

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
Issues in Social Gerontology: Soci/Gero 4515

Winter 2013

Classes Mondays 11:30-2:30 in RB2027

Dr. Sharon-dale Stone
Phone: 343-8530

Office: RB2038 – office hours by appointment
Email: sharondale.stone@lakeheadu.ca

Course Description

This **advanced seminar** course introduces students to critical and interdisciplinary perspectives in social gerontology, with a focus on critically examining the role of social factors in shaping views of old age and the experience of old age.

This upper-level course is organized as a combination of lecture and seminar, with primary emphasis on seminar discussion. In keeping with the advanced nature of the course, **students are expected to actively participate in critically discussing issues raised in readings.**

Course Goals

- * to critically interrogate the meaning of old age
- * to offer students a critical analysis and understanding of the status of old people in society
- * to introduce students to cutting edge research offering a critical perspective on various aspects of old people's lives
- * to encourage students to develop a critical awareness of factors affecting the well-being of old people
- * to provide students with information and analysis that is relevant to their own lives and experiences
- * to encourage students to reflect on the ways in which they are themselves affected by issues discussed in the course
- * to encourage students to reflect on what could be done to improve the status of old people in society
- * to encourage students to develop/practice/refine critical thinking skills
- * to encourage students to develop/practice/refine their ability to critically express themselves in writing
- * to foster a classroom atmosphere of respect for all, with an openness to varying perspectives on course material
- * to provide students with a stimulating and enjoyable learning experience

Student Responsibilities

- * to complete the assigned readings before class and reflect on them
- * to attend all classes prepared to actively discuss course material
- * to ask questions when not sure whether you understand something (most likely, other students will also benefit from your query)
- * to be open to learning about new perspectives on topics discussed in the course
- * to respectfully listen to what other students have to say and learn from them – recognize the ways in which your classmates are also your teachers
- * to complete assignments on time (or be prepared to be penalized)
- * to let the professor know about difficulties you are having with the course
- * to actively work towards claiming your education

Evaluation (for details, see Assignments section of outline):

Assignment	Weight
Comment papers (9 @ 5%each)	45%
Seminar/discussion participation	25
Presentation outline	5
In-class presentation	15
Final take-home exam due April 18	10

Required Readings

A coursepack of readings is available for purchase at the bookstore, and readings are also in books on reserve at the library (indicated with *). Other readings are posted on Desire2Learn.

Books on reserve at the library:

Andrews, Gavin J., and David R. Phillips (eds.). 2005 *Ageing and Place: Perspectives, Policy, Practice*. NY: Routledge.

Cole, Thomas R., Robert Kastenbaum and Ruth E. Ray (eds.). 2000. *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging (2nd Ed.)*. NY: Springer Publishing.

Featherstone, Mike, and Andrew Wernick (eds.). 1995. *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life*. London: Routledge.

Hazan, Haim. 1994. *Old Age: Constructions and Deconstructions*. NY: Cambridge University Press.

Jamieson, Anne, Sarah Harper and Christina Victor (eds.). 1997. *Critical Approaches to Ageing and Later Life*. Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

Johnson, Malcolm L. (ed.). 2005. *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Minkler, Meredith and Carroll L. Estes, (eds.). 1999. *Critical Gerontology: Perspectives from Political and Moral Economy*. Amityville, NY: Baywood Publishing.

Sheets, Debra J., Dana Burr Bradley and Jon Hendricks (eds.). 2006. *Enduring Questions in Gerontology*. New York: Springer Publishing.

Schedule of Weekly Topics and Readings1. Jan 7: **Old Age as a Social Construction**

- Gilleard, Chris & Paul Higgs. 2011. "Ageing Abjection and Embodiment in the Fourth Age." *Journal of Aging Studies* 25: 135-142. (**Recommended but not required**)
- Hazan, Haim. 1994. Ch 1 & 2 (pp. 13-32) of *Old Age: Constructions and Deconstructions**
- Mykytyn, Courtney Everts. 2010. "A History of the Future: The Emergence of Contemporary Anti-Ageing Medicine." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 181-196.

Focus Question: What does it mean to say that old age is a social construction? Can you give examples of how age is socially constructed?

2. Jan 14: **Old Age as a Social Construction (cont'd)**

- Degnen, Cathrine. 2007. "Minding the Gap: The Construction of Old Age and Oldness Amongst Peers." *Journal of Aging Studies* 21: 69-80. (**Recommended but not required**)
- Fry, Christine L. 2006. "Whatever Happened to Culture?" Pp. 159-176 in Sheets *et al.*, *Enduring Questions in Gerontology** (**Recommended but not required**)
- Hareven, Tamara K. 1995. "Changing Images of Aging and the Social Construction of the Life Course." Pp. 119-134 in Featherstone & Wernick, *Images of Aging**
- Lagacé, Martine, Houssein Chamarkeh & Florian Grandena. 2012. "Cultural Perceptions of Aging: The Perspective of Somali Canadians in Ottawa." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 27: 409-424.

