

**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
GERONTOLOGY
SWK 6686/8686 (online)
Fall 2019 (October 27 - December 15)**

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The world population is growing older at an unprecedented pace. In the U.S. alone, close to 35 million persons are 65 years or older. Between 2020 and 2030 alone, the number of older persons is projected to increase by almost 18 million as the last of the large baby boom cohorts reaches age 65. This demographic trend represents enormous challenges and opportunities for older adults, their families, communities and professionals of all disciplines.

Currently there is a shortage of health and social service professionals who are familiar with the diversities of the aging experience. It is important for social workers to be knowledgeable about the aging process and the social services that impact older adults (pension, long-term care, housing, etc.). Learning about their future clients and advocating for them will contribute to an age-friendly society.

Gerontology is an elective course open to students in either the foundation or advanced years. The course introduces students to the field of aging providing an overview as preparation for the dramatic demographic shifts facing our society and profession. The course builds upon knowledge of biology, and psychosocial development taught in the Human Behavior in the Social Environment course. It also explores the contemporary manifestations of ageism taught from a historical perspective in the social welfare organization course. The course highlights the unique challenges confronting aging women, LGBTQ groups and ethnic and racial minorities who have had to cope with multiple levels of oppression, sexism, racism and other forms of discrimination throughout their lifespan.

Students are expected to apply practice principles learned in foundation and advanced practice courses to issues in aging, such as: retirement, chronic illness, depression, social isolation, elder abuse, widowhood, and caregiving. Students will be invited to discuss and investigate many systems that disproportionately affect older adults and examine the role of the social worker within these systems. At the same time, students will learn about the disparities that already exist within the older population and that may become even more pronounced in the future.

Readings, class discussion and student activities will center around the understanding of the aging process and its complexities.

I. COURSE COMPETENCIES

This course addresses Council on Social Work Education Competencies #2, #3, #6, #7, and #8.

COMPETENCY 2: ENGAGE DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE IN PRACTICE

Social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigration status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status. Social workers understand that, as a consequence of difference, a person's life experiences may include oppression, poverty, marginalization, and alienation as well as privilege, power, and acclaim. Social workers also understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and recognize the extent to which a culture's structures and values, including social, economic, political, and cultural exclusions, may oppress, marginalize, alienate, or create privilege and power.

Social workers: • apply and communicate understanding of the importance of diversity and difference in shaping life experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo, and macro levels; • present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and • apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

COMPETENCY 3: ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Social workers understand that every person regardless of position in society has fundamental human rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education. Social workers understand the global interconnections of oppression and human rights violations, and are knowledgeable about theories of human need and social justice and strategies to promote social and economic justice and human rights. Social workers understand strategies designed to eliminate oppressive structural barriers to ensure that social goods, rights, and responsibilities are distributed equitably, and that civil, political, environmental, economic, social, and cultural human rights are protected.

Social workers: • apply their understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice to advocate for human rights at the individual and system levels; and • engage in practices that advance social, economic, and environmental justice.

COMPETENCY 6: ENGAGE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that engagement is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers value the importance of human relationships. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to facilitate engagement with clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand strategies to engage diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions

may impact their ability to effectively engage with diverse clients and constituencies. Social workers value principles of relationship-building and interprofessional collaboration to facilitate engagement with clients, constituencies, and other professionals as appropriate.

Social workers: • apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks to engage with clients and constituencies; and • use empathy, reflection, and interpersonal skills to effectively engage diverse clients and constituencies.

COMPETENCY 7: ASSESS INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that assessment is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge in the assessment of diverse clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand methods of assessment with diverse clients and constituencies to advance practice effectiveness. Social workers recognize the implications of the larger practice context in the assessment process and value the importance of inter-professional collaboration in this process. Social workers understand how their personal experiences and affective reactions may affect their assessment and decision-making.

Social workers: • collect and organize data, and apply critical thinking to interpret information from clients and constituencies; • apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in the analysis of assessment data from clients and constituencies; • develop mutually agreed-on intervention goals and objectives based on the critical assessment of strengths, needs, and challenges within clients and constituencies; and • select appropriate intervention strategies based on the assessment, research knowledge, and values and preferences of clients and constituencies.

