Course code: SOC 2201  
Course title: Sociology of Aging  
Class hours/credits: 3 class hours, 3 credits  
Prerequisite: SOC 1101  
Pathways: Individual and Society

**Catalog Description:** This course provides an analytical understanding of growing old in the United States of America. Topics center around the effects of social, political and economic inequality upon the elderly. It will also concentrate on the roles the elderly play within such social institutions as religion, community and the family.

**RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK(S)**  
Title: *Aging, Society, and the Life Course*  
Author: Morgan, Leslie A. and Suzane R. Kunkel  
Publisher: Springer Publishing  

*The textbook used in a particular section will be chosen by the instructor.*

## COURSE INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT METHODS*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Demonstrate an understanding of the basic sociological concepts (including those from Interactionism, Functionalism, and Social Conflict theory) defining family and aging in the United States from both macro and micro perspectives</td>
<td>Exams, essays, in-class discussions, small group workshops, and oral presentations focusing on the examples related to the concepts introduced in readings and lectures.</td>
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<td>2. Demonstrate an understanding of the ways in which aging is shaped by the various spheres of social life, such as the economy, community, and political system.</td>
<td>Combination of multiple-choice and essay questions in exams, in-class discussions, and questions discussed in a small group setting.</td>
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<td>3. Demonstrate an understanding of the life course and special issues related to the aging experience.</td>
<td>Exams, quizzes, in-class discussions, small group work, and essays.</td>
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<td>4. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of social institutions (family, gender, ethnicity, religion, social class) shape aging.</td>
<td>Exams, quizzes, in-class discussions, small group work, and essays.</td>
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## GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE: Develop an introductory knowledge of the concepts and theories deployed by sociologists in their analysis of the social factors shaping aging.</td>
<td>Quizzes, exams, essays, class discussions, and oral presentations.</td>
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SKILLS: Develop and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, analysis and productive work.

INTEGRATION: Work productively within and across disciplines.

VALUES, ETHICS, AND RELATIONSHIPS: Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse perspectives in personal, civic, and cultural/global domains.

Combination of class discussions, oral presentations, in-class small group work, essays, and exams.

Quizzes, exams, essays, class discussions, and in-class small group work that draws on various resources in sociology and other disciplines.

Combination of class discussions, oral presentations, in-class small group work, and essays that engage directly with the questions about values, ethics, responsibility, and diversity.

* may vary slightly per instructor to suit their own needs

SCOPE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND OTHER COURSE REQUIREMENTS*

Quizzes; midterm and final exams including multiple-choice and short answer questions; essay assignments; participation in-class discussions; participation and contribution to small-group projects; oral presentations

FINAL GRADE DISTRIBUTION – elements and weight of factors determining the students’ grade*

Midterm exam: 20% of the grade
Final exam: 30% of the grade
Quizzes: 20% of the grade
Essay: 20% of the grade
Attendance/Participation: 10% of the grade

* may vary slightly per instructor to suit their own needs

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.9</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70-76.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-69.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.9 and below</td>
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WU Unofficial Withdrawal
WF Withdrew Failing

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

COLLEGE POLICY ON ABSENCE/LATENESS

A student may be absent without penalty for 10 percent of the number of scheduled class meetings during the semester as follows:
Class meets | Allowable Absence
---|---
1 time/week | 2 classes
2 times/week | 3 classes
3 times/week | 4 classes

It is the responsibility of the instructor to keep accurate records of every student’s attendance and to inform each class orally and in writing of the applicable attendance policy during the first two weeks of class meetings each semester.

Excessive Absence
If a student’s class absences exceed the limit established for a given course or component, the instructor will alert the student that a grade of “WU” may be assigned. If a student remains officially registered for a course and never attends that course, a final grade of “*WN” will be assigned. If the student withdraws officially from the course, he/she will be assigned a grade in accordance with the existing withdrawal policy of the College.