Readings cont'd next page

- Thane, Pat. 2000. "The History of Aging in the West." Pp. 3-24 in Cole *et al.*, *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging**

Focus Question: How do constructions of age change over time and across places?

3. Jan. 21: **Critical Approaches in Social Gerontology**

- Achenbaum, Andrew. 1997. "Critical Gerontology." Pp. 16-26 in Jamieson *et al.*, *Critical Approaches to Ageing and Later Life**(**Recommended but not required**)
- Kail, Ben Lennox, Jill Quadagno & Jennifer Reid Keene. 2009. "The Political Economy Perspective of Aging." Pp. 555-571 in *Handbook of Theories of Aging, 2nd ed.**
- Kontos, Pia. 2005. "Multi-disciplinary Configurations in Gerontology." Pp. 24-35 in Andrews & Phillips, *Ageing and Place**

Focus Question: How does a critical approach to social gerontology complicate understandings of old age? Which perspective appeals to you most and why?

4. Jan. 28: **The Medicalization of Old Age**

- Estes, Carroll L. 1993. "The Aging Enterprise Revisited." *The Gerontologist* 33: 292-298. (**Recommended but not required**)
- Estes, Carroll L. and Elizabeth A. Binney. 1989. "The Biomedicalization of Aging." *The Gerontologist* 29: 587-596.
- Marshall, Barbara L. 2010. "Science, Medicine and Virility Surveillance." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 211-224.

Focus Question: How does the medicalization of old age shape popular understandings of old age?

5. Feb. 4: **The Problem of Ageism**

- Bytheway, Bill. 2005. "Ageism." Pp. 338-345 in Johnson, *Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing**
- Campos, Irma D., Ashley M. Stripling & Martin Heesacker. 2012. "'Estoy viejo' [I'm old]: Internalized Ageism as Self-Referential, Negative, Ageist Speech in the Republic of Panama." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 27: 373-390.
- Ellis, Shannon R. and Todd G. Morrison. 2005. "Stereotypes of Ageing." *International Journal of Aging and Human Development* 61: 57-73. (**Recommended but not required**)
- Hausdorff, Jeffrey M. *et al.* 1999. "The Power of Ageism on Physical Function in Older Persons." *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* 47: 1346-1349.
- Levy, Becca. 2009. "Stereotype Embodiment: A Psychosocial Approach to Aging." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 18 (6): 332-336.
- NACA, "The Myths of Aging." *Expression* 16 #2 (2003)* (**Recommended but not required**)
- Palmore, Erdman B. 2004. "Ageism in Canada and the United States." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 19: 41-46* (**Recommended but not required**)

Focus Question: What is ageism and how is it supported in popular culture?

6. Feb. 11: **Attitudes, Images, and the Role of Media**

- Bytheway, Bill & Julia Johnson. 2005. "Cataloguing Old Age." Pp. 176-187 in Andrews & Phillips, *Ageing and Place** (**Recommended but not required**)
- Donlon, Margie M., Ori Ashman & Becca R. Levy. 2005. "Re-Vision of Older Television Characters: A Stereotype-Awareness Intervention." *Journal of Social Issues* 61 (2): 307-319.
- Fealy, Gerard, Martin McNamara, Margaret Pearl Treacy & Imogen Lyons. 2011. "Constructing Ageing and Age Identities: A Case Study of Newspaper Discourses." *Ageing & Society*: 1-18.
- Featherstone, Mike & Mike Hepworth. 2005. "Images of Ageing." Pp. 354-362 in Johnson, *Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing**
- Lee, Monica M. *et al.* 2007. "Representations of Older Adults in Television Advertisements." *Journal of Aging Studies* 21: 23-30.

Focus Question: How are YOU affected by images of old people that you daily see (or not see)?

7. Feb. 25: **Age Segregation**

- Hagestad, Gunhild O. & Peter Uhlenberg. 2005. "The Social Separation of Old and Young: A Root of Ageism." *Journal of Social Issues* 61 (2): 343-360.
- McHugh, Kevin. 2003. "Three Faces of Ageism: Society, Image and Place." *Ageing & Society* 23: 165-185.

Focus Question: What are the benefits and drawbacks of age-segregation? Who benefits and how? Who does not benefit and why not?

