

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Department of Sociology

Sociology 282: The Sociology of Aging

Fall 2017 Course Syllabus



Professor: Noelle Chesley
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Class Day/Time: T/Th, 9:30 – 10:45
Class Location: Bolton B79
Office Hours: T 2-3 PM; F 9 – 10 AM

Why Study Aging in a Sociology Class?

When you think of aging, or aging populations, you probably think of the physical aspects of aging, such as changes in our bodies and minds that can occur as we all get older. But the experience of aging is also, perhaps even primarily, a social one that can be greatly impacted by the culture, institutions, and social arrangements that surround the aging person. For example, being “old” or “retired” are socially defined categories that are subject to change. How do we decide who is “old” in the United States? How is this defined in other cultures, or in different historical periods?

Thinking about the social implications of aging is especially relevant today. Prior to the year 2000, younger people have always outnumbered older people. From 2000 forward, older people have and will likely continue to outnumber the young. This is a new trend that has *never* happened before in human history. This growth in the number of older citizens relative to younger people is shaping every facet of social life: our government and its policies, our healthcare and social services systems, employment sectors and the job market, the housing and financial markets, neighborhoods, and families.

How will population aging shape the lives of individuals, families, and the larger society? This class is designed to examine this broad question from a number of angles, and will include discussion of:

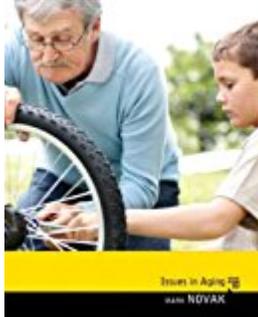
- The field of *social gerontology*, its history, theories, and research methods;
- The physiological and psychological changes that accompany aging;
- With emphasis on the *social contexts* (family, friends, social support, employment, and volunteer work) in which individual aging occurs;
- The influence of *culture* and *institutions* on the aging individual and the influence of growing numbers of aging citizens on institutions and society.

We will spend the semester examining how the United States (and many other countries around the world) came to be “aging societies.” We will also assess the potential consequences of this change—both positive and negative—for individuals, families, employers, community service providers, and public policy.

About Professor Chesley

Both my research and teaching interests are centered around social questions that intersect with contemporary family life. In particular, much of my research is focused on how paid employment influences family expectations, attitudes, and experiences (and how family life influences work life). Some of my research has touched upon how caring for aging relatives may impact both work and family experiences for employees. Prior to working as a professor, I was employed in a private-sector consulting firm where I applied social research methods to solve real-world problems. I also bring that consulting experience to bear in all of my teaching. My central goals as your instructor are to excite you about the possibilities for learning and growth that studying sociological topics can enhance and inspire you to do your very best work.

Required and Recommended Course Materials



The primary text for the course is *Issues in Aging, 3rd Edition*, by Mark Novak. Pearson. ISBN: 978-0-205-83195-1.

The text is available through the UWM online bookstore (as well as other online venues). You should also be able to rent an online copy.

Other materials mentioned on the course schedule can be downloaded from the course website.

Learning Objectives*

Development of Social Science Knowledge:

Completing the activities associated with this course should help you progress in your ability to understand and apply:

- 1) the interdisciplinary field of social gerontology;
- 2) the demographic and historical factors that underlie the phenomenon of an “aging” society;
- 3) the ways that physical, psychological, and, especially, *social processes* influence the aging experience in individuals;
- 4) how a variety of social contexts shape the aging experience to produce differences by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class;
- 5) the interaction between individuals and society and its institutions;
- 6) the variety of careers available to those with a background in gerontology.

