2008. "'I am Not That Old': Inter-Personal Experiences of Thriving and Threats at a Senior Centre." *Ageing & Society* 28: 675-692.\*

**Focus Question:** How does consumer culture turn those who are visibly old into

“the other”? What are the consequences for those growing old?

10. Mar 16-18: **Constructions of Acceptable Elders**

- Katz, Stephen. 2000. “Busy Bodies: Aging, Activity, and the Management of Everyday Life.” *Journal of Aging Studies* 14 (2): 135-142.\*
- Katz, Stephen. 2001. “Growing Older Without Aging?” *Generations* 25: 27-32.\*
- Martinson, Marty. 2006. “Opportunities or Obligations? Civic Engagement and Older Adults.” *Generations* 30 (4): 59-65.\*

**Focus Question:** How do images of active elders buttress an anti-aging culture, and what are the consequences for old people?

11. Mar. 23-25: **Constructions of Retirement**

- Ekerdt, David J. & Evelyn Clark. 2001. “Selling Retirement in Financial Planning Advertisements.” *Journal of Aging Studies* 15: 55-68.\*
- Laliberte Rudman, Debbie. 2006. “Shaping the Active, Autonomous and Responsible Modern Retiree.” *Ageing & Society* 26: 181-201.\*

**Focus Question:** How do currently popular constructions of retirees both promote and constrain opportunities for well-being in old age?

12. Mar 30: **Imagining Dignity in Long Term Care**

Reading TBA.

April 1: **Course Wrap-Up and Discussion of Final Exam**

No readings.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Seminar Participation (15%)

Attendance in class and participation in class discussions is an important component of this course, and is a way for you to demonstrate your understanding of issues raised in the readings. There are 2 components to this:

**1 Preparation (5%).** In preparation for class, you are expected to email 2 proposed questions for class discussion that are relevant to and based on the week’s readings. Feel free to bring your own copy of your questions to class, but in an effort to save paper, please do not make a hard copy to hand in. It would be helpful, but not essential, for you to provide a context for your question (i.e., what does the reading say that prompts your question?).

**2 Contributions to Discussion (10%).** Students are expected to contribute to **every** class discussion. Thus, you need to **read and think critically about the required readings so that you will be prepared to discuss them in class.** You can use each week’s focus question as a starting point for thinking about the significance of the readings.

Your **class participation mark will reflect the degree of thoughtful and critical reflection** shown by you as you engage with course material. As well, you may participate by raising a topic for discussion on Web CT or offering thoughtful comment in response to a question raised by someone else. Both forms of participation will be considered in calculating your participation mark.

### Comment Papers (40%)

You are required to write 4 comments papers (2 - 3 pp. each, or 500-800 words each) to critically comment on required readings for one week. Be sure to follow the guidelines for written work at the end of this outline. You are free to choose any 4 weeks for comment, but you may

not hand in a comment paper for the week of your presentation. Each comment paper is worth 10% and will be **due 1 hour prior to the beginning of the Tuesday class during which we discuss the readings**. Do not print a hard copy but email your comment to both the professor and TA. Late comment papers will not be accepted.

In your comment papers, you must:

- give full bibliographic information on the readings at the top of the 1st page
- **briefly** summarize the main point(s) of each reading
- identify ways in which the readings relate to each other, how they support or contradict each other, and how they shed light on the week's focus question
- pay attention to the guidelines for written work on the last page of this outline

Your comment papers are expected to be critical. This means that you need to reflect on what you are reading and offer your own evaluation of the ideas presented. To be critical is not necessarily to find fault with the text, it is to carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas and arguments presented. An excellent resource that will help you with this is the webpage published by the University of Toronto Writing Support Centre:

<<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/reading-and-researching/critical-reading>>. You are strongly encouraged to download the superb advice on this page and follow it (even if you think you already know how to write critically). There are also links on this page to other pages with writing advice.

### **Presentation and Final Paper (total 35%)**

You are expected to collaborate with 1 other student to give a 40-50 minute presentation (including 10-15 minutes of discussion facilitation) on one of the topics on the course outline. You are expected in your presentation and paper to incorporate but also go beyond discussion of the week's required readings. You should assume that everyone has done the readings and has come to class with their own point of view on the issues. Your role is to alert the class to key passages, themes, and arguments in the readings for the purposes of critique, interpretation, and amplification. Notably, the presentations should also address key points that could be considered to be problematic. For example, what is controversial and debatable about the point(s) of view in the readings, perspective(s), findings, and argument(s)?

Be creative in designing your presentation. For example, it could be:

- a standard presentation of an analysis of the significance of readings and related material, perhaps using overhead transparencies, powerpoint, handouts, etc.;
- a presentation of a short documentary or movie clip, preceded by a brief introduction highlighting its significance given the week's topic and followed by a more detailed analysis and discussion;
- a debate between the presenters with the audience having to decide who wins the debate; or
- something else again – use your imagination.

Whatever format you decide on, it is essential that you work with the professor and TA to organize it.

There are 2 components to this assignment:

#### **1. Presentation Outline (10%)**

Due 1 week prior to presentation.

Send via email and provide a hard copy of a 2-3 page outline of your presentation to include:

- title

- names of presenters
- thesis statement to focus the presentation (see [http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis\\_statement.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml))
- brief (1-2 paragraphs) summary of presentation
- topics and points to be covered in the presentation
- 2-3 discussion questions on relevant issues, with brief notes on points relevant for answering the questions
- list of at least 5 relevant references (in addition to required readings)

## 2. Presentation (25%)

Two students collaborate on a 40-50 minute class presentation (including 10-15 minutes of discussion facilitation), to follow the format of the presentation outline submitted the week before. You will be evaluated on the clarity and depth of analysis shown, ability to clearly explain complex ideas, ability to identify critical issues and engage the class in a discussion of those issues.

## 3. Take-home Exam (10%). Due April 12.

Details to be discussed the last day of class, April 1.

### Guidelines For All Written Work

- ⇒ work must be typed & double-spaced (with margins at least 1" on all sides)
- ⇒ do not use a font size that is unusually small or unusually large (preferred fonts are Times Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11 pt.)
- ⇒ do **NOT** include a cover page, but write your name at the top of the first page
- ⇒ number your pages
- ⇒ write in essay form, not point form
- ⇒ carefully proofread your submission to ensure that it is grammatically correct, concisely and clearly written
- ⇒ pay close attention to length requirements
- ⇒ deliver your work on time! Late papers will not be accepted
- ⇒ failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in marks being deducted