8. March 4: **Cultivating Youth and Anti-Aging**

- Brooks, Abigail T. 2010. "Aesthetic Anti-Ageing Surgery and Technology: Women's Friend or Foe?" *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 238-257.
- Calasanti, Toni. 2007. "'Bodacious Berry,' 'Potency Wood,' and the 'Aging Monster': Gender and Age Relations in Anti-Aging Ads." *Social Forces* 86 (1): 335-355.
- Gillearn, Chris. 2005. "Cultural Approaches to the Ageing Body." Pp. 156-163 in Johnson, *Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing (Recommended but not required)*
- Kinnunen, Taina. 2010. "'A Second Youth': Pursuing Happiness And Respectability Through Cosmetic Surgery in Finland." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 258-271.

Focus Question: How does consumer culture marginalize those who are visibly old? What are the consequences for those growing old?

9. March 11: **Constructions of Acceptable Elders**

- Katz, Stephen. 2000. "Busy Bodies: Aging, Activity, and the Management of Everyday Life." *Journal of Aging Studies* 14 (2): 135-142.
- Katz, Stephen. 2001. "Growing Older Without Aging?" *Generations* 25: 27-32.
- Laliberte Rudman, Debbie. 2006. "Shaping the Active, Autonomous and Responsible Modern Retiree." *Ageing & Society* 26: 181-201. **(Recommended but not required)**
- Lund, Anne & Gunn Engelsrud. 2008. "'I am Not That Old': Inter-Personal Experiences of Thriving and Threats at a Senior Centre." *Ageing & Society* 28: 675-692. **(Recommended but not required)**
- Tulle, Emmanuelle & Nika Dorrer. 2012. "Back From the Brink: Ageing, Exercise and Health in a Small Gym." *Ageing & Society* 32 (7): 1106-1127.

Focus Question: How do images of active elders buttress an anti-aging culture, and what are the consequences for old people?

10. March 18: **Social Creation of Frailty and Dependence**

- Aronson, Jane. 2002. "Elderly People's Accounts of Home Care Rationing: Missing Voices in Long-Term Care Policy Debates." *Ageing & Society* 22: 399-418.
- Grenier, Amanda. 2007. "Constructions of Frailty in the English Language, Care Practice And the Lived Experience." *Ageing & Society* 27: 425-445.
- Nicholson C., J. Meyer, M. Flatley, C. Holman & K. Lowton. 2012. "Living on the Margin: Understanding the Experience of Living and Dying With Frailty in Old Age." *Social Science & Medicine* 75: 1426-1432.

Focus Question: How does the medicalization of old age encourage us to see dependence as both inevitable and irreversible? How can we reduce the incidence of frailty?

11. March 25: **Technogenarians**

- Copelton, Denise A. 2010. "Output That Counts: Pedometers, Sociability and the Contested Terrain of Older Adult Fitness Walking." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 304-318.
- Loe, Meika. 2010. "Doing It My Way: Old Women, Technology and Wellbeing." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 319-334.
- Neven, Louis. 2010. "'But Obviously Not For Me': Robots, Laboratories and the Defiant Identity of Elder Test Users." *Sociology of Health and Illness* 32 (2): 335-347.

Focus Question: How do currently popular constructions of old people shape opportunities for well-being and a good quality of life in old age?

12. April 8: **Imagining Dignity in Long Term Care**

- Dannefer, Dale, et al. 2001. "From The Top To The Bottom, From The Bottom To The Top: Systemically Changing The Culture Of Nursing Homes." Final Project Report for the Van Ameringen Foundation. (**Recommended but not required**)

Focus Question: Why is it so hard to change nursing home culture?

Course Wrap-Up and Discussion of Take-Home Exam

ASSIGNMENTS

Seminar/Discussion Participation (25%)

Attendance in class and participation in class discussions is an important component of this course. Participation in discussion is a way for you to demonstrate your understanding of issues raised in the readings, a way for you to gain an appreciation for additional ways of understanding issues, and a way for you to hone your ability to critically express yourself. There are 2 components to evaluation:

1 Preparation (5%). In preparation for class, you are expected to email 2 proposed questions for class discussion that are relevant to and based on the week's readings (weeks 2-11 only), and provide a very brief context for your question (i.e., what does the reading say that prompts your question?). It is a good idea to bring your own copy of your questions to class, but in an effort to save paper, please do not make a hard copy to hand in. Email questions at least 30 minutes before class starts to the professor: sdstone@lakeheadu.ca. Even if you know you will not be able to attend class, you should still email questions for discussion.

2 Contributions to Discussion (20%). Students are expected to contribute to **every** class discussion. Thus, you need to **read and think critically about the required readings so that you will be prepared to discuss them in class**. You can use each week's focus question as a starting point for thinking about the significance of the readings.