Development of Transferrable Skills*

Completing the activities associated with this course should help you progress in your ability to:

- 1) Think critically: evaluate/analyze a research study, discuss theories of aging, distinguish evidence-based arguments from those based on values and personal experiences, and appreciate the value of multidisciplinary approaches to the study of aging;

- 2) Create knowledge: synthesize and integrate information from a variety of sources, pose questions that follow from existing research, link individual life experiences to course concepts, and formulate and communicate conclusions to others;
 - 3) Solve problems creatively: think about problems and their solutions in multiple ways, seek information from a variety of sources;
 - 4) Communicate: summarize and critique conclusions from aging research through effective communication to classmates, engage with other learners through active listening and sharing ideas;
 - 5) Understand and appreciate diversity: become more aware of values and experiences of different cultures, religions, ethnic traditions, and social arrangements.
- * These learning objectives and skill development goals meet university-wide General Education Requirements (GERs)

Class Format: In Person, Active Learning

The in-class experience will use both lecture and active learning techniques. Your participation is critical to your learning and the overall success of our class! To facilitate an active learning atmosphere, I'll be requiring you to read and prepare before our in-class meetings so that you can engage with me and others in class and deepen your knowledge about this subject.

Desire2Learn (D2L)

A Desire2Learn website is active for this course. To access your grades, assignments, supplementary readings, and other information please log in to <http://D2L.uwm.edu>. You will use the same username (*username@uwm.edu*) and password that you use for your UWM email account. If you have any questions about content on the course website, please contact me. If you have questions about, or problems using, the D2L website, please email help@uwm.edu, call 229-4040, or see the service staff in Bolton 225 during their office hours.

*****Important*****

This syllabus, particularly the course calendar, is subject to change. It is critical that you check the course website regularly (and come to class!) for updates, assignments, supplementary materials, and announcements.

Requirements and Grades

The grading system used in this class is an absolute system—in other words, it is possible for every student to earn an “A” grade. Your grades do not depend on the performance of your fellow classmates, rather, each student earns points based on demonstrated learning via class assignments and projects.

- 1. In-Class Work.** In an active learning class environment, we use class time to practice and apply concepts and ideas from the reading in ways that are intended to create more significant learning. Most classes will involve some sort of active learning exercise to engage the materials you have already reviewed and to deepen your understanding of them. After the first day of class, I’ll post “Guiding Questions” on our D2L website. These will give you a better idea of how I want you to focus your reading and study *before* a particular class. Then we will use class time to deepen your understanding of key ideas by more fully analyzing and applying the concepts and ideas already introduced to you in the reading and my slides. This type of active approach is critical to creating deeper learning. As a result, there is no way to “make up” missed class time. Missing class for any reason will negatively affect your learning and your grade. There is no way around that. That said, be sure to come talk to me if outside factors are keeping you from class.

In-class work is graded on a $\sqrt{-}/\sqrt{0}/\sqrt{+}$ system and will be evaluated as evidence of *preparation* for class (so a check is average preparation, a $\sqrt{+}$ is above-average preparation, etc.), not mastery of all ideas or concepts. Class time is learning time and mistakes are an expected part of this active learning process.

- 2. Quizzes.** There are four quizzes that are given in class. These quizzes are used to assess your learning of key concepts and ideas in the course and are worth 10 points each. If you miss a quiz, speak to the instructor. Make-up opportunities are at the discretion of the instructor.
- 3. Group Presentation.** Each student will be assigned to a group of about 5 students and each group will identify a topic relevant to the *social aspects or implications* of aging to focus upon as part of this assignment. Group presentations will be 25 minutes in length and groups will be assigned to one of three presentation days at the end of the semester (see course plan).