Appeals
A student wishing to appeal the excessive absence status and the impending grade should request a meeting with the chairperson of the department in which the course is offered. The chairperson will consult with the instructor to render a decision. A student wishing to appeal a “WU” grade may do so through the Committee on Course and Standards.

Lateness
It is the responsibility of the instructor to keep a record of lateness and to inform each class orally and in writing of the lateness policy during the first two weeks of class meetings of each semester.

SAMPLE SEQUENCE OF TOPICS AND TIME ALLOCATIONS*

I. Who Are the Aging and the Aged? (Week 1)
   A. Define aging in terms of each of the following
      1. Chronology
      2. Functional capacity
      3. Life stage

II. Ways to Look at Aging (Week 2)
   A. Perspectives on Physical Aging
   B. Perspectives on Psychological Aging
      1. Stage theories of human development
         a. Erik Erikson
         b. Levinson et al.
      2. Process theories of human development
         a. Riegel
         b. Whitbourne and Weinstock
   C. Sociological Aspects of Aging
      1. Social roles
      2. Age norms
      3. Socialization
      4. Age grading
III. Ways to Study Aging: Research Methodology (Week 3)

A. Quantitative & Qualitative research methods (Databases, Longitudinal/Panel studies, Secondary analysis, Interview techniques, Event history analysis, Life history interviews, etc.)
B. Pros and Cons of research methods (cohort effect, Hawthorne effect, Ageism, Preconceived ideas about elderly, cultural relativism v. ethnocentrism, etc.)
C. Ethical issues related to research methods and the study of the elderly

The Rise of Aging as a Social Problem

A. Explain how population growth, urbanization, and industrialization have given rise to aging as a social problem.
B. In summarized fashion, describe the position of older Americans in Society from 1900 to the present.
C. Explain the origins, nature, and consequences of the stigma attached to old age in Americans Society.
   A. Population Growth
   B. Urbanization
   C. Industrialization
   D. The Position of Older People in Society
   E. The Stigma of Old Age (Ageism)

Theory: cohort size and life changes: Easterlin Hypothesis

IV. Demography: Cross Cultural and Global Perspectives of Aging/ How Do Populations Age? (Week 4)

A. Population Pyramids
B. Proportion Aged
C. Median ages
D. Aging index
E. Dependency ratios
F. Life expectancy

V. The Individual & Society: Link the Micro to Macro (Social Institutions) (Week 5)

A. The Significance of Social Class
B. Gender and Aging
C. Black Americans
D. Hispanic Americans
E. Native American Indians
F. Asian Americans
G. Human Development and Aging
H. Social Context (The life course, social time, social roles, age norms, structural lag)

The Influence of Social Class, Sex, Race and Ethnicity on Aging
A. Define the concept of social class.
B. Explain how social class makes a difference with reference to the styles of living of older adults.
C. Define what is sexism, and discuss 3 of its effects on the life situations of older women.
D. Explain how discrimination has affected elderly blacks with reference to:
   1. Life expectancy
   2. Income
   3. Quality of housing
E. With regard to income, health, and quality of housing, compare elderly Hispanic Americans, American Indians, and Asian Americans.

