

## PSYCHOLOGY 366-01 PERSPECTIVES ON AGING

WINTER 2022 TTH 2:30-3:45PM ASH 2132

**Instructor:** Jing Chen, Ph.D.                      **Phone:** 331-2867 (office)  
Office: ASH 2203                                      331-2195 (Psychology Department)  
E-mail: chenj@gvsu.edu

**Office hours:** Tuesdays & Thursdays: 1-2pm, or by appointment, in-person or via BB Collaborate Ultra.

**Blackboard Website:** <http://mybb.gvsu.edu>

### Covid-19 Related Issues:

- General information and updates regarding COVID can be found at the [Lakers Together](#) website and additional information is available at <https://www.gvsu.edu/provost/>.
- **Lakers VAX-UP!** GVSU requires all faculty, staff and students to be vaccinated against COVID-19, unless approved for an exemption or postponement. Please check [here](#) for more information.
- **Self-assessment:** A daily [self-assessment](#) is required before coming to campus.
- **Face coverings** are required in all indoor spaces under the current level of alert. If you are unable to wear a face covering due to medical conditions, please contact [Disability Support Resources \(DSR\)](#) to obtain a documentation. Without it, you will not be allowed to enter the classroom. Students who forget to bring their face coverings to class may get a disposable mask at a campus office. For more information about face covering policy, please check [here](#).
- **Testing:** Any individuals who are unvaccinated are required to be tested weekly. GVSU also offers free COVID testing on campus. Here are the locations and schedules: <https://www.gvsu.edu/lakerstogether/testing-and-contact-tracing-28.htm>
- **Contact Tracing:** Faculty members need to provide contact tracers the names of students who were sitting within six feet of a student who tests positive for COVID for fifteen minutes or longer.

### Financial Hardship:

GVSU remains committed to supporting you because of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and is here to help you in times of financial need. Financial hardship funds are available to help you meet basic needs and cover educational costs (such as housing, food, and textbooks) that you otherwise pay out of pocket. Please visit <https://www.gvsu.edu/financialaid/> for more information.

### Course format:

This class will be held in-person as listed in Banner. The university requires all face-to-face courses to remain face-to-face for the duration of the semester unless there is a university decision and campus-wide pivot to alternative meeting options. The university has also made it clear that the students are not entitled to virtual instruction if a course is face-to-face or hybrid.

The lectures will not be live-streamed. If you have to be quarantined or isolated, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss ways to help you keep up with the course.

Exams will be given in class, whereas homework assignments will be submitted on online via BB. Office hours will be held either in-person or through BB Collaborate Ultra.

**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.

In order to create more flexibility for in-depth examinations of these important topics in aging, we will not be using a standard textbook. Instead, you will be reading original research articles and book chapters that have been carefully selected for each topic in this course. Background information will be provided in lecture to assist your understanding of the readings. Discussions and various activities will also be carried out throughout the course to let you take an active role in making connections between basic research and its real-world implications.

Prerequisite: Psychology 101.

**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.
- Understand basic research findings in aging research and apply them in real life to enhance the quality of older adults' lives.

**Course Outcome Measures:**

**EXAMS:** There will be two mid-term exams 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 related to your readings and in-class activities will be given throughout the semester. For this course, it is crucial for you to keep up with these assignments and take them seriously because information from the readings will be discussed in lecture. The assignments are not only designed to prepare you for the lecture but also to provide you with opportunities to exercise important basic skills.

Reading questions along with their respective due dates for all of the readings in a topic will be posted before we start the topic. All of these reading-question assignments will be submitted online. There will be a 50% deduction if an assignment is late but still within a week of its due date unless it is a result of an excused absence. You may not receive credits if the delay is substantial (i.e., longer than four weeks) and without an excused reason. Grace: You can miss one homework assignment and one discussion/activity without penalty.

