

PSYCHOLOGY 366-01 PERSPECTIVES ON AGING

FALL 2025 TTH 2:30-3:45PM ASH 2310

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10-11:15am, or by appointment, in-person or via Zoom.

Blackboard Ultra Website: lms.gvsu.edu

Financial Hardship:

GVSU remains committed to helping students 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 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 use 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 Format:

This class is an in-person class. The lectures will not be live-streamed. Exams will be given in class and homework assignments will be submitted in BB. In-class discussions/activities will also be carried out throughout the semester. Office hours will be held either in-person or via Zoom.

Course Outcome Measures:

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

Reading-Question Assignments: For each assigned reading in each topic, you will be given a set of reading questions ahead of time. You are required to answer these questions to help you better understand the articles and be more prepared for the lectures. For some readings, you may be asked to bring your answers to class for discussions, whereas for a limited number of readings, you will need to turn in the answers for credits.

In-class activities: In-class activities and discussions will be given in each class throughout the semester to help you exercise basic skills such as the ability to extract information, to express ideas, and to think critically. You will be given credits for participating in these activities and discussions. There will be no make-up opportunities if you miss them unless you have an excusable reason for your absence (e.g., severe health issues or sports-related trips. You need to talk to me under these circumstances). However, you are allowed to miss three of them without being penalized.

Paper/Project: This project is designed to help you better understand the impacts of intergenerational integration. It consists of two parts. The first part involves reviewing research studies on existing intergenerational programs. The second part requires you to engage in co-mentoring activities with an older adult and reflect upon as well as critically evaluate 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	85	17%
Exam #2	85	17%
Final Exam	90	18%
In-class Activities	110	22%
Assignments	30	6%
Mentoring Project	100	20%
Total	500	100%

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

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 schedule 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 questions covering the same amount of material as what was covered on the missed 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. 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 live-streamed or 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 or go over any portions of the lecture. 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.

Class Courtesy 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.

Office Hours:

I will hold office hours in person or online via zoom. 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 **November 7th, 5pm.**

Extra Help from Psych Friends:

Psych Friends Peer-to-Peer Mentors are trained, upper-level psychology and behavioral neuroscience students ready to help you succeed. They offer support in key areas like study strategies, exam prep, understanding major requirements, career/grad school planning, and student well-being. Follow on Instagram@gvsu.psychfriends and schedule your online or in-person meeting at gvsu.edu/navigate.

Academic Honesty and AI Use:

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 should be answered using your own words without using AI. You will not receive credits for the homework if answered the questions by copying and pasting the information from the readings.

Use of AI: In this class, AI can be used as a tool to help you learn. However, it is not allowed if you use it to outsource your learning, e.g., answering your reading questions for you.

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

COURSE SCHEDULE* & READING ASSIGNMENTS

TOPIC ONE: AN OVERVIEW (AUG. 26, 28; SEPT 2, 4, 9, 11)

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. (This book is not on Course Reserves. It will be discussed in class)

TOPIC TWO: A NATURAL HISTORY OF AGING (SEPT. 9, 11, 16, 18, 25)

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. Gavrilov, L. A., & Gavrilova, N. S. (2002). Evolutionary theories of aging and longevity. *The Scientific World Journal*, 2, 339–356. <https://doi.org/10.1100/tsw.2002.96>

TOPIC THREE: SELF, CULTURE, SOCIETY, AND AGING (SEPT. 30; OCT. 2, 7, 9, 14, 16)

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. Ng, R., Indran, N., & Yang, W. (2023). Portrayals of older adults in over 3000 films around the world. *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, 71, 2726-2735.
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TOPIC FOUR: COGNITIVE STYLES OF THE ELDERLY (OCT. 23, 28, 30; NOV. 6, 11, 13)

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.

Readings (Cont.):

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. Zavec, Z., Shah, V. D., Murillo, O. G., Vallat, R., Mander, B. A., Winer, J. R., Jagust, W. J., & Walker, M. P. (2023). NREM sleep as a novel protective cognitive reserve factor in the face of Alzheimer's disease pathology. *BMC Medicine*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-023-02811-z>

TOPIC FIVE: CREATIVITY OF THE ELDERLY (NOV. 18, 20, 25)

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. Palmiero, M., Nori, R., Piccardi, L. (2017). Verbal and visual divergent thinking in aging. *Experimental Brain Research*, 235, 1021-1029.
2. Ross, S. D., Lachmann, T., Jaarsveld, S., Riedel-Heller, S. G., & Rodriguez, F. S. (2023). Creativity across the lifespan: changes with age and with dementia. *BMC geriatrics*, 23, 160.
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. Lytle, A., & Nowacek, N. (2024). Between Islands – an Intergenerational Contact and Creative Practice Program. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 1–15. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/10.1080/15350770.2024.2344551>
5. National Institute on Aging (2019): Participating in the arts creates paths to healthy aging. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/news/participating-arts-creates-paths-healthy-aging>.
6. Flood, M., & Phillips, K. D. (2009). Creativity in older adults: A plethora of possibilities. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 28, 389-411.

TOPIC SIX: DEVELOPMENT OF WISDOM (DEC. 2, 4)

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. Glück, J. (2024). Wisdom and aging. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 55, 7.
doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101742
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 on who you ask... and how you ask. *Aging, Neuropsychology, and Cognition*, 24, 94-114.
10. Robert J. Sternberg & Sareh Karami (2021). A 4W Model of Wisdom and Giftedness in Wisdom, *Roeper Review*, 43, 153-160, DOI: 10.1080/02783193.2021.1923596
11. Kahlbaugh, P., & Budnick, C. J. (2023). Benefits of intergenerational contact: Ageism, subjective well-being, and psychosocial developmental strengths of wisdom and identity. *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, 96, 135-159.

Exams Schedule

Exam 1: Tuesday, September 23rd, 2025

Exam 2: Tuesday, November 4th, 2025

Final Exam: Thursday, December 11th, 2025, 2-3:50pm

No class on October 21st, Fall Break

Any necessary changes made to this syllabus will be announced both in class and on Blackboard.

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