

**THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL WORK**

**Syllabus: SW540 General Topics in Social Work: Psychological and
Cognitive Aspects of Aging
Summer 2007**

CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the student's responsibility to have read the College of Social Work Ethical Academic and Professional Conduct Code that is in the CSW MSSW handbook (<http://www.csw.utk.edu>).

THE HONOR STATEMENT

An essential feature of The University of Tennessee is a commitment to maintaining an atmosphere of intellectual integrity and academic honesty. As a student of the University, I pledge that I will neither knowingly give nor receive any inappropriate assistance in academic work, thus affirming my own personal commitment to honor and integrity (*Hilltopics*, 2006).

DISABILITY

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability or if you have emergency information to share, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 191 Hoskins Library at 865-974-6087. This will ensure that you are properly registered for services.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will examine psychological, mental health and mental illness aspects of the aging process, with special emphasis on age, gender, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and psychological resources across various mental health domains. Among the domains we will investigate are: memory, cognition, intelligence, personality, mood and anxiety disorders, emotion, elder abuse, spirituality, and culture. . Objectives include increasing students' knowledge about:

1. The growth of the older population.
2. Research methods used to study aging issues.
3. Changes in sensation/perception, health, and cognition with aging.
4. How aging affects interpersonal relationships, personality, and psychopathology.
5. How diversity (e.g., gender and ethnicity) affect the experience of aging.
6. How to analyze and creatively apply research knowledge about aging to practical problems faced by older adults.

COURSE RATIONALE

Due to improvements in health awareness and medical technology, as well as demographic changes, the number of elderly people in the U.S. and most other Western

countries is increasing rapidly. This trend has profoundly changed Western society in the past quarter-century and will continue to do so well into the next century. As a result, interest in the aging process has grown considerably within the last 25 years. The rapid increase of older persons will require an enormous increase in the number of professionals trained and competent to work with older adults and their families. This class will examine psychological and cognitive aspects of the aging process, with special emphasis on applied issues in aging/gerontological research. Consideration will be given to biological and physiological aspects of psychological aging, mental health and aging. Besides theory and research on aging, we will discuss practical issues of importance to all of us who are growing older, or who deal with older parents, clients, or patients.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of the course students will be able to:

1. Critically analyze and compare patterns of normal aging with patterns of psychological and mental health dysfunction in later life.
2. Articulate and assess practice implications of the effects of the aging process on psychological functioning and mental health.
3. Assess and evaluate the common intellectual deficits and gains, cognitive impairments, and psychological challenges facing older adults, and the implications for practice.
4. Apply knowledge of risk and protective factors in the development of resiliency in later life; and those associated with discrimination against older adults.
6. Identify the effects of ethnic, racial, cultural, economic, and gender variables on individuals' psychological and mental health in later life
7. Gain and synthesize knowledge of the interactive influence of biological, psychological, and social factors, including families, groups, organizations and communities, on human development and behavior;
8. Apply factual knowledge about the aging process to real-world problems.