**Paper/Project:** In this project, you will participate in activities in an intergenerational co-mentoring program designed to bridge the gaps between younger and older generations so people from different generations can learn from each other. This project consists two parts. The 1<sup>st</sup> part requires you to review research on the effects of intergenerational integration. The 2<sup>nd</sup> part involves journaling the co-mentoring activities and critically evaluating your experience in the context of what you have learned from lectures and readings. Specific instructions and due dates for each part will be posted in the Project Folder on BB.

### **GRADING DISTRIBUTION AND SCALE:**

	Points	Percentage
Exam #1	90	18%
Exam #2	90	18%
Final Exam	110	22%
Paper/Project	90	18%
Homework & Activities/Discussions	120	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>100%</b>

<b>A</b>	<b>465-500</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>384-399</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>450-464</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>365-383</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>434-449</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>350-364</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>415-433</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>334-349</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>400-414</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>300-333</b>
		<b>F</b>	<b>&lt;300</b>

### **Make-up exams:**

Make-up exams will not be given unless there is a family emergency, illnesses, or a university sanctioned event. Please notify me by phone or email as soon as you can. In some cases, proper documentation (e.g., a coach's letter) may need to be given to me before I can set up your make-up exam. Things such as having to go to work, attending a wedding, or going on vacation, do not count as family emergencies. Make-up exams will be given in a different format (e.g., short answer/essay questions covering the same amount of material as the exam that you have missed). 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. Some of your readings might be difficult to understand because most of them 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. The lectures will also provide you with background information that allows you to see the connections among different topics and understand the big picture of human aging.

As mentioned earlier, the lectures will not be recorded during class. If you are unable to attend a class, make sure to borrow notes from your classmates first and then contact me as soon as possible to clear up any questions. If you have to be absent for an extended period, you need to let me know so I can make the proper arrangements to help you stay on track.

In order to assist contact tracing, I may have you sign your name on a sitting chart during each class. These seating charts are solely used for the purpose of contact tracing, not for recording attendance.

### **Class and learning environment:**

A respectful, professional, and friendly atmosphere inside of classroom is important 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. We are also in an unprecedented time having to deal with waves after waves of high-rate COVID infections over the past two years. The stress we are experiencing in our lives during this pandemic may affect the clarity of our thinking and communication. Let's also be patient and supportive with each other. A little more compassion goes a long way.

Your cell phone needs to be stored completely out of sight during the entire class period.

**Office Hours:**

I will hold office hours in person or online via BB Collaborate. You are strongly encouraged to discuss with me any of your concerns about the course or difficulties that you have encountered as soon as possible. If you need special assistance, please contact 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.

**Withdraws:**

The last day you can withdraw from this class with a “W” grade is on March 11, 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 cheating on an 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. Reading questions in your homework assignments should be answered using your own words. You will not receive credits for the homework if answered the questions by copying and pasting the information from the readings.

Academic honesty and integrity are expected from all student at all times (click [here](#) for code of conduct).

**This course is subject to the GVSU policies listed at <http://www.gvsu.edu/coursepolicies/>.**

**Given the uncertainty with the pandemic, we may have to make changes in information included in this syllabus (course schedule, assignments, grading procedure). Any consequential changes to this syllabus will be announced on Blackboard.**

## COURSE SCHEDULE\* & READING ASSIGNMENTS

### TOPIC ONE: AN OVERVIEW (JAN. 11, 13, 18, 20, 25, 27)

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. Stage/Journey. Excerpts from *The Oxford Book of Aging* (1994) – Edited by T. R. Cole & M. G. Winkler.
3. Swift, H. J., & Chasteen, A. L. (2021). Ageism in the time of COVID-19. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24, 246-252. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430220983452>
4. McKee, P., & Kauppinen, H (1987). *The Art of Aging: A Celebration of Old Age in Western Art*. New York, Human Sciences Press. (Not on Course Reserves. It will be discussed in class)

### TOPIC TWO: A NATURAL HISTORY OF AGING (FEB. 1, 3, 10, 15, 17)

How does the human body age? - An overview of biological aging will be presented first.

Why do we age? Is aging universal among different 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. Clynes, M. A., Harvey, N. C., Curtis, E.M., Fuggle, N. R., Dennison, E.M., & Cooper, C. (2020). The epidemiology of osteoporosis. *British Medical Bulletin*, 133, 105-117.
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.

