

Gero 380m: Diversity in Aging

Fall 2008 Syllabus

Instructor:

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Course Websites:

Announcements, links to readings, assignments, class notes, and all other information will be posted on our course website. The site is <https://blackboard.usc.edu> and can be accessed with your USC username and password.

Weekly E-class discussion will take place on <http://gero380m.blogspot.com/>

Course Description and Objectives:

This course provides an overview of theory, research, and policy concerning diversity in aging. It will summarize the major concepts, research methods, and policy considerations for understanding and helping older adults from diverse backgrounds. Social gerontology theories, research, and its practical implications will be examined from multidisciplinary perspectives: sociology, psychology, demography, public policy, and social work. At the end of the course the student will:

1. Understand and be able to discuss the most prominent topics discussed in this class and their relevance to the aging experience of diverse groups over the life course.
2. Understand and be able to discuss the various theories discussed in the class that are commonly used to explain the aging processes of individuals.
3. Understand and be able to describe the major social policy and programs relevant to older adults over the life course.
4. Understand the concept of *linked lives* and how it affects the lives of older individuals and their family members as well as the various aspects of intra-generational and inter-generational relationships.
5. Continue to sharpen skills required for successful writing of integrative essays and papers using multi-disciplinary perspectives

Course Format:

This course is designed to be completed online and asynchronously at each student's own pace. Via blackboard, the textbooks, supplemental readings, and other information on the web. Students encountering challenges with the online environment are to communicate with the instructor, as soon as possible, so solutions are addressed in a timely manner. Students are expected to read the required readings before they start each week's lecture, to actively participate in E-class discussion, and to finish the assignments. Critical and creative thinking is very important in this class. E-class discussion is designed to help you apply what you have learned and develop your logical thinking on a certain topic. *Please take at least 30 minutes to carefully read the syllabus for course requirements and assignments.*

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Course Requirements:

1. **E-class discussion:** The class will be broken into two E-class groups. Every student is expected to participate in discussion in a minimum of 10 class discussions (out of a possible 13). Following the first class, we will assign discussion leaders for the various topics that will be covered in this E-class forum. The leaders will be in charge of guiding the blog discussion for that week and are responsible for posting their response papers by 3pm, the day before class.

Instructions for Participating in Weekly E-class Discussion:

Step 1: Accept invitation to join the blog (sent to your usc.edu address)

Step 2: Sign in to Blogger (create Google account if you don't have one)

Step 3: View blog, then click "Create Post", or click "Post a Comment" if you want to respond to a particular post.

Step 4: Input your discussion comments or response paper (don't forget to include your names)

Step 5: Click "Publish Post"

[[Email me](#) if you experience technical problems]

2. **Discussion leader/Response papers:** Each student will serve as an E-class discussion leader (assigned after the first class) for 1 week over the course of the semester. You will serve as a discussion leader and write a one page abstract comprised of two parts. In the first part, you will restate the text's argument or message in your own words. You should concentrate on the main ideas the author is trying to communicate. You can write a summary, make an outline, draw a flowchart or diagram of the reading, or simply take careful notes. The purpose of this portion of the page is to help you recall the reading in some detail several weeks later. Please also include the main point of the text at the top of the page in 25 words or less. The second half of the assignments to be your scholarly reflections on or reactions to the reading—in the context of the day's required readings and previous course readings. In your response to a reading, you might analyze it, illustrate it through your own experience or observation, refute it, support it, go beyond it. Post your response paper on the blogger class website (<http://gero380m.blogspot.com/>) by 3pm the day before 'class'. Students who are Leaders will guide discussion on the website for the week. Discussion leaders are expected to respond to at least 5 posts (2 sentence minimum).
3. **Arts/Literature Assignment:** Choose a book, movie, or play that focuses on a topic addressed in this course. A suggested reading/viewing list can be seen here http://www.usc.edu/libraries/subjects/gerontology/documents/ResearchGuide_Diversity.pdf. However, students are welcome to choose outside sources *with prior approval from the instructor*. Write a 2-3 page essay on how this book/movie/play relates to specific theories, topics, or concepts of diversity in aging. Do not simply provide a review of the book/movie/play; rather, show how specific events from the work support (or contradict) our readings or E-class discussion. In addition, evaluate the work's potential contribution (or lack of contribution) to the study of diversity in aging.
4. **Final project:** Choose one of 2 options below.