Theory: Generativity, ego-integrity, gerotranscendence, structural lag

VI. Aging and the Family (family as a social institution) (Week 6 & 7)

A. Core Norms and Expectations of Family Relationships
   1. Cite some current statistics indicating the percentage of older men and women who are married and live with their spouses in independent households.
   2. Discuss the relationship between length of time being married and marital satisfaction.
   3. List and discuss 4 factors associated with successful marriage in later life.
   4. Discuss the impact of retirement on a couple’s marital adjustment.
   5. Compare and describe the problems confronting widows and widowers in adjusting to the loss of their spouses.
   6. Discuss the research findings indicating how never married older people adapt to living alone, and functioning in their community.
   7. List 4 consequences for older persons, if the trend of more people getting married today than got married 50 years ago continues.
   8. List 5 factors the Masters and Johnson found were responsible for the increase with age in sexual inadequacy.
   9. Discuss the family dynamics of older adults commenting upon:
      a. Living arrangements
      b. Proximity to children
      c. Frequency of contact with family members
      d. Types and extent of social services provided to older adults by their families.
   10. Explain the relationship between advanced age and the formation maintenance of friendships.
   11. Discuss the importance of friends and neighbors in the lives of the elderly.
B. Key Familial Roles and Relationships
   1. Spouses and Aging couples
   2. Describe the most prevalent type of relationship researchers have found exists between elderly parents and their adult children.
   3. Grandparents: Describe grandparent and great-grand parent roles in our society.
C. Families as Caregivers (Women in the middle, Family conflict/elder abuse, family norms & mutual assistance)
D. Change social Context in later life
E. Overview:
   1. Launching the Children
   2. Mid-life Career Changes
   3. Retirement
   4. Widowhood
   5. Dependency
6. Disability and Sickness
7. Joining Golden Age Clubs and senior Citizen Centers
8. Older Married Couples
9. Older non-married couples
10. Widows and Widowers
11. Never-Married Older People
12. Divorced Older People
13. Trends in Marital Status of the Elderly
14. The Sexuality of Older Persons
15. The Older Parent Role
16. The Grandparent Role
17. The Great-Grandparent Role
18. Family Dynamics of Older Adults
   a. Living arrangements
   b. Proximity to children
   c. Frequency of contacts
   d. Exchange of family services
   e. Social services provided to older adults by their families
19. The Role of Friends and Neighbors in Later Life

Theory: Family Life Cycle Theory and Individual Dependency in the Family

VII. Work & Retirement (Week 8 & 9)

A. Offer three operational definitions of retirement.
B. Focusing on the United States and Japan explain the relationship between industrialization and retirement.
C. Describe the retirement process commenting open:
   1. Attitudes toward retirement
   2. Retirement preparation
   3. The retirement decision
   4. Retirement as an event
   5. Retirement as a social role.
D. List and describe the six phases of Robert C. Atchley's model of retirement.
   Phases of Retirement
   1. Preretirement
   2. Honeymoon
   3. Disenchantment
   4. Reorientation
   5. Stability
   6. Termination
E. Discuss the consequences of retirement, commenting upon:
   Situational Consequences of Retirement
   1. Income changes
   2. Change of residence
   3. Impact on family structure
F. Define and offer 3 examples of each of the following (Ageism):
   1. Age prejudice (Ageism)
   2. Age discrimination
G. Using these examples, explain how the process of societal disengagement applies to older Americans.
   Adjusting to Retirement
1. A look at the findings of research
   The future of retirement

Theory: Disengagement theories, and Continuity theory and activity theory

**VIII. Economic Life and Aging (Week 10)**

**Finances**
A. The Financial Needs of Older People
B. Direct Income Sources
   1. Earnings
   2. Retirement pensions
   3. Private pensions
   4. Public pensions
   5. Dual pensions
   6. Assets
   7. Supplemental security income
   8. Independent income sources
   9. Spending patterns of the elderly
   10. The future financial picture of the aged
C. Cite some current statistics indicating the extent of poverty among older adults.
D. Economic Well being and Inequality among older people -- Kinds of elderly persons who are likely to be poverty stricken and explain why this is so.
E. List and describe 4 types of direct income sources of the elderly.
F. Discuss what the financial pictures of most older Americans will probably be during the remainder of this century.

**The Economy and its Impact in Later Life**

A. Older People as Consumers
B. The Older Population as Economically Dependent
   1. The problems of social security
C. Inflation
D. Describe the effects of the economy on elderly people with regard to:
   1. Retirement income
   2. Access to jobs (Race, gender, class)
   3. Their treatment as consumers (Ageism, Baby Boomer effect)
E. Explain the problem this nation has with its social security system.
F. Courses of action that the federal government can take to render the social security system solvent.
G. Explain why inflation has a severe impact on the elderly.

