SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY  
SWK 6686  
Spring 2017  
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**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. By 2030, as the baby boomers age, it is anticipated that 20 percent of the US population, or one out of every five individuals will be old. This demographic trend represents enormous challenges and opportunities for older adults, their families, communities and professionals of all disciplines.

Demands for new health and social service programs, policies and living arrangements have been growing substantially. Social workers are already encountering older adults at risk and their families in numerous settings, from long term care, health and mental health agencies to child welfare and the workplace. Working with four of five generational families from diverse cultural background is the wave of the future. We must find creative ways to tap into the wisdom and life experience of seniors and to solve current social problems; this calls for leadership and competencies which social workers can and must provide in the twenty-first century.

This 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 and 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, GLBT 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 such life-altering phenomena as retirement, successful aging, chronic illness, depression, social isolation in old age, nursing home placement, suicide, elder abuse and active parenting by grandparents. Strengths based practice with aging women will be taught, recognizing that older women constitute the majority of older adults and have a high rate of poverty.

**COURSE COMPETENCIES OUTCOMES**

This course will help students achieve the following competencies:

**COMPETENCY 2-ENGAGE DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE IN PRACTICE**

Social workers understand diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience 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,
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 experience 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 experiences in practice at the micro, mezzo and macro levels. Social workers present themselves as learners and engage clients and constituencies as experts of their own experiences; and social workers apply self-awareness and self-regulation to manage the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse clients and constituencies.

MEASURE 2A-Gain sufficient self-awareness to eliminate the influence of personal biases and values in working with diverse groups.

MEASURE 2B- View themselves as learners and engage those with whom they work as informants.

MEASURE 2C- Demonstrates particular knowledge and sensitivity to forces impacting clients who represent stigmatized or at-risk populations.

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, rjohnl@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.

**E-RES (Electronic Reserve)**
Most of the articles mentioned in the curriculum are available on electronic reserve [E-RES]. You can access the full text articles from your home or from a university computer at no charge.

**How do I Use E-RES?**
1. Go to the library’s online resources page: [http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp](http://www.yu.edu/libraries/online_resources.asp)
2. Click on E-RES. If you are off-campus, at this point you will be prompted for your Off Campus Access Service login and password.
3. Click on “Search E-RES” or on “Course Index,” and search by instructor's name, department, course name, course number, document title, or document author.
4. Click on the link to your course.
5. Enter the password given to you by your instructor.
6. Locate and click on the item you wish to view. Titles beginning with "A", "An", or "The" are alphabetized under "A" and "T" respectively.
7. When the article text or book record appears on the screen, you can print, email, or save it to disk.

To view documents that are in pdf format, the computer you are using must have Adobe Acrobat Reader software. You can download it FREE at [www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html](http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html)

**TEACHING METHODS AND CLASS PARTICIPATION**
A combination of lecture and class discussion, films and experiential learning methodologies will be used in this course. **Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions, and exercises.**

It is expected that each student will keep up with the required readings in the course outline. Books and articles listed as recommended are designed to enhance or complement the required text. Students are urged to take advantage of the supplementary readings which are on reserve at the library. Time will be set aside during each class to answer questions related to readings or assignments. The instructor is available by appointment for individual student conferences.

Familiarity with readings should be reflected both in written assignments and classroom discussion.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**
Required text:

**Recommended texts:**


**ASSIGNMENTS**

*There will be two written assignments during the semester. There will also be short, ungraded, written assignments. Failure to complete and turn these in will reduce your overall grade. Classroom attendance and class participation will also be factored into the overall grade.*

**First paper: Due: 7th class session, October 23, 2016**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the student with an opportunity to research and explore in depth a specific topic of interest in social work practice in gerontology. This paper should focus on a medical, psychosocial or political condition that affects the aging population or specific groups within that population. The policies and programs formulated to address the condition should be identified and the role of social workers in dealing with this condition should be explored.

Select a topic of interest from the course outline or from ideas stimulated by films or discussions in the classroom or by your personal experience.

The choice of topic needs to be approved by the instructor to make sure that not everyone writes on the same topic.

No less than 8 pages no more than 10 pages. At least 5 reference more if needed. References should come from the text, assigned readings or suggested readings. *Newspaper and/or magazine articles, web sites, power point presentations may be used but are not to be counted as one of the five references.*

Use the following outline as a guide for your paper:

**I. Introduction of topic.**

Provide a brief presentation of the purpose of this paper including why it is of interest to you.

**II. The medical, psychosocial, social or political condition.**
Provide a description of an existing condition affecting the wellbeing of older adults or a specific group within the aged population. Who is affected and how are they affected?

An analysis of the factors contributing to this condition and their consequences on those affected directly and indirectly. Why did this come about and what will happen if it is left unaddressed? For example, if you are writing about aging prisoners, or any other group, use statistics and projections in this section.

III. Social Policy and Programs

A description of the policies and programs formulated to address this condition. Identify specific policies, programs and resources. If few or none exist, describe why. What are the policies and programs main goals and main provisions?

Give a brief analysis of the personal, professional and societal values underlying the policies and programs, or their absence.

IV. The Role of Social Work

A description of the role that social workers play in addressing the condition you are describing in terms of:

Direct practice-- what do social workers do with client systems that are affected by this condition in terms of identification, assessment, intervention, education.

* Advocacy and Empowerment-- what efforts are being made on behalf of and with affected populations? What more is needed?

* Research and Education-- What have social workers contributed to the research and knowledge base in this area? What else is needed?

* Ethical Issues-- How do social workers justify their interventions in this area? What are some of the ethical dilemmas that need to be addressed?