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Choice 1—Write a Final Paper:

The final paper should be between 10 to 14 pages, typed, and double-spaced. Citations and references are to be used (APA format). The purpose of the paper is to:

- A. Allow you to examine an ethnic or national group of interest to you.
- B. Describe the situation of older persons in that group.
- C. Compare persons from different groups.

In making the selection of a national minority or ethnic group, you need to determine the availability of information and the feasibility of doing the research by the due date.

Your paper should address (at the minimum) the following areas:

Section I: Descriptive

- A. Describe the group you have chosen.
- B. Identify the historical events that affected the elderly of the group.
- C. Describe the group's current social, economic, and political status.
- D. Describe the cultural characteristics of this group as they are generally perceived.

Section II: Oral Interview

This section will require an interview with an elderly member (60+) of the group you have selected. It is preferable to interview more than one (if possible). In the interview you are to obtain information on the following areas. If the interview does not allow information for the following areas, simply state that. You can use email or telephone to complete the interview.

- A. Key events in their life. Their experience with discrimination or bias.
- B. Their family composition and solidarity. Relations with other members of the group. Thoughts about changing family lifestyles. Involvement (if any) in protests or social demonstrations.
- C. The extent to which they identify with the culture of the group. Whether they feel it is being maintained or lost. Thoughts about culture being a major feature for their offspring.

Section III: Analytical

- A. Describe the extent to which the older person(s) you interviewed reflected the status of the group in general.
- B. Describe the changes/trends you expect are occurring in the ethnic group and discuss these implications for the next generation of older persons.
- C. Discuss the implications of these changes for delivering services to elderly members of this group and upcoming generation.
- D. Discuss the implications for political advocacy, coalition building, and political participation of the elderly members of this group.

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Choice 2—Create an Academic Blog:

Instructions: Academic blogs are gaining popularity as a method to help students to find a voice and develop interests in a new technology medium. The process of writing a blog assists in information sharing, reputation building, and personal expression. Your blog will be thematically governed by your discipline/future profession in relation to this course. You will need to make regular posts (8 posts over the course of the semester; 2 posts per month; minimum of 10 sentences per post) on a particular phenomenon that is current, interesting, important, and not obvious or already known. You will analyze, interpret, evaluate, and argue as you inform, entertain, and persuade. Many students use the blogs they create on applications to graduate or other professional schools.

For guidelines on “how to write” an academic blog, please see
<http://thoughtcapital.wordpress.com/2007/03/11/how-to-write-an-academic-blog/>

For examples of undergraduate blogs, please see:

<http://healthcareforus.blogspot.com/>
<http://wheredowedrawtheline.blogspot.com/>

Topic examples—remember that a more specific topic is better (i.e. Mexican American Aging rather than Latino Aging)

- Aging in China
- Multiracial Aging
- Innovative Techniques in Culturally Competent Care
- Assistive Technology for Older Adults

How to create a blog - http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g (Video)

Grading and Due Dates:

ASSIGNMENT	DUE DATE	GRADE PROPORTION
Response paper/ Discussion Leader	Assigned during First Class (see Course Documents)	50 points
Arts/Literature	September 25	50 points
E-Class discussion	Over course of semester	100 points
Mid-term exam	October 20th	100 points
Final Project	Final Class (December 4)	100 points
Final Exam	December 10	100 points
Total Points		500 points

Grade will be assigned as follows:

A (93 – 100)	B- (80 – 82)	D+ (67 – 69)
A- (90 – 92)	C+ (77 – 79)	D (63 – 66)
B+ (87 – 89)	C (73 – 76)	D- (60 – 62)
B (83 – 86)	C- (70 – 72)	F (0 – 59)

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Grading will be based on 1 response paper, 1 arts/literature assignment, 10 E-class discussions, a mid-term exam, a final exam, and a final project/paper. The midterm exam will be conducted during the 8th week (October 16) and will be based on the readings and E-class discussion. Make-up exams will be scheduled on a case-by-case basis. Please make sure to contact the professor as early as possible with such need so your situation can be given sufficient consideration. The Final project is due the final week of class. Please email me your choice of final project and topic by the 2nd week of class. **Late assignments:** For every day late, the assignment will result in one letter grade reduction (e.g. If you are 2 days late, the highest grade you can receive is a C).