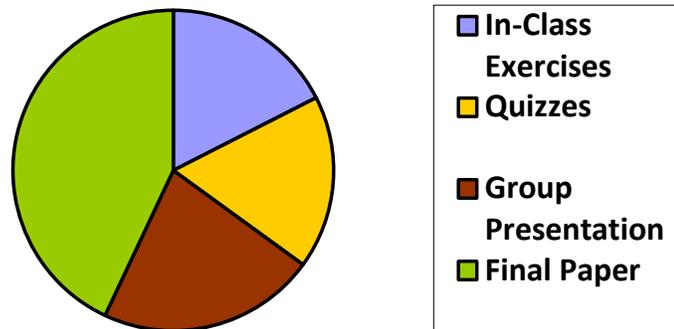
Many of you bring diverse educational backgrounds and career interests to this class. I encourage you to draw upon your own educational training (i.e. nursing, social work, journalism, etc.), resources in our local community, and your own interests as you shape your presentation. There are a few central criteria that I will use to judge the quality of presentations: 1) how informative are they on the given topic?; 2) how accurate/believable is the information provided? and, 3) was the presentation content delivered in a creative and interesting way? In addition, each presentation is required to have some sort of interactive component—the presenters must involve the audience in the presentation and interact with them as part of the assignment. More detailed instructions about this assignment will be posted on the course website.

- 4. Final Paper.** We will use a simulation exercise to deepen our understanding of how social and economic forces shape retirement savings. Each student will be assigned an identity and a series of demographic (e.g. age, gender, race), and other characteristics. I will provide the class with summaries that outline the retirement progress of each character over the course of his/her lifetime. The simulation will also involve a series of outside events that will impact characters in different ways with respect to retirement savings. Will your character save “enough” for retirement? You will write a paper analyzing the dynamics of this simulation, connecting your analysis to larger concepts and ideas we have discussed throughout the semester. We will spend some time going over the simulation exercise in class and more detailed instructions about the simulation exercise and this assignment will be posted on the course website.

Summary

Requirement	Points	Percentage
In-Class Active Learning Exercises	40	17.5%
Quizzes	40	17.5%
Group Presentation	50	22%
Final Paper	100	43%
<i>Total</i>	<i>230</i>	<i>100%</i>

Distribution of Course Points



Matching Points to a Final Grade

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
214-230	A	168-176	C
207-213	A-	161-167	C-
200-206	B+	154-160	D+
191-199	B	145-153	D
184-190	B-	144 & below	F
177-183	C+		

Policies and Reminders

How to Do Well in This Class

This is a survey (overview) course of the sociology of aging. We will cover a wide range of topics, many of which are informed by disciplines other than sociology. To do well in this class, I encourage students to:

- Actively read the course materials (take notes while you read);
- Take detailed notes in class;
- Make the material relevant by using course assignments to explore questions you are interested in or care deeply about;
- Actively participate—ask questions, engage with other students in group discussions and brainstorming activities.
- Put aside enough time to research and write high-quality assignments.

A Note About the Course Workload

- UWM guidelines for undergraduate courses indicate that students should expect to do two hours of outside work each week for each hour spent in the classroom, thus, **this class should (and will) require an average of approximately nine hours of work per week.** Students will spend 2.5 hours per week in class sessions and about five to six hours per week reading and critically assessing course materials, preparing for class, and completing course assignments or studying for exams/quizzes.
- The active learning design of this course means class attendance is critical to deepening your learning. Please plan on regular class attendance barring serious illness or life events (i.e. family death);
- Please plan your involvement in other courses and activities (including paid work) with this course design and workload in mind.

Use of Email and Other Technology:

Some of our communication this semester may happen over email. I would like to ask students to follow these guidelines in relying on email or other forms of online communication in this class:

- Be professional and focused in your communication. Please format your emails like you would a business letter. This means including a greeting, a body of the email that contains the clear purpose of your communication, and a closing.
- In addition, please use the following format in the subject line of the email: “Soc 282: [Put the topic of your email here]”
- Use proper English and avoid “texting” acronyms (i.e., OMG, BTW, LOL etc.). It is critical that we are as clear as possible in our written communication.
- **Please give me up to 24 hours to respond to your email Monday through Friday.** In many cases, I will be able to get back to you more quickly than that. **Email sent to me after 4 p.m. on a Friday will be addressed no later than the end of the day on the following Monday.**
- Please silence your cell phones in class and refrain from texting as a courtesy to me and your student colleagues.
- Laptops or tablets are valuable academic tools and are welcome in class. However, use that interferes with other students (or my) classroom experience (because it is distracting or not relevant to what we are doing) is not welcome. If this becomes a problem, I may ask you to stop using these items in class.

