

**UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

SW540 - General Topics in Social Work: Psychological and Cognitive Aspects of Aging
Course Outline
Summer 2007

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Required Text: Cavanaugh, J. C. & Blanchard-Fields, F. (2006). Adult development and aging (5th ed.). Wadsworth: Belmont, California

Format

The course will be offered using an online education format. The course will be supported through the use of Blackboard. Students are responsible for *actively* participating on a weekly basis.

Course Requirements

Active student participation is mandatory. Students are expected to read all assigned material, and to complete all assignments as scheduled.

Assignments & Grading

The Grading Scale is as follows:

- A (95-100) Outstanding/Superior - Exceptional performance. Consistently exceeds expectations.
- B+ (90-94) Very Good. - Student consistently meets, and occasionally exceeds, normal expectations for the course.
- B (85-89) Good - Student consistently meets normal expectations for the course.
- C+ (80-84) Average - There is unevenness in grasping course content. Student is inconsistent in meeting normal expectations for the course.
- C (70-79) Poor - There is lack of understanding of course content. Student does not meet course expectations.
- F (69-Below) Very Poor - There is a lack of attendance or incomplete assignments. Course expectations are not met.

Quizzes multiple choice quizzes will be given online 4 times through-out the semester. The quizzes will focus on the major points covered in the weekly readings. Students may take the quiz at any point during the week (Tuesday through Monday). The quizzes will be open book and have no time limit. However, you must complete each quiz in one sitting as you cannot come back into the quiz after you have left the quiz site.

4 quizzes @ 10% each	40%
Interview Paper- guidelines below	30%
Journal Articles critique-guidelines below 2@ 10% each	20%
Discussion Board Participation 5 @ 2% each	10%

Course Outline

Date	Topic/Readings	Assignments
6/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1 Studying Adult Development Pp. 1-18; 28-33 Chapter 2 Physical Changes <p>McIlvane, J.M., & Reinhardt, J.P. (2001). Interactive effect of support from family and friends in visually impaired elders. <i>Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences</i>, 56B, 374-382.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Board 	
6/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 Longevity, Health, and Functioning <p>Reynolds, S.L., Saito, Y., & Crimmins, E.M. (2005). The impact of obesity on active life expectancy in older American men and women. <i>The Gerontologist</i>, 45, 438-444.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Board 	Quiz 1
6/18	<p>Chapter 4</p> <p>Clinical Assessment, Mental Health, & Mental Disorders</p> <p>Chapter 5</p> <p>Person-Environment Interactions and Optimal Aging</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Board 	Quiz 2
6/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intelligence Chapter 8 <p>Insel, K., Morrow, D., Brewer, B., & Figueredo, A. (2006). Executive function, working memory, and medication adherence among older adults. <i>Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences</i>, 61B, P102-P107</p>	Quiz 3
7/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independence Day 	
7/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attention and Perceptual Processing Chapter 6 <p>Marsiske, M. & Margrett, J. A. (2006). Everyday problem solving and decision making. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), <i>Handbook of the Psychology of Aging</i>, New York: Elsevier (pp 315 – 342).</p>	Interview Paper Due
7/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Memory Chapter 7 <p>Gonzalez, H., Mungas, D., & Haan, M. (2002). A verbal learning and memory test for English- and Spanish-speaking older Mexican-American adults. <i>The Clinical Neuropsychologist</i>, 16, 439-451.</p>	
7/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personality Chapter 10 <p>Wilson, R. S., Mendes de Leon, C. F., Bienias, J. L., Evans, D. A., & Bennett, D. (2004). Personality and mortality in old age. <i>Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences</i>, 59, P110-P116.</p>	Quiz 4

7/30 Review and Evaluation of All Discussion Board Questions and Responses
All Groups

8/6 Review of course

Guidelines for Interviewing an Older Adult

The purpose of this assignment is to give you some familiarity with applying your knowledge about the psychology of aging to learning about an older adult. Most students have had contact with older adults, but are unlikely to have applied psychological theories to these interactions. In particular, I want you to take the following issue discussed in this course and apply it to understanding the person you interview:

What age-related changes in intellectual functioning do the older adult notice? What things does this older adult do to compensate for changes in intellectual functioning?

Your task will be to interview an older adult, and then to write a brief paper summarizing your findings. Your paper should include a discussion of this issue and how well the individual you interviewed seems to fit the theories and research discussed in class and in the readings regarding age changes in cognitive functioning.

The interview:

The participant you interview must be at least 60 years of age. You should tell him or her that you are completing a class project for your Psychology of Aging class and that this will require about 1 hour to answer some questions. If you feel the person might feel uncomfortable about the interview, you should tell the person that his or her responses will be kept confidential – your report will not use names, but will use a pseudonym (such as Mr. X). You may use a family member, friend, neighbor, or new acquaintance.

Be sensitive to the person you are interviewing. Don't take more time than he or she wants to give. Respect the person's privacy and don't probe into private details that he or she doesn't want to discuss.

The following sample questions should help you conduct the interview. It is not necessary to ask all or any of these questions. Feel free to be creative:

Over time, have they noticed any differences in

- their ability to pay attention to information

Sample question: Can you follow the plot in your favorite radio or TV program (or in a movie) as well as when you were 20 or 30?

- their ability to remember information that they have heard a few minutes ago

Sample question: Do you remember for which class I am preparing this assignment?

- their ability to remember information for more than a few minutes

Sample question: How well can you remember a list of items to buy at a grocery store?