COMPETENCY 8: INTERVENE WITH INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, GROUPS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND COMMUNITIES

Social workers understand that intervention is an ongoing component of the dynamic and interactive process of social work practice with, and on behalf of, diverse individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers are knowledgeable about evidence-informed interventions to achieve the goals of clients and constituencies, including individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities. Social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge to effectively intervene with clients and constituencies. Social workers understand methods of identifying, analyzing and implementing evidence-informed interventions to achieve client and constituency goals. Social workers value the importance of interprofessional teamwork and communication in interventions, recognizing that beneficial outcomes may require interdisciplinary, interprofessional, and inter-organizational collaboration.

Social workers: • critically choose and implement interventions to achieve practice goals and enhance capacities of clients and constituencies; • apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks in interventions with clients and constituencies; • use inter-professional collaboration as appropriate to achieve beneficial practice outcomes; • negotiate, mediate, and advocate with and on behalf of diverse clients and constituencies; and • facilitate effective transitions and endings that advance mutually agreed-on goals.

II. COURSE COMPETENCY OUTCOMES

By the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate the major historical and cultural events that have influenced and shaped aging policy and are demonstrative of the substantial disparities that exist within the aging population in the United States.
2. Critically evaluate current theories and evidence-based intervention strategies that are currently associated with clinical work with older adults in the United States.
3. Articulate an understanding of the importance in considering of diversity and difference in engagement with the aged populations served within the field of social work.
4. Demonstrate critical thinking and consideration of values specific and unique to older populations when performing assessments and selecting effective evidence-based interventions.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS, GRADING & COURSE REQUIREMENTS

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS:

Interactive discussion will be utilized as the principle means of instruction. It is expected that each student will keep up with the required readings. Students are expected to prepare for, attend and participate fully in each class session, and hand in all assigned materials on time. Students will be expected to create and maintain a reaction journal to process new information and personal and professional reactions to course content. Students will be asked to integrate experiences from field practice as well as their own personal experiences into their class discussions and assignments when possible.

This class will utilize Canvas, an online learning management system (LMS) that facilitates educational interactions and experiences outside of the classroom. It is expected that students will log on to Canvas and participate fully in online class activities and discussions. For more information on creating a Canvas account, please contact Yeshiva University's Information Technology department.

GRADING:

Grades will be computed on the following basis:

- Reading Assignment & Discussion board comments and responses & Participation – 25%
- Reaction Journal with Learning Partner – 35%
- Final project – 40%

Instructions for weekly readings and assignments

Reading Assignments

The weekly readings will be in the in the range of 30-50 pages per week/module. The readings will relate to the topic headings.

Discussion Board

Each student will be required to participate in the discussion board conversations. The professor will post a conversation topic relevant to the week's reading assignment. The discussions in this class will allow us to analyze and discuss some concepts, ideas and practical interventions specific to older adults. In composing your response, you are asked to think analytically about the issues and alternative solutions, while also drawing upon your experiences and the literature in formulating your answer.

Your initial response to a discussion will be due on the Wednesday @ 11:59pm of the week the discussion opens. Please provide approximately a page response (350 words), and provide a citation that demonstrates or enhances your thought about the question.

You are asked to provide a thoughtful and meaningful reply to the comments of at least one of your classmates by Sunday @ 11:59pm.

Instructions for reaction journal with learning partner

Reaction Journal

You will maintain a reaction journal throughout the semester. For the reaction journal, you are asked to identify a learning partner that you will interview over the next 8-weeks. This learning partner may be a friend, colleague or family member 70 years or older. You are asked for the purposes of the reaction journal to discuss with your learning partner a topic covered in your previous weeks' readings.

At the end of sessions 2, 4, 6 and 8, you will write a one-page reaction (approximate 275+ words) to the discussion you had with your learning partner regarding the information presented in the readings or via the discussion boards from the previous (2) weeks. You can also include reactions to anything new that you learned during the discussions, or comment and add to information what you may have already known. By the end of the 8-weeks, your reaction journal should include (4) submissions.

Grades for this journal (complete or incomplete) will reflect your demonstration of critical thinking; clarity of thought and communication; and analysis of the information presented. This reaction journal is written from your point of view and is not a formal paper, so no citations are necessary (but can be included).

Instructions for final project

Final Project

You will present a societal problem or issue that particularly impacts the older population. The presentation should be 15-20 minutes long and may be in the form of a narrated PowerPoint presentation, a video of yourself discussing this topic, or a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Please select and email (to your instructor) by Session 6 the title of your presentation. The project should provide a clear understanding of the challenges facing older adults who are dealing with the problem or issue.

