

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
SOCI 4550: SOCIOLOGY OF AGING- SUMMER 2021**

Instructor: Associate Professor/Dr. Gül Seçkin
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Office Hours: Online by appointment

Class Dates: July 5th-August 6th
Class Time: Online
Class Location: Online

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 emerged, as a field, in response to the need to understand how social change intersects with the aging process. In this course, we will not only examine how aging-related experiences 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. We will place an emphasis on: the importance of context and how individuals experience context differently as they age, how individuals experience events differently depending on their place in the life course, and how lives are linked together through social relationships

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 provided 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. Throughout this 5-week summer course, you will be introduced to a broad spectrum of topics and issues related to aging. This course will entail a substantial amount of reading. By the end of the session, you will be able to:

- ✓ 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.

COUSE READINGS

Available on Canvas under Files. Please note that new/alternative readings might be added or removed from the reading list. **Each week you are required to complete only five (5) articles of your choice from the list of options.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: July 5-11

Topic: Fundamental and Disciplinary Perspectives on Sociology of Aging

Articles:

1. Successful Aging and Its Discontents: A Systematic Review of the Social Gerontology Literature.
2. Successful Aging 2.0: Conceptual Expansions for the 21st Century.
3. Using a Micro-Level Model to Generate a Macro-Level Model of Productive Successful Aging.
4. Examining Rowe and Kahn's Concept of Successful Aging: Importance of Taking a Life Course Perspective.
5. Successful Aging in the United States: Prevalence Estimates From a National Sample of Older Adults
6. Defining Successful Aging: A Tangible or Elusive Concept?

Reaction Paper # 1 is due on July 11 by 11:59 p.m.
Online Exercise # 1 is due on July 11 by 11:59 p.m.

Week 2: July 12-18

Topic: Health & Aging

Articles:

1. Early Life Origins of Adult Health and Aging.
2. Epidemiology of Aging.
3. Social Dimensions of Anti-Ageing Science and Medicine.
4. Social Support and Cognitive Functioning as Resources for Elderly Persons with Chronic Arthritis Pain.
5. Understanding the Effects of Covid-19 through a Life Course Lens.
6. Emerging Lifesyles and Proactive Options for Successful Aging A Two-Factor Model of Successful Aging.
7. Doing It My Way: Old Women, Technology and Well-Being.
8. Defining Successful Aging: A Tangible or Elusive Concept?
9. New Directions in the Sociology of Aging.
10. Religion, Health, and Aging

Reaction Paper # 2 is due on July 18 by 11:59 p.m.

Online Exercise # 2 is due on July 18 by 11:59 p.m.

Week 3: July 19-25

Topic: Social & Psychological Contexts of Aging

Articles:

1. A will to youth: The woman's anti-aging elixir.
2. Sociocultural Perspectives on Aging Bodies.
3. Internet Use and Depression Among Retired Older Adults in the United States: A Longitudinal Analysis.
4. Positive Attitudes towards Technologies and Facets of Well-Being in Older Adults.
5. Measuring (Non)Essentialist Beliefs About the Process of Aging.
6. Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Devices Among the Oldest-Old: Loneliness, Anomie, and Autonomy.
7. Predictors of Older Adults' Technology Use and Its Relationship to Depressive Symptoms and Well-Being

Reaction Paper # 3 is due on July 25 by 11:59 p.m.

Online Exercise # 3 is due on July 25 by 11:59 p.m.

Week 4: July 26-August 1

Topic: Social Diversity, Differential Experiences of Aging and Inequalities

Articles:

1. Reconceptualizing Successful Aging Among Black Women and the Relevance of the Strong Black Woman Archetype.
2. Successful Aging Among LGBT Older Adults: Physical and Mental Health-Related Quality of Life by Age Group.
3. How "Successful" Do Older Europeans Age? Findings From SHARE.
4. Subjective Control and Health Among Mexican-Origin Elders in Mexico and the United States: Structural Considerations in Comparative Research.
5. The Disproportionate Impact of COVID-19 on Older Latino Mortality: The Rapidly Diminishing Latino Paradox.
6. Racial and Ethnic Inequalities in Health.
7. Health Inequalities Among Older Adults in Developed Countries: Reconciling Theories and Policy Approaches.
8. Immigration, Aging, and Health in the United States.
9. Older Adults' Internet Use for Health Information: Digital Divide by Race/Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status.
10. Aging in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Avoiding Ageism and Fostering Intergenerational Solidarity.
11. Beyond Successful Aging 2.0: Inequalities, Ageism, and the Case for Normalizing Old Ages

Reaction Paper # 4 is due on August 1 by 11:59 p.m.

