

**PSYCHOLOGY 366-01**  
**PERSPECTIVES ON AGING**  
**FALL 2016   TUESDAYS 6-8:50PM   ASH2119**

**Instructor:** Jing Chen, Ph.D.

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**Office hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays 1-2:25pm or by appointment.

**Course Description:**

This course will allow you to take an in-depth look at the process of aging from multiple perspectives. Biological aging, the evolving self, the styles of adult thinking, creative endeavors of the elderly, and the emergence of wisdom will be the main topics of this course. These topics will be approached from the psychological, social-cultural, and evolutionary perspectives with an emphasis on empirical research. An effort will also be made to integrate multiple views into a comprehensive understanding of the human aging.

Psychology 101 is the prerequisite for this course.

**Course Objectives:**

- Develop an understanding of the complex nature of the aging process and begin to view aging through different lenses.
- Appreciate the importance of having multiple perspectives on aging and the necessity of having empirical research in each perspective.

**Course Format:**

This course mainly consists of lectures and in-class discussions. Given the nature of the course, readings from different sources will be assigned prior to each class throughout the semester. It is crucial to read the assigned readings on time so you can actively participate in class discussions and gain a better understanding of the lectures.

**Course Outcome Measures:**

EXAMS : There will be a mid-term exam and a final exam. The exams will be consisted of mostly multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions based on materials covered in lectures, discussions, and readings.

Assignments/In-class activities: A number of homework assignments and in-class activities including group discussions will be given throughout the semester. For this course, it is crucial for you to keep up with these assignments and take them seriously. All homework and in-class group discussions will be collected in class and graded. You are allowed to miss one of the assignments/activities without affecting your grades (the lowest score will be dropped). Any late homework will be marked down 50%. No late work will be accepted one week after its due date. I will not accept email attachments of any homework assignments.

Paper/Project: In this project, you and two other students will work on a proposal centered on how to make Grand Rapids an Age-Friendly city. Your proposal will be based on research discussed in class or findings reported in the literature. Specific instructions and due date will be posted on the Blackboard and discussed in class.

Email attachment of this paper will not be accepted. A late paper will be marked down by 50%.

GRADING SCALE:

	<u>Points</u>	<u>%</u>
Mid-term Exam	100	25%
Final Exam	120	30%
Paper	80	20%
Assignments/Dis	100	25%
	400	100%

Final Grade:

A 372-400	A- 360-371	
B+348-359	B 332-347	B- 320-331
C+308-319	C 292-307	C- 280-291
D+268-279	D 240-267	
F <240		

**Make-up exams:**

Make-up exams will not be given unless there is a family emergency or a severe personal health problem. In such cases, please notify me by phone or email as soon as you can. You also need to provide me with proper documentation (e.g., doctor's note) at the time when you take the make-up exam. Things such as attending a wedding, going to a family reunion/vacation, or having a plane ticket booked on the exam day do not count as family emergencies. Make-up exams will be given in a different format (e.g., 6 – 9 essay questions). The essay questions will cover the same breath of information as the regular exam. No exams will be given prior to the scheduled date.

**Class Attendance:**

Attendance is EXTREMELY important for this class given the structure and the goals of this course. Throughout the semester, you will be reading original articles focusing on different topics. My lectures will provide you with background information that allows you to see the connections among different topics and to get a big picture of human aging. Some of your readings might be difficult to understand because they often were not written for general audience. The lectures will help you gain a better understanding of what you read and learn how to read different kinds of scientific articles. If you are unable to attend a class, make sure to find out what has been covered in class.

**Office Hours:**

You are strongly encouraged to talk to me if you have any questions, confusions, concerns, or suggestions about this course. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, please let me know and I will schedule an alternative time to meet with you.

If you need special assistance, please come to see me at the beginning of the semester.

**Emails:**

The best way to communicate with me is through email. Please put PSY366 in the subject line. Otherwise, I may delete your email without reading it.

**Class Courtesy:**

A respectful and friendly atmosphere in the classroom is important for all of us. Without it, it would be difficult for each of us to freely express our ideas and to feel comfortable to learn and to teach. Let's work together to create an environment that truly nurtures learning.

Unless you have a medical condition that prevents you from taking notes by hand, you are not allowed to use your computer during class.

Your cell phone must be kept out of sight during the entire class period.