**Theory: Stratified Life Course and Economic Diversity**

**IX. Health and the Aged (Week 11 & 12)**

A. Define Comprehensively what is health
   a. What is Health?
   b. Acute Conditions
   c. Chronic Conditions
   d. Mental Health
   e. Medical Care
f. Institutionalization in Nursing Homes and Homes

h. Future Health Care Needs of the Elderly

B. Distinguish between acute and chronic conditions.

C. Define mental illness and distinguish between:
   1. Functional disorders
   2. Reversible organic mental disorders
   3. Chronic organic mental disorders

D. Describe the relationship between age, reversible organic mental disorders, and chronic organic mental disorders.

E. Cite some recent statistics indicating what percentage of elderly persons are institutionalized in nursing homes and homes for the aged.

F. Explain what is Medicare and list 3 of its major benefits.

G. Discuss the implications of the greatly increased demand for health services for the elderly that is expected to occur in the remainder of this century.

Theory: The Political Economy of Health Care Access

X. The Relationship of Politics, Government, and Older People (Week 13)

A. Describe political participation of older adults with regard to:
   1. The extent to which they are interested in and informed about politics.
   2. Voting behavior
   3. Party identification

B. List and discuss 4 factors that have adversely affected the efforts of pressure groups, comprised of the elderly, to obtain greater political power.

C. Explain what benefits each of the following provide for older people.
   1. Social security
   2. Medicare
   3. Aid for the aged
   4. Federal housing programs

Theory: Age stratification theory

XI. Issues in aging: Older Persons and their Communities, Baby boomers, Religion (Week 14 & 15)

A. Defining what is a Community
   1. The social structure of a community
   2. Community facilities
   3. Social services of communities

B. Community Services to Older People
   1. Meals on Wheels: programs
   2. Information and referral services
   3. Visitor programs
   4. Outreach services
   5. Telephone reassurance
   6. Employment services
   7. Home-maker services
   8. Income counseling
   9. Senior centers
10. Protective services

C. Services by Older People
   1. The Foster Grandparent Program
   2. The Retired Senior Volunteer Program
   3. The Service Crops of Retired Executives
   4. The Senior Companion Program
   5. Senior Community Service Aide Program

D. Transportation
E. Housing
F. Education
G. Crime
H. Planned Retirement Communities

A. List and describe 5 community services by older people.
C. List and describe 5 community services by elderly people.
D. Discuss how the field of education, to a great extent, fails to meet the needs of older persons.
E. Discuss how crime impacts the elderly.
F. Describe the social characteristics of older persons who live in planned retirement communities.
G. Cite some research findings indicating the attitudes and feelings of older people with reference to the retirement communities they live in.

Religion, Voluntary Associations, and the Elderly

A. Religion
   1. Ultimate religious questions
   2. Religiosity
   3. Church attendance and participation patterns of older adults
   4. The place of religion in the lives of the elderly

B. How the Church Deals with Older People
C. Voluntary Associations
   1. The definition of a voluntary association
   2. Membership and participation patterns of the aged in various types of voluntary association

A. Discuss the relationship between age, church attendance, and religious involvement.
B. Describe how the church deals with older adults.
C. List 3 recommendations for improving church programs for elderly people.
D. Define what is a voluntary association.
E. Discuss the relationship between age and joining voluntary associations.
F. Describe the types of voluntary associations that elderly adults are likely to participate in.
G. Discuss the effects of participating in voluntary associations on older adults.

Death, Dying, Bereavement, and Widowhood:

A. Defining Death
B. The Demography of Death
C. The Meaning of Death
D. Coping with Dying
   1. Kubler-Ross’ proposed five stages in the dying process
   2. Hospices
E. Bereavement
F. A Comparison of the Roles of Widow and Widower
G. Aging in the future – Epilog

* may vary slightly per instructor to suit their own needs

Reviewed/revised by Diana Mincyte, Ph.D.  

Date: December, 2015