By 2031 Canadians over 65 years old are expected to comprise 25% of the population. This course provides an introduction to contemporary issues on social aging, focusing on sociological perspectives and theories of aging including: post-structuralism, postmodernism, social structural (gender, race and social class) and cultural factors. Students will draw on sociological literature to on aging to critically examine: 1) how aging is influenced by gender roles, culture, sexuality, social class and ethnicity; 2) the importance of understanding the aging body as a social construct; 3) how physical aspects of society (environment, buildings, transportation) influence the experience of aging; and 4) the sociological impact of aging successfully with disability and/or illness.

Course Goals and Objectives

This is a seminar course, and the active and thoughtful participation of students is required. This class is a culture of possibility (Roberson 2011:885), using a variety of activities outside the usual lecture context to facilitate learning. Each week you will be expected to read and discuss 1 or more articles.

Classes will be divided into three time blocks (11:30-12:20; 12:30-1:20; 1:30-2:20), with short breaks between the sessions. Generally we will begin with the lecture component. After the first break we will have guest presentations or a continuation of the lecture/discussion of material. The final block of time in the class will be devoted to small group interactions focused on the readings. The class will conclude with a brief presentation of one reading (overview/strengths/weaknesses) from each group. The purpose is for you to engage with the material, developing and defending your perceptions in a climate of support and constructive criticism from your peers.

Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scheme</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class presentation 30%</td>
<td>November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 20\textsuperscript{th}, 27\textsuperscript{th} &amp; December 4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Response Diary 20%</td>
<td>November 6\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper or Case study 40%</td>
<td>December 4\textsuperscript{th}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class participation &amp; attendance 10%</td>
<td>Calculated after end of class</td>
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Late Policy

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day.

Class presentation 30%

– 20 minutes (plus 5 minutes for questions)

The purpose of the presentation is to give students the opportunity to orally present their understanding of the material. Presentations will be done individually, but it is expected that you will collaborate with your peers in the development of your presentation. You will provide the instructor and other students with 2 or 3 journal articles to use for preparation for your presentation. Since the other students will have already read the material you provided, the presentation must engage with the material in such a way that the depth of your understanding is apparent and you go beyond a cursory review. Your presentation must be framed from a sociological perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Potential Presentation topics:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Elder abuse</td>
<td>2. Self-concept and aging</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Emergencies and elders</td>
<td>4. Resilience and aging</td>
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<tr>
<td>(tornados, earthquakes, pandemics etc)</td>
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<td>5. Knowledge translation of aging research</td>
<td>6. Gerotranscendence and aging</td>
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<td>7. Ageism and stereotypes</td>
<td>8. Global issues in aging</td>
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<td>9. Illness and aging</td>
<td>10. Dementia care (Dutch farm)</td>
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<td>17. Mobility challenges</td>
<td>18. Policy change/protection of elders</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Bereavement and social exclusion</td>
<td>24. Organ &amp; body donation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Intergenerational linkages</td>
<td>26. Your idea?? Must get approval well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>before presentations begin</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Aspects you will have to cover in your presentation:

1. An overview of the topic from a sociological perspective
2. A critical assessment including strengths, weaknesses and debates in the literature
3. At least two examples of research that substantiate your argument (journal articles)
4. Questions for your peers that can be used to inspire discussion after your presentation

5. An outline of your presentation – which will be provided to the instructor and the other students electronically prior to the presentation. Make sure that you include definitions of terminology and important concepts. Also include the list of references used for your presentation.

It is expected that you will use slides for your presentation and that you will facilitate a class discussion afterwards.

**Arguing a position: Academic Paper or Case Study 40%**

You may do either a position paper or a case study.

If you chose to do a position paper, it must be presenting and supporting a perspective on an issue(s) regarding the sociology of aging. This is not an overview of the literature, but an argument for a particular position which you support with academic sources. It cannot be the same as your presentation, but it may be related to it. You will be marked on the strength of your argument, writing, your use of supporting material and referencing (ASA style).