Academic Misconduct

- By becoming a student at UWM, you have agreed to abide by the University’s code of conduct, including its provisions on academic misconduct. I take this obligation very seriously. In cases of academic misconduct, I will award a grade of F (zero points) for the entire assignment AND usually for the entire course, as well as pursuing disciplinary action.
- The University defines academic misconduct as “an act in which a student seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation, uses unauthorized materials or fabricated

data in any academic exercise, forges or falsifies academic documents or records, intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others, engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of a student's academic performance, or assists other students in any of these acts." We will discuss plagiarism in class, but check with me if you are unsure about proper citation and use of others' work. If you are not familiar with UWM's policies on academic misconduct, I encourage you to review them at <https://www4.uwm.edu/dos/conduct/academic-misconduct.cfm>.

Late Assignments

Each assignment must be turned in as noted in the course calendar, by the date and time noted in order to receive full credit.

- Permission to make up academic work due to missed deadlines is not automatic. Contact Professor Chesley for last-minute emergencies (where an "emergency" is a family death, serious health condition, or something similar). Conflicts will be resolved on a case-by-case basis at my discretion.
- Take your own notes or borrow notes from a classmate should you miss class.

Grading Grievance Process

It is always possible for a test to be scored incorrectly (although rare, it does happen), for an exam question to have two or more equally good answers, or for a grader to miss a point you are trying to make in an essay or paper. If you believe that a test or assignment was incorrectly graded, please follow this procedure:

Within one week of receiving a graded test or assignment, submit a written "appeal" describing the basis for your opinion (e.g., citing a passage from the text that supports your choice of an answer) to Professor Chesley or the TA. This appeal need not be lengthy - a short paragraph will often do. In appealing a grade, it is not sufficient to argue that your answer was reasonable given your implicit assumptions. You must convince Professor Chesley and the TA that the answer you chose was as good as or superior to the one identified as correct.

Feedback, Getting Help, and Course Recommendations

- You will have an opportunity to evaluate the course at the end of the semester. In the meantime, I am eager to hear from you during and after class. Feel free to contact me with questions, worries, or other constructive feedback.
- I have high standards for my students. Grades of "A" are reserved for work that illustrates mastery of course concepts and also engages course materials with creativity and care. At the same time, I do not want students to feel overwhelmed or lost in the course. *I hope you always feel you can come talk to me about anything related to this course!*
- For help with writing – a key part of this course – I strongly recommend consulting the UWM Writing Center (<http://www4.uwm.edu/writingcenter/>) @ 229-4339, or by email: writing@uwm.edu
- Information about other sources of academic support can be located at <http://www4.uwm.edu/pass/>.
- It is university policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need accommodations in order to meet any of the requirements of this course, please contact me as soon as possible.
- Many of you will require recommendations for graduate programs & scholarships, or references for a résumé. As an added incentive for doing well in this class, I will write graduate school recommendation letters for any student who receives an A- or better in the course and who attends class regularly. I will serve as a reference on a résumé for students who earn a B (and sometimes a C) in the course and attends class regularly.

Course Plan

Date	Key Question Guiding Class	How to Prepare for Class:
Week 1 9/5 9/7	<i>What is sociology and how can it help one learn about aging?</i> <i>How do we know what we know? Theories and methods used in social gerontology</i>	No preparation required; Read Novak, Ch. 1 & Ch. 2; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 2 9/12 9/14	<i>What does aging look like? Physical and psychological change across the life course</i>	Read Novak Ch. 4; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L) Read Novak Ch. 5; Read Riley (D2L); Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 3 9/19 9/21	<i>What is “demographic change”? How does this process shape our understanding of aging?</i>	Read Novak Ch. 3; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L) Quiz 1 in Class (Covers Ch. 1, 2, 4, 5, Riley reading) Read Novak, Ch. 6; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 4 9/26 9/28	<i>Is there a link between inequality and aging?</i> <i>How is population aging affecting health care?</i>	Read Cowen chapter (D2L); Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L) Read Novak, Ch. 7; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 5 10/3 10/5	<i>How is population aging affecting families and communities?</i>	Read Novak, Ch. 12; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L) Quiz 2 in Class (Covers Ch. 3, 6, 7 and Cowen Reading) Read Novak, Ch. 13; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 6 10/10 10/12	<i>Who can afford to get old? The economics of retirement</i> <i>Do older people work? The realities of aging and employment</i>	Read Novak, Ch. 8; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L) Read Novak, Ch. 9; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)