The 15 weeks of the course will be conducted asynchronously within one week blocks of time. For example, assignments and exams are given on Thursday at 12:00 noon and must be completed by the following week on Thursday at 11:00 a.m. However, you may log-on to the site at any time you choose during the week.

The following matrix will be used to grade your E-class discussion comments:

Quantity		Quality	
Criteria	Score	Criteria	Score
Extraordinary contributions were made and showed consistent engagement with the discussion over the life of the study.	5	Contributions were so well prepared, and often backed by references, that their impact changed the nature of the discussion in a meaningful way.	5
Average contributions were made with minimum requirements met.	4	Contributions regularly focused on implications of ideas and true self-examination.	4
Below average contributions were made on an inconsistent or untimely basis.	3	Responses by other group members showed that contributions were of little value.	3
No contributions were made.	0	Contributions showed little effort.	0
Total points possible per discussion: 10			

Grading of Final Project:

Grading will be based on the following criteria:

- The comprehensiveness of responses to the three major sections (final paper) and discussion of pertinent issues (academic blog).
- Reliance on lectures, reading, library research.
- Accuracy of statements and information.
- Imaginativeness of analysis.

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Course Textbooks:

Stoller, E., & Gibson, R. (Eds.) (2000). *Worlds of Difference: Inequality in the Aging Experience*, 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Olson, L. (Ed.) (2001). *Age Through Ethnic Lenses: Caring for the Elderly in a Multicultural Society*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield.

The textbooks are available at the USC bookstore. Additional readings will be available as a PDF or HTML format each week.

Supplemental Texts/References:

American Psychological Association (2002). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association*, (5th ed.). Washington, D.C.: <http://webster.commnet.edu/apa/> This is the core reference text when writing papers in many social science fields. You may refer to the identified web site when constructing a paper. However, you may also use MLA or another citation style, *as long as you are consistent*.

Older Americans 2008: Key Indicators of Well-being. This report provides the latest data on the 38 key indicators selected by the Forum to portray aspects of the lives of older Americans and their families. It is divided into five subject areas: population, economics, health status, health risks and behaviors, and health care.

http://www.agingstats.gov/agingstatsdotnet/main_site/default.aspx

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2000). *Health People 2010, Understanding and Improving Health* (2nd ed). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. This is core reference in the field of public health. It can be accessed in full from the web.

www.health.gov/healthypeople/

Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) Information Center is an on-line service that has a sizeable collection of information which may be ordered and have sent to your home or downloaded. Most materials are free of charge and can be ordered by going to the following web site. <http://www.ask.hrsa.gov/>

Useful Websites:

Nat'l Institutes of Health/Nat'l Institute on Aging – <http://nia.nih.gov/>

NIH Senior Health – <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/>

Administration on Aging – <http://www.aoa.gov>

U.S. Census Bureau – <http://www.census.gov>

National Council on Aging – <http://www.ncoa.org/index.cfm>

Office of Minority Health – www.omhrc.gov

The Gerontological Society of America – www.geron.org

Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research - <http://www.rcmar.ucla.edu/>

Resources guide to diversity in aging -

http://www.usc.edu/libraries/subjects/gerontology/documents/ResearchGuide_Diversity.pdf

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CLASS SCHEDULE – Fall 2008

Each week is broken down into three sections: Readings, E-Class activity, and Assignments due. Each week there are reading assignments from both of the texts and occasionally some additional sources(s), usually electronically linked to the website or via email.

1) August 28 – Introduction to Gerontology & Aging

On-line class is open and each student is to completely review the website for the course and the syllabus.

Readings: Stoller pages 1-15/Olson Chapter 1
Videos: [Connie Goldman](#), President, Connie Goldman Productions

E-class Activity: [Introduce yourself](#) & post a brief response to first week's readings.

Assignment Due: Read syllabus thoroughly and decide whether you will be completing a final project or paper (Email decision to [instructor](#) by Sept 8th). Also consider what you will read or view for the arts/literature assignment.

2) September 4 – Diversity & Aging / Social Theories of Aging

Readings: Stoller pages 19-28, Chapter 8 from Hooyman & Kiyak (.pdf); Review theories (.ppt)

E-class Activity: How do social theories of aging inform the aging process of diverse groups of older adults?

Assignment Due: Email instructor Choice 1 or 2 for final project & selection for arts/literature assignment.