**Withdraws:**

The last day you can withdraw from this class with a "W" grade is October 28, 5pm.

**Academic Honesty:**

Violations of the standards of Academic Honesty will be met with severe penalties. In addition to referral to the appropriate university committee, anyone known to be plagiarizing material or copying from another person's exam will receive a grade of zero on that assignment or exam. All of the assignments should be done individually unless I announce it otherwise. If I found two identical pieces of work, both of you will not receive credits for that assignment.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE\* & READING ASSIGNMENTS**

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**TOPIC ONE: AN OVERVIEW (8/30, 9/13)**

The objectives of this course will be discussed in the context of liberal education.

Basic methods used in aging research will be presented.

A comprehensive overview of the aging process will be introduced –

How is old age viewed in history and by different cultures?

What are involved in the psychological studies of human aging and what are the psychological perspectives on aging?

**Readings:**

1. Cronon, B (1998). "Only Connect..." The goals of a liberal education. *American Scholar*, 67, 73-80.
  2. Excerpts from *The Oxford Book of Aging* (1994) – Edited by T. R. Cole & M. G. Winkler.
  3. McKee, P., & Kauppinen, H (1987). *The Art of Aging: A Celebration of Old Age in Western Art*. New York, Human Sciences Press.
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**TOPIC TWO: A NATURAL HISTORY OF AGING (9/20, 9/27, 10/4)**

How does the human body age? - An overview of biological aging will be presented first. Why do we age? Is aging universal among different kinds of organisms? Why do different organisms exhibit different patterns of aging? How to explain human aging from the evolutionary perspective? How may the human life span evolve in the future?

**Readings:**

1. Marx, J. (2004). Coming to grips with bone loss. *Science*, 305, 120-1422.
2. Almeida, M. (2012). Aging mechanisms in bone. *BoneKEy Reports*, 1, 1-7.
3. Ricklefs, R. E., & Finch, C. E. (1995). Patterns of aging. In *Aging: A Natural History* (pp.1-17). Scientific American Library, New York.
4. Epel, E. S. (2009). Telomeres in a life-span perspective: A new “Psychobiomarker”? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18, 6-10.
5. Kirkwood, T. B. L., & Melov, S. (2011). On the programmed/non-programmed nature of ageing with the life history. *Current Biology*, 21, R701-707.

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**TOPIC THREE: SELF, CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND AGING (10/4, 10/11, 10/18)**

How does the *self* evolve over the adulthood? What are the psychological forces that drive these changes? How do individuals define their identities through narratives and life reviews? What are the cultural impacts on these self identities and representations exhibited in autobiographical memories? Can age-related stereotypes alter the process of aging?

**Readings:**

1. Erickson, E. H. (1997). Major stages in psychosocial development. In *The Life Cycle Completed* (pp. 55-72). Boston, MA: Norton.
  2. Weiss, D., & Lang, F. R. (2012). The two faces of age identity. *GeroPsych: The Journal of Gerontopsychology and Geriatric Psychiatry*, 25, 5-14.
  3. Martinelli, P., Anssens, A., Sperduti, M., Piolino, P. (2013). The influence of normal aging and Alzheimer’s disease in autobiographical memory highly related to the self. *Neuropsychology*, 27, 69-78.
  4. Conway, M. A., & Holmes, A. (2004). Psychosocial stages and the accessibility of autobiographical memories across the life cycle. *Journal of Personality*, 72, 461-480.
  5. Wang, Q., & Conway, M. A. (2004). The stories we keep: Autobiographical memory in American and Chinese middle-aged adults. *Journal of Personality*, 72, 911-938.
  6. Levy, B. R. (2009). Stereotype embodiment: A psychosocial approach to aging. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 18, 332–336.
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**TOPIC FOUR: COGNITIVE STYLES OF THE ELDERLY (10/25, 11/1, 11/8, 11/15)**

An overview of changes in older adults' basic cognitive abilities (processing speed and memory) will be first presented followed by discussions addressing important questions such as: What are the major factors that contribute to these age-related changes? Are these changes merely quantitative changes or do they indicate that fundamental changes have occurred in our thinking beyond the "endpoint" of cognitive development?

How do older adults fare in handling everyday tasks such as managing their own finance and getting their house in order given all of the changes in their basic cognitive abilities? How to help older adults enhance their everyday competence?