Online Exercise # 4 is due on August 1 by 11:59 p.m.

Week 5: August 2-6

Topics: *Social Relationships and Aging*

Articles:

1. Can Digital Technology Enhance Social Connectedness Among Older Adults? A Feasibility Study.
2. Societal Views of Older Adults as Vulnerable and a Burden to Society During the COVID-19 Outbreak: Results From an Israeli Nationally Representative Sample.
3. Modern Senicide in the Face of a Pandemic: An Examination of Public Discourse and Sentiment About Older Adults and COVID-19 Using Machine Learning.
4. Calculated Ageism: Generational Sacrifice as a Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.
5. From “Coffin Dodger” to “Boomer Remover”: Outbreaks of Ageism in Three Countries With Divergent Approaches to Coronavirus Control.
6. “We’re Staying at Home”. Association of Self-Perceptions of Aging, Personal and Family Resources and Loneliness with Psychological Distress During the Lock-Down Period of COVID-19.
7. The Physical–Digital Divide: Exploring the Social Gap Between Digital Natives and Physical Natives.
8. “He Explained It to Me and I Also Did It Myself”: How Older Adults Get Support with Their Technology Uses.

Reaction Paper # 5 is due on August 6 by 11:59 p.m.

Online Exercise # 5 is due on August 6 by 11:59 p.m.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

I. Reaction Papers (5 papers X 50 points = 250 points possible)

In order to encourage critical thinking about the assigned readings, all students will write reaction papers based on assigned readings. These papers need to show thoughtful and critical engagement with the readings. Essentially, students will be asked to critically reflect on the course content. These papers are to be about three pages in length. In your reaction papers, you should respond to the content of the readings by discussing the following points as building blocks of your papers.

1. Select 5 articles of your choice and provide a brief summary of each article.
2. What are the important points discussed in the articles?
3. What are the primary findings of the articles and how did the author(s) come to these conclusions?
4. Given the data and methods, do you agree with the conclusions drawn by the authors?
5. If you were to complete a follow-up research projects, what would you study and how would you study it?
6. How do these articles contribute to your understanding of the issues aging adults face?
7. Can these issues be generalized to older adults of diverse backgrounds with respect to gender, race and ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation? If so, how? If not, why not?
8. What questions do you feel your readings should have addressed, but did not?
9. Taking all of the above discussion into account, what actions are now called for?
10. Propose two questions based on your reading for future research.

II. Online Exercises (5 exercises x 50 points = 250 points possible).

These exercises will require you to critically reflect on the course content and critically evaluate the materials that you have been exposed in the course. Detailed instructions are available on Canvas under Assignments tab.

GRADING

Total points you can earn in this class is 500. Points you earned will be converted to 100 metric system via Canvas course grade calculation. The following distribution will be used to determine your final course grade:

A: 90-100; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 59 or below

SPECIFIC COURSE POLICIES

Success in this class is measured by the degree to which students demonstrate effort, understanding, and critical analysis of the subject matter. 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 some changes and alterations may be necessary. All assignments must be completed in ASA or 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.

UNT 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). Pertinent Information can be found at the following websites:

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

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

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

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences. According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

ADA Accommodation Statement. UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation (Policy 16.004). The University of North Texas (UNT) prohibits discrimination and harassment because of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal or state law in its application and admission processes; educational programs and activities; employment policies, procedures, and processes; and university facilities. The University takes active measures to prevent such conduct and investigates and takes remedial action when appropriate.

Access to Information – Eagle Connect. Students' access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to a student's Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

Emergency Notification & Procedures. UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Student Evaluation Administration Dates. Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13, 14 and 15 of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the SPOT website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

Retention of Student Records. Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via Canvas online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about student's records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University's policy. See UNT Policy 10.10, Records Management and Retention for additional information.

References and Cross References.

UNT Policy 04.008, Records Management and Retention

UNT Policy 06.035, Academic Freedom & Academic Responsibility

UNT Policy 06.038, Safety in Instructional Activities

UNT Policy 06.039, Student Attendance and Authorized Absences

UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity

UNT Policy 16.001, Disability Accommodation for Students and Academic Units

UNT Policy 16.005, Sexual Harassment