3) September 11 – Gender & Aging

Readings: Stoller Chapters 1, 16-19, 22
Videos: [Joan Ditzion](#), Founder, Boston Women's Health Book Collective

E-class Activity: How has the role of women changed over the last 5 decades? What are some negative consequences for women in the workplace? What are some specific issues related to older minority women?

4) September 18 – Religion & Later Life

Readings: Olson Chapters 11-14
Videos: [Stephen Sapp](#), Professor & Chair of Religious Studies, University of Miami
[Ilana Dunner](#), Director, Jewish Association for Services for the Aged

E-class Activity: Discuss two potentially negative aspects of religion in later life.

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5) September 25 – Education, Economics & Multiple Jeopardy in Aging

Readings: Olson Chapters 6-10; Stoller Chapters 17-27

E-class Activity #1: What types of educational opportunities are available to older adults?
What considerations are relevant to caregivers and service providers?
How do learning patterns differ from younger adults?

E-class Activity #2: Choose a specific minority population and discuss how cumulative disadvantage may influence later life economic conditions.

Assignment Due: Arts/Literature assignment due, Email to [instructor](#) by Noon on Sept 25th.

6) October 2 – Mental Health, Cognition, & Aging

Readings: Stoller Chapters 8-14

E-class Activity: If you know an older adult with cognitive decline, what types of behaviors do they display? If you don't know anyone, try to imagine how a person might act and how you would react. Discussion leaders: please focus on how ethnicity or gender shape mental health in late life.

7) October 9 – Language & Aging

Readings: Olson Chapters 15-18
[Diverse Voices—The Inclusion of Language-Minority Populations in National Studies: Challenges and Opportunities](#) (optional)

E-class Activity: Why would a person actively choose not to learn a language? How does that decision influence a person's health care seeking behavior? Are language differences good, bad, or neither, for an aging society?

8) October 16 – Midterm Exam (due October 20th, noon)

9) October 23 – Latino Aging

Readings: Olsen Chapter 6 & 7; Stoller Chapters 3, 7, 31; Chapter 14 (p. 606-611)
Hooyman & Kiyak (.pdf)

E-class Activity: Pick one factor that you believe has the greater influence on a Latino older adult's life. Discuss why you think it is important.

10) October 30 – Older Adults of African Descent

Readings: Olsen Chapter 9 & 10; Stoller Chapters 4, 10, 13, 21, 28; Chapter 14 (p. 599-606) Hooyman & Kiyak (.pdf)

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E-class Activity: Discuss the multiple factors influencing health outcomes for older adults of African descent.

11) November 6 – Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American Aging

Readings: Olson Chapters 2-5, 10; Stoller Chapters 2, 5, 6, 14, 20; Chapter 14 (p. 611-629) Hooyman & Kiyak (.pdf)

E-class Activity: What are the negative and positive consequences of strong familial relationships and responsibility in Asian and Pacific Islander cultures? How do historical forces shape the lives of older Native Americans?

12) November 13 – Sexuality in aging

Readings: Olson Chapters 19, 29

Videos: [Julie Kliska](#), Senior Program Manager, Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center
[Lisa Krinsky](#), Director, LGBT Aging Project
[Catherine Thurston](#), Director of Clinical and Social Services and Tom Weber, Director of Community Services, SAGE New York

E-class Activity: Discuss how the life course trajectory of a homosexual man or woman differs from that of a heterosexual man or woman in late life.

13) November 20 – Changing Family Forms

Readings: Stoller Chapters 32-35

E-class Activity: How does changing family structure impact aging?

14) November 27 – Community & Government Resources for Older Adults

Readings: Olson Chapter 21

E-class Activity: What additional barriers do older adults who were immigrants face?

15) December 4 – The Future of Diversity in Aging (Final Paper/Project Due)

Readings: Stoller Chapters 36-44
[An Aging World 2001](#) (optional)

E-class Activity: None

Assignment Due: Final paper or project. Final exam will be handed out.

Final Exam – Due December 10 (12pm)

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Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>.

Waiver

This syllabus does not represent a final contract between the instructor and the students. It is a suggestion only. The instructor of this class reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus including readings, assignments, class descriptions, course goals, and grade breakdown at anytime during the class. The instructor will make any efforts to notify students of any changes in a timely fashion.