Date	Key Question Guiding Class	How to Prepare for Class:
Week 7 10/17 10/19	The economics of aging: a simulation exercise <i>Does an aging population need different housing, transportation and leisure options?</i>	Read the “Retirement Simulation” handout (D2L); Quiz 3 in Class (Covers Ch. 8, 9, 12, 13) Read Novak, Ch 10 & 11; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 8 10/24 10/26	The Group Presentation Assignment; Presentation Group Meeting Time	Read: <i>The Group Presentation</i> (D2L); Come prepared with questions. Come prepared with topic ideas for your group.
Week 9 10/31 11/2	Group Consultations with Prof. Chesley (Groups 1, 2, 3) Group Consultations with Prof. Chesley (Groups 4, 5, 6)	Come prepared with questions or problems you need resolved.
Week 10 11/7 11/9	<i>What are the social forces shaping the dying process and death?</i> What role do politics and policy play in aging? Guest Speaker: Gary Sprong, AARP	Read Novak, Ch. 14: Listen to assigned podcasts (see “links” in D2L); Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L) Read Novak Ch. 15; Read and think about Guiding Questions (D2L)
Week 11 11/14 11/16	Analyzing the retirement simulation and planning for the final paper [Open]	Quiz 4 in Class (Covers Ch. 10, 11, 14, 15)
Week 12 11/21-24	Thanksgiving Break—No Class	
Week 13 11/28 11/30	Presentation Group Meeting Time Group Presentations (1 & 2)	
Week 14 12/5 12/7	Group Presentations (3 & 4) Group Presentations (5 & 6)	
Week 15 12/12 12/14	How was class? Course evaluations <i>How can I apply this knowledge outside of UWM?</i>	Final Paper Due (D2L)

UNIVERSITY AND SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT POLICIES

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that page is: http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/news_events/upload/Syllabus-Links.pdf

1. **Students with disabilities.** Notice to students with disabilities that special services and accommodations are provided. Information is available from the Accessibility Resource Center at <http://uwm.edu/arc/>
2. **Religious observances.** Information concerning accommodations for absences due to religious observance is available at: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm>
3. **Students called to active military duty.** Accommodations for absences due to call-up of reserves to active military duty is available at <http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/>
4. **Incompletes.** A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. The policy outlining incomplete grades is available at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf
5. **Discriminatory conduct** (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Policy regarding discriminatory conduct can be found at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf
6. **Academic misconduct.** Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. The policy and procedures concerning academic misconduct is available at <http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>
7. **Complaint procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the Sociology Department Chair or the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the Sociology Department Chair, the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Letters & Sciences, or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. Policy may be found at: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf
8. **Grade appeal procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the College of Letters & Science or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the sociology department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College of Letters & Science. Procedures for undergraduate student grade appeal can be found at <http://uwm.edu/letters-science/advising/answers-forms/policies/appeal-procedure-for-grades>
Procedures for graduate student grade appeal can be found at <http://uwm.edu/graduateschool/academic-appeals-procedure/>
9. **LGBT+ resources.** Resources to support inclusivity of students who identify as LGBT+ in the learning environment are available at <http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/>
10. **Final examination policy.** Policies regarding final examination requirement can be found at: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm>
11. **Publication royalties.** Royalties from the sale of faculty-authored publications to students in their classes are donated to the UWM Foundation–Sociology account to support activities and awards for UWM Sociology students.