**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS**

**COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES–DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**SOCI 4550: SOCIOLOGY OF AGING**

**Summer 5W1 Session: June 3-July 5, 2019**

**Professor**: Gül Seçkin, M.S.G., Ph.D. **Class Dates:** Web

**TA:** Mehmet Celebi, M.A **Class Time**: Web

**Contact e-mails:** gul.seckin@unt.edu **Class Location**: Web

\* mehmet.celebi@unt.edu

\*For a quicker response, students are encouraged to email the course TA, Mr. Celebi.

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Aging is an individual experience on many levels (e.g., economic, cultural), but it is also an experience that is heavily influenced by social processes. Sociology of aging has emerged in response to the need to understand how social change intersects with the aging process. In this course, we will not only examine how social pathways unfold, but will also consider how they are a product of a particular place and time. Students will learn about diverse experiences in aging in several ways, including health disparities, cumulative advantage and disadvantage across the life course, access to government services and programs, and how learning about and living in a diverse society can enrich the lives of both older and younger adults.

This course draws on the rich contributions of several disciplines (e.g. sociology, psychology, demography, and public policy) as they help shed light on the origins, scope, and dynamics of the social issues of older adults. Key concepts, current research findings, and important policies concerning older adults will be discussed within socio-historical context. The course will challenge students to consider complex issues of aging and their unique impact on diverse older populations. Social conflict will remain a consistent theme throughout the course, with particular attention given to the stark disparities within older adults - as well as between generations - and their relation to physical health, mental health, and access to other resources (e.g., Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid). By the end of this short summer session, you will be able to:

1. Identify ways in which the socio-historical context and personal life experiences shape the perspectives of older adults.

2. Identify the ways in which changing social demographics, emerging social trends and scientific and technological advancements influence the development of social policies and services for older adults.

3. Critically consider the distinct challenges facing many older adults of minority backgrounds

(e.g., racial/ethnic, sexual identity, gender, religious, non-traditional, family, etc.).

4. Identify age-related sources of social conflict, their historical consequences, and current issues resulting from historical trends.

**COURSE TEXTBOOK**

Stoller, E. P. & Gibson, R.C. (2000). *Worlds of Difference*. Pine Forge: Thousand Oaks: CA. (Required)

Moody, H.R. (2018). *Aging: Concepts and Controversies*. Sage: California. (Recommended).

Online articles: Additional readings will be uploaded on Blackboard (Bb).

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Schedule below is subject to a revision as deemed necessary by the professor. Make sure that you are aware of the announcements made on Canvas.

**Week 1:**

***Topics:*** The Life Course Perspective: Aging in Individual, Sociocultural, and Historical Contexts

***Required readings:***

Preface

Introduction: Different Worlds in Aging: Gender, Race, and Culture p. 1-15

Advantages of Using the Life Course Framework in Studying Aging p. 19-32

***Required assignments:***

Complete discussion questions on pages 67 & 68 and online posts by **June 9th, 11:59 pm.** Please note that you need to do additional readings in the book in order to be able to answer the questions.

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**Week 2:**

***Topics:*** Social & Psychological Contexts of Aging

***Required readings:***

Cultural Images of Old Age p. 75-88

***Required assignments:***

Complete discussion questions on page 118 and online posts by **June 16, 11:59 pm.** Please note that you need to do additional readings in the book in order to be able to answer the questions.

**Current Event Paper is due on June 14, 2019**

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**Week 3:**

***Topics:*** Productive Activity: Paid & Unpaid

***Required readings:***

Expanding the Definition of Productivity in Old Age p. 123-141

***Required assignments:***

Complete discussion questions on pages 197 & 198 and online posts by **June 23, 11:59 pm**. Please note that you need to do additional readings in the book in order to be able to answer the questions.

**Midterm is due on June 21, 2019, 11:59 pm.**

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**Week 4:**

***Topics:*** Family: Variations on the American Family

***Required readings:***

The Diversity of American Families p. 203-220

***Required assignments:***

Complete discussion questions on page 264 and online posts by **June 30, 11:59 pm**. Please note that you need to do additional readings in the book in order to be able to answer the questions.

**Movie Paper is due on June 28, 2019 pm.**

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**Week 5:**

***Topic:*** Health & Mortality: Inequalities

***Required readings:***

Inequalities in Health and Mortality: Gender, Race, & Class p. 269-286

***Required assignments:***

Complete discussion questions on page 325 and online posts by **July 3, 11:59 pm**. Please note that you need to do additional readings in the book in order to be able to answer the questions.