If you chose to do a case study you must base it on interviews with someone over the age of 65 years old. You will be presenting a position derived from the information you gather in your interviews and supported by academic sources. This is not a biography, although you may use biographical examples from your interviews to illustrate ideas. You must integrate theoretical perspectives on the sociology of aging into your analysis of the case study and presentation of the position.

*ASA format is required for the paper/case study, as is thoughtful analysis of the topic/case study.*

**Reading Response Diary 20%**

Your reading response diary is a *hand written* document (unless you have an exemption from disability services) to help you connect with the era experienced by those who are over age 65 years old. You must write legibly. You may add illustrations if you wish. You are expected to use a bound book (blank or lined paper). You are expected to be sophisticated in terms of language (no slang or text style abbreviations).

Each week you will chose one or more readings to comment on. In your comments you will:

1. Give an overview of the article including the purpose, importance, strengths and weaknesses
2. Your thoughts about the article, how it relates to your life or those around you.
3. Your thoughts in terms of how this article sheds light or creates questions concerning your presentation or paper topic(s)

4. Response to the ideas presented by a guest speaker, linked to the week’s readings

You will be graded based on the presence of a reading response for every week; the quality of remarks, creativity and insight.

Class participation & attendance 10%

Attending each class is not sufficient to get full marks for participation. You are expected to have read 1-2 of the assigned articles before coming to class. You will be working in small groups every week to discuss 1 article and then, as a group, present the article to the class (overview and strengths/weakness). If you are absent without contacting the instructor before the class (or after with a doctor’s note) you will be given a zero for participation in that class.

Academic Integrit

Academic integrity is constituted by the five core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senateandtrustees/principlespriorities.html).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/2011-2012-calendar/academic-regulations/regulation-1), on the Arts and Science website (see http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen’s. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

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The material on this website is copyrighted and is for the sole use of students registered in SOCY 424. The material on this website may be downloaded for a registered student’s personal use, but shall not be distributed or disseminated to anyone other than students registered in SOCY 424. Failure to abide by these conditions is a breach of copyright, and may also constitute a breach of academic integrity under the University Senate’s Academic Integrity Policy Statement.

Text: articles as assigned
September 18th:
Welcome; Ethnic & Cultural Diversity; Social Constructions of Age
- Review of Syllabus
- Review of assignments
- Myths of aging
- What are the biological, psychological, and social dimensions of age?
- How do they differ in different societies and subgroups?
- How can age be studied at the macro and micro levels?
- Population aging


September 25th:
Premodernity, Modernity and Postmodernity
- Premodernity
- Modernity
- Postmodernity


**October 2\(^{nd}\):**

**Sociological Perspectives & Theories of Aging**

- Structural-Functional perspective
- Theory of disengagement
- Activity Theory
- Continuity Theory
- Symbolic-Interaction
- Social conflict


**October 9\(^{th}\):**

**Life Course Perspective & Overarching lives**

- Aging Self, Creativity & Wisdom
- Life Course Perspective
- How age-segregated or age-integrated is the adult life course in our society, and why?
- When does older adulthood begin, and what roles, phases, and transitions does it contain?
- Why do earlier life conditions matter so much for later life outcomes?
- How is the accumulation of advantage across the life course similar to or distinct from the accumulation of disadvantage?
Which “turning points” do you think are particularly important for understanding an individual’s life course, and how could we best study turning points and their consequences?

Crimmins, Eileen, Mark D. Hayward, Aaron Hagedorn, Yasuhiko Saito and Nicolas Brouard. 2009. “Change in Disability-Free Life Expectancy for Americans 70 Years Old and Older.” *Demography* 46:627-646.


**October 16th:**

**Gender, Linked lives/Sexuality**

- How do partners select and influence each other at various stages in the life course?
- How do social norms shape the linking of lives?
- How much, and in what ways, does the principle of linked lives apply to weak ties between individuals?