Your **class participation mark will reflect the degree of thoughtful and critical reflection** shown by you as you engage with course material, discussing issues in class. As well, you are encouraged to participate by raising a topic for discussion on Desire2Learn or offering thoughtful comment in response to a question raised by someone else. Both forms of participation will be considered in calculating your participation mark.

Comment Papers (45%)

This assignment is intended to encourage you to come to class having already been exposed to ideas and having already given some thought to their significance. You are required to write 9 comment papers (1.5 - 2 pp. each, or 300-500 words each) to critically comment on required readings for one week. Be sure to follow the guidelines for written work at the end of this outline. You are required to submit a comment paper for weeks 2-11 inclusive, except you are not required to submit a comment paper for the week of your presentation. Each comment paper is worth 5% and will be **due 1 hour prior to the beginning of the class during which we discuss the readings**. Do not print a hard copy but upload your comment paper to the appropriate dropbox folder on Desire2Learn. **Late comment papers will not be accepted.**

In your comment papers, you must:

- give full bibliographic information on the readings at the top of the 1st page (this information does not count towards the length requirement)
- **briefly** summarize the main point(s) of each reading

- identify ways in which the readings relate to each other, how they support or contradict each other, and how they shed light on the week's focus question
- pay attention to the guidelines for written work on the last page of this outline

Your comment papers are expected to be critical. This means that you need to reflect on what you are reading and offer your own evaluation of the ideas presented. To be critical is not necessarily to find fault with the text, it is to carefully evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the ideas and arguments presented. An excellent resource that will help you with this is the webpage published by the University of Toronto Writing Support Centre: <<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/reading-and-researching/critical-reading>>. You are strongly encouraged to download the superb advice on this page and follow it (even if you think you already know how to read and write critically). There are also links on this page to other pages with writing advice. An example of an excellent comment paper is posted on Desire2Learn.

Presentation Outline and Presentation (total 20%)

You are expected to prepare and give an in-class presentation for a total of approximately 45 minutes. This includes 30 minutes presenting a topic to the class and 15 minutes of discussion facilitation. You must choose one of the topics on the course outline and you are expected in your presentation to incorporate but also go beyond discussion of the week's required readings. You should assume that everyone has done the readings and has come to class with their own point of view on the issues. **Your role is to highlight key passages, themes, and arguments in the readings for the purposes of critique, interpretation, and amplification. You should clarify what the issues are, why they are important, how the readings relate to each other, and offer a way of understanding them.** Notably, your presentation should also address key points that could be considered to be problematic. For example, what is controversial and debatable about the point(s) of view in the readings, perspective(s), findings, and argument(s)?

Be creative in designing your presentation. For example, it could be:

- a standard presentation of an analysis of the significance of readings and related material, perhaps using overhead transparencies, powerpoint, handouts, etc.;
- a presentation of a short documentary or movie clip, preceded by a brief introduction highlighting its significance given the week's topic and followed by a more detailed analysis and discussion;
- something else again – use your imagination.

Whatever format you decide on, it is essential that you work with the professor to organize it.

There are 2 components to this assignment:

1. Presentation Outline (5%)

Due 1 week prior to presentation. Please upload your outline to the appropriate comment paper folder on dropbox (e.g. if you will present on Feb. 4 then upload to the comment paper folder for that date).

Also hand in a hard copy of the outline the week before your presentation. The outline should be 2-3 pages long and include:

- your name
- presentation title
- thesis statement to focus the presentation (see <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/thesis_statement.shtml>)
- brief (1-2 paragraphs) summary of presentation
- topics and points to be covered in the presentation
- 2-3 discussion questions on relevant issues, with brief notes on points relevant for answering the questions
- list of at least 5 relevant references (**in addition to required readings**)

2. Presentation (15%)

Follow the format of the presentation outline submitted the week before. You will be evaluated on the clarity and depth of analysis shown, ability to clearly explain complex ideas, ability to identify critical issues and engage the class in a discussion of those issues.

Take-home Exam (10%). Due April 18

Details to be discussed the last day of class April 8.

Guidelines For All Written Work

- work must be typed & double-spaced (with margins at least 1" on all sides)
- do not use a font size that is unusually small or unusually large (recommended fonts are Times New Roman 12 pt. or Arial 11 pt.)
- do NOT include a cover page, but write your name at the top of the first page
- number your pages
- write in essay form, not point form
- carefully proofread your submission to ensure that it is grammatically correct, concisely and clearly written
- pay close attention to length requirements
- deliver your work on time! Late papers will not be accepted
- failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in marks being deducted