Please remember to address the following points in your presentation:

1. The purpose of the project - why is it important to highlight this issue?
2. A clear statement of the problem or issue.
3. Possible solutions identified.
4. Strategies for raising public awareness around the issue.
5. The role that helping professionals should play in addressing the issue.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:

No Required Textbook.

A. Assigned readings will be provided via a *pdf* file or thru a link to the host site.

B. ADDITIONAL ARTICLES:

Additional articles will be available on e-Res (accessible through Yeshiva University's library webpage and through the Library and Research Resources tab for this course).

Guest faculty may be invited to provide a broad interdisciplinary perspective.

Students with disabilities should identify themselves to the instructor at the beginning of the semester so that any needed special considerations can be made to accommodate the student.

PLAGIARISM:

Students should remember that the School will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically **FAIL** the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

HIPAA ALERT:

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Given the nature of classroom discussion and the presentation of case materials and at times personal revelation in class, students are reminded that the same commitment to confidentiality with clients extends to classmates. What is shared in class stays in class.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rkohn1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Reading Assignment Module 1: Understanding Social Gerontology

Hooyman, N. R. and Kiyak, N. R. (2005). *Social Gerontology: A Multidisciplinary Perspective* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Chapter 1 - The Growth of Social Gerontology, pgs. 3-27.

What old age is really like. Dovey, Ceridwen. *The New Yorker* October 1, 2015.

Reading Assignment Module 2: Theories of Aging and Cross-Cultural Issues in Aging

Richardson, V. E., & Barusch, A. S. (2006). *Gerontological Practice for the Twenty-First Century: A Social Work Perspective*. Columbia University Press.

Chapter 2: Theories of Aging, pgs. 22-47.

Cummings, S. M., & Galambos, C. (2012). *Diversity and Aging in the Social Environment*. New York, NY: Routledge, p. 155-174.

Reading Assignment Module 3: Biological and Cognitive Age-related Changes

Morgan, L. A., & Kunkel, S. (2016). *Aging, Society, and the Life Course*, Fifth Edition. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, p. 205-219.

Reading Assignment Module 4: Social Challenges of Aging

Hendricks, J., Schulz, J. H., Cutler, S. J., Binstock, R. H., & George, L. K. (2006). *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences* (Vol. 6th ed). Amsterdam: Academic Press. p. 320-336

Reading Assignment Module 5: Sexuality and Aging

Blando, J. A. (2001). Twice Hidden: Older Gay and Lesbian Couples, Friends, and Intimacy. *Generations*, 25(2), 87-89.

Sex in the nineties: Exploring sexuality and intimacy with older Jewish women. David, Paula. *Journal of Social Work in Long-Term Care* (2002): 47-55.

Cummings, S. M., & Galambos, C. (2012). *Diversity and Aging in the Social Environment*. New York, NY: Routledge. Special Populations, p. 25-44.

Reading Assignment Module 6: Social Supports and Caregiving (formal & informal)

Aldwin, C. M., & Gilmer, D. F. (2013). Health, Illness, and Optimal Aging, Second Edition : Biological and Psychosocial Perspectives (Vol. 2nd ed). New York: Springer Publishing Company, p.247-264.

Lum, T. Y. (2005). Understanding the Racial and Ethnic Differences in Caregiving Arrangements, Journal of Gerontological Social Work, 45:4, 3-21, DOI: 10.1300/J083v45n04_02

Reading Assignment Module 7: Social Work Practice in Gerontology

Youdin, R. (2014). Clinical Gerontological Social Work Practice. New York: Springer Publishing Company, p.19-45.

Reading Assignment Module 8: Programs and Policies in Aging

Aldwin, C. M., & Gilmer, D. F. (2013). Health, Illness, and Optimal Aging, Second Edition : Biological and Psychosocial Perspectives (Vol. 2nd ed). New York: Springer Publishing Company, 265-294.

Cox, C. B. (2015). Social Policy for an Aging Society : A Human Rights Perspective. New York: Springer Publishing Company, 173-182.

Hrostowski, S. (2010). Diversity in Aging America: Making Our Communities Aging Friendly. Race, Gender & Class, 17(3/4), 307-313.