**Final Exam is due on July 5, 2019, 11:59 pm.**

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**ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING**

**I. Submission of Weekly Discussion Questions** (5 X 50 points = 250 points)

In order to encourage critical thinking, you are required to respond to discussion questions presented in your book. These assignments require you to complete the readings presented as case stories/poems etc. beyond what I listed above as weekly reading requirements (sometimes you also need to do additional research). Essentially, you will be asked to critically reflect on the course content. Your answers to discussion questions should make up approximately three pages (total, nor per question!).

**II. Movie Paper** (1 paper X 50 points = 50 points possible)

My goal in assigning this paper is to engage the student in thinking sociologically beyond the text and the classroom. I believe it makes sociology more meaningful when students recognize that it is everywhere and appreciate that learning extends well beyond the academic environment. The paper should be 2-3 pages (title and reference not included in page length). Cite from your class materials where appropriate. Make it evident that you identified themes/content from the movie that reflects key concepts from the course. Keep in mind that many of these films may reinforce, as well as question stereotypes or biases related to the experience of aging (sometimes one or the other, sometimes both). Please use the following as your outline:

1. Summarize the movie. (This should be one paragraph. Be succinct.)

2. What was the main theme of the film?

3. How was the particular sociological theme or concept (e.g., aging and family, social construction of age) addressed in the film?

4. Conclude with an evaluation of the film. Did you enjoy it? Why or why not

**III. Current Event Paper** (1 paper X 50 points = 50 points possible)

The issues addressed in this class relate to contemporary social problems faced by older adults, and often appear as headlines in the local and national media. This course requires you to look critically at the ways in which issues impacting older adults are conceptualized, represented and addressed by society. To assist you in this process, you will write a current event paper, which will require you to find an article that relates to elderly people. News articles may be selected from one of many state or national newspapers (e.g. New York Times, Washington Post, Chicago Tribune, LA Times) or one of the following news magazines: Time Magazine, U.S. News & World Report, The Economist or Newsweek). You may use the online searchable archives of these publications to locate an article; however, your news article must be dated from January 1, 2015 up to the present day. The current events paper will include the following components:

1. Briefsummary of article. (No longer than one paragraph)

2. How are older adults and/or the issue under consideration portrayed by the author of this news article?

3. Thinking back to what you have learned so far in course readings and lecture, what do you feel are the strengths of this article? Weaknesses?

4. How accurate is the author’s portrayal of the issue and why?

5. How does this article contribute to your understanding of the social context in which this issue is situated for older adults?

This paper is to be not less than two and not more than three pages in length (title and reference notincluded in page length). To assist you in your article search, students should consider signing up for the Current Awareness in Aging (CAAR) Report listserv, which sends daily listings of newspaper articles relevant to older adults: CAAR Report: <http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/cdha/caar.html>

**IV. Mid-Session Exam** (150 points)

Students will be able to choose a number of essay-type questions to answer. Questions will be posted on course Blackboard one week prior to exam due date. Each answer should be roughly 1 to 2 pages. This exam will require you to apply your critical thinking to the course content.

**V. Final Exam** (150 points)

Students will be able to choose a number of essay-type questions to answer. Questions will be posted on course Blackboard one week prior to exam due date. Each answer should be roughly 1 to 2 pages. This exam will require you to apply your critical thinking to the course content.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**Written Assignments**

Written assignments must be completed in APA format, including the following:

• Cover page including title, name, date submitted, course number, course title

• One-inch margins

• 1.5 spaced

• Times New Roman, 12-point font, and references.

**Missed/Late Assignments**

Success in this class is assessed by the degree to which students demonstrate effort, understanding, and critical analysis of the subject matter. All course assignments are to be submitted no later than due date specified on the course syllabus. Students who have a legitimate reason for submitting a late assignment should contact the instructor PRIOR to due date. The instructor reserves the right to determine whether a late assignment can be submitted without point penalty and/or whether you can make-up a missed in-class assignment. Unapproved late assignments will be marked down three points for each day they are late. The University attorney advises faculty members to notify students that the syllabus is not a contract and is therefore subject to change. We will try to adhere to the schedule provided, but it is important to note that changes may be necessary to meet unforeseen needs and events.

**Grade Distribution**

Total points you can earn in this class is 700, which will be added and converted to 100 metric system via Blackboard course grade calculation as follows: A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 59 or below

**Additional Policies**

I recommend you to refer to UNT Policies (regarding withdrawals, student accommodation with health challenges, absence due to athletic events, student misconduct, academic dishonesty and the services). Information is found at the following websites:

<https://disability.unt.edu/>;

<http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct>;

<http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/withdrawals>