V. Conclusion and Summary

Based on your work on this paper discuss your personal recommendations about how this particular psychosocial or medical or political condition should be addressed in schools of social work and in society at large. Give reasons for your recommendations.

Second paper- Due: Class session 13, December 11, 22016

Using the same topic identified in your first paper, explore the issue from a more global perspective. The issue related to aging can then be discussed in depth as viewed in a particular country. This global perspective should include (1) demographics, (2) prevailing views in the country and culture about aging, (3) what does the issue related to aging look like in this country and (4) does social work have a role in providing care and service to the elderly and what theories may be most helpful in providing service?

All papers must be typed double spaced with appropriate use of APA-6th edition for
scholarly documentation. Late papers are not accepted. If there are circumstances that interfere with your ability to submit this assignment on the due date, you must discuss with the professor at least a week before. At the discretion of the professor, a new date may be given. The responsibility for this belongs to you.

GRADING CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used for grading written assignments:

Completeness and timeliness of the assignment; clarity of thought and communication; correctness of language, ability to apply course content and reading to the assignments; appropriateness and fullness of documentation; evidence of interest in learning from written assignments and classroom discussions.

The course grade will be based on the following components: each written assignment attendance and classroom participation.

Assignment 1. – 30%
Assignment 2. – 35%
Ungraded assignments – 10%
Attendance – 15%
Class participation – 10%

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: Introduction and overview of the course: Review of instructor and student expectations and responsibilities. Definition of social gerontology. Why Study Gerontology? Confronting ageism and the Myths of aging

Required Reading


Suggested Reading


**Session 2: Demographic trends and implications in the US and worldwide: old, older and oldest: issues in longevity. Dimensions of the normal aging process: diverse theoretical perspectives and implications for work, finances, leisure time, caregivers, living arrangements, service delivery.**

**Required Reading:**


**Suggested Reading:**


**Session 4: The Psychological Challenges of Aging**

Multiple losses, mental disorders, depression, dementia, personality disorders, the concepts of prevention in mental health: barriers to effective treatment.

**Required reading:**


**Suggested reading:**


Session 5: The Social Challenges of Aging: changing roles, retirement, widowhood,

Required reading:


Suggested reading:


The Homeless Research Institute, http://endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/2698.


Session 4: Diversity and Older Adults: Multiculturalism in America and the Vital Importance of social support. Cross cultural Social work practice and the impact of these issues on the aging process.

Required Reading:


Suggested readings:


Session 5: The Gerontological Assessment

Required reading:


Session 6: Older Women: Economic and Social Status; The Rural Elderly

Required Reading:


Online: http://rnojournal.binghamton.edu/index.php/RNO/article/viewFile/55/46

Session 7: Older Adults in prison

Required Reading

Corrections + Health Care (1-21-04).pdf


Old Behind Bars, _Human Rights Watch.html_


Osborne Aging_whitepaper.pdf


**Session 8: Elder Abuse Hoarding**

**Required Reading:**

Beaulieu, M. Ethical and psychosocial issues raised by the practice in cases of mistreatment of older adults. Journal of Gerontological Social Work. 46. ¾ May 2006: 161-186


**Suggested reading:**


Session 9: Sexuality and aging. Aging issues within the LGBTQ Community

Required Reading:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCHyNHk_O_c


Scott, Paula Spencer. (2015) Facilities are finally grappling with the fact that residents have sex lives. AARP Bulletin, June 2015

Suggested Reading:


Session 10: Alzheimer’s and other Dementias. Care-giving formal and informal, trends and challenges.

Required reading:


Suggested reading


Hooyman Chapter 9 & 10. Opportunities and stress of informal caregiving.


Session 12: The evolution of health and social policies affecting older people; a critique.
The spectrum of policies and services available to the elderly, from pre-retirement counseling to hospice

Required reading:

**Suggested reading:**


Project 2015 The Future of Aging in NYS. Articles and Briefs are online: http://www.aging.state.ny.us.


**Suggested reading**


**Session 13: Ethical Issues and value conflicts in gerontology. Intergenerational value conflicts, resource allocation, end of life decision making, bioethics**

**Required Reading:**


**Suggested Reading**


Session 14: The use of medical and psychosocial research for social work practice with the elderly. Course evaluation and a Call to Action: Advocacy agenda in the field of gerontology.

Required reading


**Bibliography**


**Social Work Practice in Gerontology**


**Cultural Issues/Diversity**


**Ethics and Values**


**Caregiving**


**Aging and Social Policy**


Websites
Administration on Aging  http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov
AARP  http://aarp.org
Alzheimer Association  http://www.alz.org
Center for Medicare and Medicaid  http://www.cms.hhs.gov
Gerontological Society of America  http://www.geron.org
Family Caregiver Alliance  http://www.caregiver.org
International Longevity Center  http://www.ilcusa.org
National Academy on an Aging Society  http://www.agingsociety.org
National Caregivers Association  http://www.nfcacares.org
National Center for Health Statistics website  http://www.cdc.gov/nchs2000a
National Hispanic Council on Aging  http://www.nhcoa.org
NYS Office for the Aging  http://aging.state.ny.us
Senior Action in a Gay Environment  http://www.sageusa.org
US Census  http://www.census.gov

Addendum

NASW 2012 Conference
Susan J. Bendor DSW  bendor@yu.edu
Yeshiva University, Wurzweiler School of Social Work, New York
Selected References for “Don’t Be Afraid of the Looking Glass: Strengths-based Practice with Aging Women

Bergin, L. & S. Walsh 2005 The role of hope in psychotherapy with older adults Aging and Mental Health (1) 7-15


Tong, Min (2001). The Client centered integrative strengths-based approach: ending the longstanding conflict between social work values and practice. Canadian Social Gerontology and Geriatrics 32