**October 23rd:**

**Transportation, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**

- Environment as a factor in aging
- How could housing and accessibility policies shape the process of aging?
- Disability and accessibility

Consider these 3 as 1 reading:


**October 30th:**

**Social structure and human agency**

- How much do governments affect their citizens’ life course?
- How can better understand human agency, which is often treated by sociologists as a “black box” or random error?
To what extent can individuals exercise agency given the structural constraints they face? What policies seem promising for dealing with the challenges of an aging population in the U.S., and why?

How could policies shape the process of retirement to create a successful transition and secure financial prospects in retirement?

If we manage to slow the process of human aging and extend life expectancies, what will the implications be for our society?


**November 6th:**

**Successful Aging**

- Quality of Life/Adaptation
- Models of successful aging


November 13th: WEEK 9 PRESENTATIONS

November 20th: WEEK 10 PRESENTATIONS

November 27th: WEEK 11 PRESENTATIONS

December 4th: WEEK 12 PRESENTATIONS & Conclusions

*FINAL PAPER DUE*
Appendix A

Marking Guidelines

A Range (80 and above)

Papers in this range will show excellence in most or all of the categories we look for:

- **Introduction:** The introduction will ideally establish an argument, accurately describe the paper’s methodology (i.e., list the topics it will cover), and state a thesis.
- **Thesis:** It will be concise and analytical, and will show insight into the student’s topic.
- **Organization:** The argument will be logically broken down into manageable units, each of which will be well supported by appropriate evidence. There will be smooth transitions between the paper’s sections.
- **Development:** There is more than the summation of others’ ideas. Every detail is analysed and introduced in support of some facet of the author’s argument.
- **Use of Evidence:** Evidence will be carefully analysed and effectively integrated, and appropriate conclusions will be drawn from it. If secondary evidence is cited, it will be fully and accurately documented.
- **Conclusion:** There will be an effective conclusion that steps back from the paper’s argument and contextualizes it, or indicates how it might be taken to the next level.
- **Style:** The paper will be largely free from error and awkwardness; the writing will be clear and effective, without being wordy or mannered.
- **Formatting:** The paper will be cleanly and accurately formatted.

**83 and up:** These papers are structurally sound, mechanically flawless, and show impressive interpretative ability. Either they show truly insightful reading of existing research, or their argument is strikingly original, or they combine creativity and analysis in ways that get our attention.

**80–82 (A-):** These papers demonstrate some excellence, but are held back by some logical, structural, or mechanical problem. The most common problems are:

- The thesis, though suitably analytical, isn’t well enough supported with evidence.
• Evidence won’t be effectively used: the author might quote references without analysing them, or draw inappropriate conclusions from them. Evidence might be badly integrated, or too sparse.

• The writing will be problematic: either there will be occasional mechanical problems, or the paper will be too wordy, unclear, or prone to generalization.

• Transitions between sections of the paper may be weak or abrupt.

• The paper will be inconsistent: well argued parts will alternate with at least one section that is noticeably weaker.

**B Range (70–79)**

Most papers fall in this range. B-range marks are good marks: these papers meet our expectations, but are held back by some of the following characteristics.

• **Introduction:** The introduction might resort to generalization instead of establishing a specific analysis, or forget to describe its methodology (a very common omission).

• **Thesis:** The thesis may be descriptive rather than argumentative. The argument may be weak or very obvious (i.e., domestic violence is harmful) The author may make value judgements that cannot be proven (e.g., “I think that Marx had a fear of being wealthy”).

• **Organization:** Generally the paper will be broken down into logical units, but not all of them may support the thesis equally well. Sometimes there will be a couple of pages of exposition and then one paragraph that must do all the work of supporting the thesis. Alternatively, there might be a section that doesn’t seem to belong in the paper.

• **Development:** There may be summary of existing research in places.

• **Use of Evidence:** Evidence may not be effectively integrated: the author will quote or cite without analysing the evidence or explaining its significance. Reading of existing research may be somewhat descriptive, or else there won’t be very much of it. Some points may lack sufficient evidence.