---



---



---

**TOPIC THREE: SELF, CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND AGING (FEB. 22, 24, MAR. 1, 3, 15, 17)**

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 and perception of aging 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. Weiss, D., Reitz, A., Stephan, Y. (2019). Is age more than a number? The role of openness and (non)essentialist beliefs about aging for how young and old people feel. *Psychology and Aging*, 34, 729-737.
  4. 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.
  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.
  7. Ehni, H-J, & Wahl, H-W. (2020). Six propositions against ageism in the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 32, 515-525. DOI: 10.1080/08959420.2020.1770032.
- 
- 
- 

**TOPIC FOUR: COGNITIVE STYLES OF THE ELDERLY (MAR. 24, 29, 31, APR. 5, 7)**

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. Salthouse, T.A. (2019). Trajectories of normal cognitive aging. *Psychology and Aging, 34*, 17-24.
2. 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.
3. Reuter-Lorenz, P. A., & Park, D.C. (2014). How does it STAC up? Revisiting the scaffolding theory of aging and cognition. *Neuropsychology Review, 24*, 355-370.
4. Erickson KI, Voss, MW, et al. (2011). Exercise training increases size of hippocampus and improves memory. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 108*, 3017-22.
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.
7. Smith, G. E. (2016). Healthy cognitive aging and dementia prevention. *American Psychologist, 71*, 268-275.
8. Irwin, M. R. & Vitiello, M. V. (2019). Implications of sleep disturbance and inflammation for Alzheimer's disease dementia. *Lancet Neurology, 18*, 296-304.
9. Bah, T. M., Goodman, J., & Iliff, J. J. (2019). Sleep as a therapeutic target in the aging brain. *Neurotherapeutics, 16*, 554-568.

**TOPIC FIVE: CREATIVITY OF THE ELDERLY (APR. 12, 14)**

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. Palmiero, M., Nori, R., Piccardi, L. (2017). Verbal and visual divergent thinking in aging. *Experimental Brain Research, 235*, 1021-1029.
3. Fusi, G., Colombo, B., Zanetti, M., Crepaldi, M., Rozzini, L., & Rusconi, M. L. (2021). The effect of psychological symptoms on divergent thinking in healthy older adults. *Creativity Research Journal, 33*, 302-310.
4. Carpenter, S. M., Chae, R. L., & Yoon, C. (2020). Creativity and aging: Positive consequences of distraction. *Psychology and Aging, 35*, 654-662. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pag0000470>
5. Flood, M., & Phillips, K. D. (2009). Creativity in older adults: A plethora of possibilities. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 28*, 389-411. DOI: 10.1080/10400419.2021.1892413.

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TOPIC SIX: DEVELOPMENT OF WISDOM (APR. 19, 21)**

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. Kunzmann, U., & Baltes, P. B. (2003). Wisdom-related knowledge: Affective, motivational, and interpersonal correlates. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 1104-1118.
  4. Wink, P., & Staudinger, U. M. (2016). Wisdom and psychosocial functioning in later life. *Journal of Personality*, 84, 306-318.
  5. Ardelt, M., Gerlach, K. R., & Vaillant, G. E. (2018). Early and midlife predictors of wisdom and subjective well-being in old age. *Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, 73, 1514-1525.
  6. 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.
  7. 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.
  8. Kross, E., & Grossmann, I. (2012). Boosting wisdom: Distance from the self enhances wise reasoning, attitudes, and behavior. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 141, 43-48.
  9. Gordon, J.K., & Jordan, L. M. (2017) Older is wiser? It depends who you ask... and how you ask. *Aging, Neuropsychology, and Cognition*, 24, 94-114.
  10. 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.
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

The schedule is tentative and subjective to change.

**Exams Schedule**

**Exam 1: Tuesday, February 8, 2022**

**Exam 2: Tuesday, March 22, 2022**

**Final Exam: Thursday, April 28, 2022, 2-3:50pm**