- their ability to remember information from long ago

Sample question: How well do you remember major events that happened to you in your childhood or early adulthood? Do you remember the date of Pearl Harbor or Kennedy assassination?

- their ability to remember names of people that they have known a long time

Sample question: Can you remember the names of your grandchildren? The names of the spouses of your children? The

names of 5 people that you went to school with?

- their ability to remember names of people they have met very recently;

Sample question: Can you recall the name of a person that you met recently?

- their ability to figure out how to solve new problems, such as how to use a new piece of electronic equipment (e.g., TV, stereo, phone), computer, or an ATM machine;

Sample question: Can you install and set up a TV, DVD player or VCR, or a computer?

Then, for any changes that the older adult has noticed, ask them what things that they have done to adapt to these changes, to minimize the impact on their daily lives

Sample question: From the perspective of your memory and thinking, can you tell me how you have adapted to the fact that you are in your “golden” years now? Are there any “tricks” that you use?

The paper:

Your paper should be about 5-6 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, and should include four sections. Each section will be graded for completeness and quality. The **first section** (20 points) should include a brief background about the topic, age changes in cognitive functioning. You should briefly overview what we know about this topic. In the **second section** (20 points, you should summarize in your own words what the older adult told you about changes that they have noticed in their cognitive functioning. Do not list questions and answers, just summarize. The **third section** (20 points) should include a summary of what things the older adult said that they did to compensate for any changes in cognitive functioning. Finally, the **fourth section, most important section**,(40 points) should relate what you have learned about this older person to what you have learned in class.

As a general guide, you should devote about one page to introducing the issue of cognitive changes in aging, one page to reporting on the content of the interview and on adaptation, and about two pages to integrating the interview with the course material. A *hint*: If you want to make sure that I find each section, label them (feel free to get creative with the labels).

Do not automatically expect to hear from the interviewee about substantial changes in cognition. You may be able to observe some changes yourself. It is also very likely that the interviewee has experienced no changes in several areas of cognition. Make sure that you explain in the fourth section how that relates to what you have learned in class.

This assignment only involves asking questions and subjective observation. Do NOT test or challenge the interviewee. Make the experience as pleasant as possible.

Grading of the paper will be based primarily on the extent to which you have followed the instructions given above, and discussed the findings from the interview in accordance with the theories and research presented in class, the assigned articles and in the text. Grading will also be based in part on the clarity of your writing, your use of proper grammar and punctuation, and other indications that you are communicating clearly and effectively.

The assignment is due on **xxxxx**, although you may turn it in earlier if you wish. I hope that this assignment provokes thought and discussion, and is not just viewed as a task to be graded. Maybe you’ll learn something you never knew about a friend or a relative. Good luck and enjoy. I look forward to reading your report!

Journal Article Critique

Description of Assignment. Choose two of the topics (i.e. physical changes, longevity; memory, intelligence, attention etc.) we discuss throughout the semester and find a recent journal article (2002 or later) that examines at least one socio-demographic variable: Socioeconomic Status (SES), Race/Ethnicity, or Gender in relation to one of that topics etc. covered in Psychological and Cognitive Aspects of Aging. Some suggested journals include: *Journal of Gerontology*, *Gerontologist*, *Aging and Mental Health*, *Journal of Applied*

Gerontology, Gerontological Social Work; Journal of Aging and Health, , any peer-review journal in your discipline. In this paper, you will critique the article. Your critique should include the following elements:

- A summary of the article – a couple of sentences that describes what the article is about.
- A list of the patterns the article highlights –what patterns does the article highlight with regard to the demographic variable and psychological and/or cognitive aging you have chosen? Be sure to include both what the literature cited states, as well as the study itself.
- An evaluation of the article – say, in your own words, whether you agree or disagree with the article and explain why. Your explanation should reflect what you have learned from class readings and class discussions.

Critiques can be turned in at anytime during the semester from June 4 to July 23. If you like, you may use any of the articles below or you may search for your own articles.

Critiques should be 2-3 pages, double spaced, 12-point font.

Be sure to include the full citation (APA or ASA style) on the heading of the first page of your critique (i.e. author, title, journal, page numbers).

Additional readings:

Reynolds, S.L., Saito, Y., & Crimmins, E.M. (2005). The impact of obesity on active life expectancy in older American men and women. *The Gerontologist*, 45, 438–444.

Insel, K., Morrow, D., Brewer, B., & Figueredo, A. (2006). Executive function, working memory, and medication adherence among older adults. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 61B, P102–P107

Wilson, R. S., Mendes de Leon, C. F., Bienias, J. L., Evans, D. A., & Bennett, D. (2004). Personality and mortality in old age. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 59, P110-P116.

McIlvane, J.M., & Reinhardt, J.P. (2001). Interactive effect of support from family and friends in visually impaired elders. *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences*, 56B, 374-382.

Marsiske, M. & Margrett, J. A. (2006). Everyday problem solving and decision making. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the Psychology of Aging*, New York: Elsevier (pp 315 – 342).

Mcdougall, G. J. & Holston, E.C. (2003). Black men and white men at risk for memory impairment. *Nursing Research*, 52, 42-46.

Allaire, J. C. & Whitfield, K. E. (2004). Relationships among education, age, and cognitive functioning in older African Americans: The impact of desegregation. *Aging Neuropsychology and Cognition*, 11, 443-449.

Gonzalez, H., Mungas, D., & Haan, M. (2002). A verbal learning and memory test for English- and Spanish-speaking older Mexican-American adults. *The Clinical Neuropsychologist*, 16, 439-451.