How does the brain cope with biological aging when cognitive tasks are performed? How plastic is an aging brain? What do we know about the Alzheimer's disease?

**Readings:**

1. Shimamura, A. P., Berry, J. M., Mangels, J. A., Rusting, C. L., & Jurica, P. J. (1995). Memory and cognitive abilities in university professors: Evidence for successful aging. *Psychological Science*, 6, 271-277.
2. Lemaire, P. (2010). Cognitive strategy variations during aging. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 19, 363-369.
3. Park, D. C., & McDonough, I. M. (2013). The dynamic aging mind: Revelations from functional neuroimaging research. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8, 62-67.
4. Brinke, L. F., Bolandzadeh, N., Nagamatsu, L. S., Hsu, C. L., Davis, J., Mirankhan, K., & Liu-Ambrose, T. (2014). Aerobic exercise increases hippocampal volume in older women with probable mild cognitive impairment: A 6-month randomized controlled trial. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 0, 1-8. doi:10.1136/bjsports-2013-093184.
5. Marx, J. (2005). Preventing Alzheimer's: A lifelong commitment? *Science*, 309, 864-866.
6. Selkoe, D. J. (2012). Preventing Alzheimer's disease. *Science*, 337, 1488-1492.

**TOPIC FIVE: CREATIVITY OF THE ELDERLY (11/15, 11/22)**

How do the quantity and quality of creative works in areas such as sciences, literature, arts, and music change across the life span? What are the factors that influence older adults' creativity? How important are creative endeavors to older adults' well being? How can we nurture creativity among the elderly?

**Readings:**

1. Simonton, D. K. (2000). Creativity: Cognitive, personal, developmental, and social aspects. *American Psychologist*, 55, 151-158.
2. Flood, M., & Phillips, K. D. (2007). Creativity in older adults: A plethora of possibilities. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 28, 389-411.

3. Lindauer, M. S. (2003). Late life creativity. In *Aging, Creativity, and Art: A Positive Perspective on Late-Life Development* (pp. 3-22). The Plenum Series in Adult Development and Aging. Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, NY.
4. Johansson, B. B. (2002). Music, age, performance, and excellence: A neuroscientific approach. *Psychogerontology*, 18, 46-58.
5. Park, D. C., Smith, J. L., Drew, L., Haber, S., Hebrank, A., Bischof, G. (2014). The impact of sustained engagement on cognitive function in older adults: The synapse project. *Psychological Science*, 25, 103-112.

#### **TOPIC SIX: DEVELOPMENT OF WISDOM (11/29, 12/6)**

What is wisdom? How is wisdom viewed in the Eastern and Western traditions?

How is wisdom studied using scientific methods? Are we really older and wiser?

What factors can affect the presence of wisdom? How can wisdom be acquired and expressed?

#### **Readings:**

1. Baltes, P. B., Kunzmann, U. (2003). Wisdom. *The Psychologist*, 16, 131-133.
2. Baltes, P. B., & Smith, J. (2008). The fascination of wisdom: Its nature, ontogeny, and function. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 3, 56-64.
3. Mickler, C., & Staudinger, U. M. (2008). Personal wisdom: Validation and age-related differences of a performance measure. *Psychology and Aging*, 23, 787-799.
4. Grossman, I., Na, J., Varnum, M. E., Park, D. C., Kitayama, S., & Nisbett, R. E. (2010). Reasoning about social conflicts improves into old age. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 107, 7246-7250.
5. Kunzmann, U., & Baltes, P. B. (2003). Wisdom-related knowledge: Affective, motivational, and interpersonal correlates. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 1104-1118.
6. Grossmann, I., Karasawa, M., Izumi, S., Na, J., Varnum, M.E.W., Kitayama, S., & Nisbett, R.E. (2012). Aging and wisdom: culture matters. *Psychological Science*, 23, 1059-1066.
7. Kross, E., & Grossmann, I. (2012). Boosting wisdom: Distance from the self enhances wise reasoning, attitudes, and behavior. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 141,
8. Sternberg, R. J. (2004). What is wisdom and how can we develop it? *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 591, 164-174.

**Midterm Exam: Tuesday, October 11, 2016**

**Final Exam: Tuesday, December 13, 2016**

\* This is a tentative schedule. However, the date for the final exam will not be changed.