• **Conclusion:** The conclusion might largely repeat the introduction, or else be too brief and lack integration with rest of the paper. On the other hand, the conclusion might state the paper’s thesis more effectively than the introduction.

• **Style:** There may be grammatical errors and instances of awkward style (e.g., wordiness, word-choice errors). Alternatively, the writing might show little variation in sentence structure, for example, using many short, declarative sentences.

• **Formatting:** There may be occasional signs of carelessness.
**B+ (77–79):** B+ papers are very good. There is a clear thesis, although it might be unanalytical. The argument is generally well developed and supported with evidence. The author’s research shows good judgement and insight. These papers are largely free from serious structural or mechanical problems. There might be a few errors or signs of carelessness, or problems with the use of evidence (it might not be well enough integrated, or sufficiently analysed). Most commonly, these papers play things too safe: they avoid difficulty, and stick to simple claims that can be definitively proven.

**B (73–76):** The thesis may be unanalytical, and the paper may include too much summary of existing research. Sometimes there won’t be an obvious thesis in the introduction: the paper has an argument, but it’s not clearly stated anywhere, so the reader has to guess. Transitions between paragraphs may be perfunctory or absent. It may be unclear why the author is discussing a particular topic at a particular point in the argument. There may not be enough evidence, or it may be insufficiently analysed or integrated. B papers tend to be inconsistent: parts of the argument may be underdeveloped, textual support may be uneven, or only part of the paper may pertain to the thesis. Papers in this range may contain misreadings, or base broad claims on slender evidence. Instead of trying to make fine distinctions or showing the complexity of an issue, these papers may offer black-and-white judgements.

**B- (70–72):** B- papers are generally B papers with writing problems that are serious enough to interfere with clarity. There may also be paragraphing problems, which often indicate difficulty in breaking the argument down into logical units.

**C and D Ranges (50–70)**

These papers do not meet our expectations. D- and C-range papers show similar problems to B-range ones, but more pervasively. **Note that you need a minimum mark of B- (2.6 grade points) in SOCY 122 to take further Sociology courses.** **Introduction:** Generally perfunctory: two to three sentences that state the thesis, but do little else. Where the intro is longer, it will likely have too much generalization.

- **Thesis:** There may not be one, or it may be too descriptive, simple, or difficult to identify. Very commonly the thesis will be vague: the author won’t offer enough context or explanation to make the argument clear. These papers might offer value judgements instead of arguments that can be proven with evidence.

- **Organization:** There may be paragraphing problems (e.g., too many short paragraphs, no topic sentences, no transitions between paragraphs). Parts of the essay may not relate to the thesis, and there may be no clear principle governing the order of the essay’s parts.
• **Development**: These papers may depend heavily on the summary of existing research. The author’s ideas may require more explanation. There may be too little insight into research, or it may be too descriptive or prone to error. The argument may follow the text too closely, simply covering events in the order in which they occur. These papers may contradict themselves.

• **Use of Evidence**: There may be unsupported generalizations, and the paper lacks sufficient evidence. There may be many long quotations with too little commentary to relate them to the thesis or to justify their length. Quotations may not be sufficiently analysed.

• **Conclusion**: May be formulaic, or may repeat the introduction.

• **Style**: Awkward and faulty, exhibiting frequent errors in grammar and punctuation. The choice of words may not be adequate for the expression of complex ideas. These papers are likely to be generally unclear.

• **Formatting**: There may be clear signs of carelessness and haste.

C papers (60–69): These essays earn a passing grade, but are problematic. The author must review the elements of essay structure (introductions and conclusions, paragraphs with topic sentences and transitions) and correct any writing problems.

D papers (50–59): Although technically they pass, these papers show little knowledge of the text and little attempt to engage with the topic. The thesis is probably weak and poorly supported. Structural problems that make the paper difficult to understand: paragraphs may not connect to one another or add up to an argument. Evidence may be minimal or misinterpreted. Writing problems tend to be pervasive. The essay may be too short, and will show signs of being written in haste.