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 Competency #2 and #6

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 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.

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.
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.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

A combination of lectures, readings, reflections through written journal assignments, class activities, case studies, and student presentations will be utilized in this course. 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. **Students are expected to actively participate in class discussions and exercises.**

This class will utilize Canvas, an online learning management system (LMS) that facilitates educational interactions and experiences. 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.

IV. COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING

**COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

It is expected that each student will keep up with the required readings in the course outline. It is also expected that assigned readings will be completed prior to class. 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. Familiarity with readings should be reflected both in written assignments and classroom discussion.

**GRADING**

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.

Grades will be weighed as follows:

- Participation & Discussion board comments and responses – 20%
- Reaction Journal with Learning Partner – 25%
- Film Assignment – 25%
- Research project – 30%
**Required Texts**

**There is NO Required Text.** Assigned readings will be provided via a pdf file, through E-Reserves or thru a link to the host site.

**Recommended Texts**


**IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Film Analysis**

**Due: 7th class session**

The purpose of this paper is to provide the student with an opportunity to explore in depth aging-related concepts and theories. This paper should focus on aging-related themes, concepts and experiences depicted in the movie.

You must select ONE movie from the list below and analyze the selected film from a gerontological perspective. The paper should be between 8 and 10 pages with a minimum of 5 references. References should come from the textbook, recent journal articles, book chapters, and assigned readings.

Newspaper and/or magazine articles, websites, power point presentations may be used but are not to be counted as one of the five references.

The following outline is a guide for your paper:

1. Introduction (1 paragraph): an introductory paragraph that brings the reader's attention to the film that you will address and why it is meaningful from a gerontological perspective.
2. A brief synopsis of the film (1 paragraph): a very brief overview of the film, with the assumption that the reader has not seen it.
3. Application of aging-related concepts: Discuss at least 4 concepts, principles and/or theories from our course that can be applied to shed light on aspects of the film you watched (include examples).
4. Select (1) scene that stood out for you. Briefly describe the relevant scene. Explain in detail the gerontological principles, concepts and/or theories you believe are relevant. Elaborate on how the selected scene conforms and/or fails to conform to the gerontological principles, concepts and/or theories you have identified.

5. Conclusion (1 paragraph): Draw together the ideas from your paper in a way that gives the reader insight into what you have learned from watching this film from a gerontological perspective.

Movie Choices: (Select one from the list below.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>And So It Goes</th>
<th>The Curious Case of Benjamin Button</th>
<th>The Intern</th>
<th>RED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Club</td>
<td>Gran Torino</td>
<td>Meditation Park</td>
<td>5 Flights Up</td>
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<td>The Bucket List</td>
<td>Grumpy Old Men</td>
<td>The Mule</td>
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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 notify your professor. At the discretion of the professor, a new date may be given.

**Research Project**

Due: Class session 12

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:

- The purpose of the project - why is it important to highlight this issue? and
  - Why it is of interest to you?
- A clear statement of the problem or issue. Who is affected and how are they affected?
- An analysis of the factors contributing to this condition/issue and their consequences on those affected directly and indirectly. Why did this come about and what will happen if it is left unaddressed?
- Possible solutions. Identify potential ways to remedy the situation.
- Strategies for raising public awareness around the issue.
- The role of Social Work. A description of the role that social workers play, or should play in addressing the condition that 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?

• Conclusion and Summary. Based on your research, discuss your personal recommendations about how this particular issue/concern should be addressed in schools of social work and in society at large. Give reasons for your recommendations.

**Discussion Board Assignments**

The purpose of the Discussion Board is to provide opportunities for students to critically analyze course concepts. Postings should be thorough, complete, and thoughtful to indicate that the student has read, examined, and can apply the concepts in the readings.

Satisfactory participation in each discussion board assignment requires students to

• give full, well-substantiated responses to the discussion questions, preferably referencing the week's readings and/or outside sources
• reply to peers' posts in other discussion threads
• make meaningful contributions as part of the responses, demonstrating that the response has been carefully though-out and is appropriate

**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 14-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, 8, and 10** 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. You may also comment or add to information that you may already know. By the end of the 14-weeks, your reaction journal should include (5) 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).
**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, rko1@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.

1. Go to your class Canvas page.
2. Click the link “Library Resources & E-Reserves”.
3. If you wish to access e-reserves from the library home page (library.yu.edu), Please use “wurzweiler” all lower case, as the password.
4. If you have problems accessing e-reserves, please email: ereserves@yu.edu.

**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 “wurzweiler”.
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)

**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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
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</table>
| Session 1 | Introduction and Course Overview, Understanding Social Gerontology, Confronting ageism and the myths of aging | Required Readings:  
| Session 2 | Theories of Aging                                | Required Readings:  
| Session 3 | Biological and Cognitive Age-related Changes     | Required Readings:  
| Session 4 | Social Challenges of Aging                      | Required Readings:  
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<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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Scott, Paula Spencer. (2015) Facilities are finally grappling with the fact that residents have sex lives. AARP Bulletin, June 2015 |
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<th>Topic</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 9       | Elder Abuse                | **Required Readings:**                                                                                          
|         | Hoarding                   | Beaulieu, M. Ethical and psychosocial issues raised by the practice in cases of mistreatment of older adults. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work.* 46, 3 May 2006: 161-186 |
| 10      | Older Adults in Prison     | **Required Reading:**                                                                                            
| 11      | Programs and Policies for Older Americans | **Required Reading:**                                                                          
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</table>
**Required Readings:**  
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](http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov)

AARP [http://aarp.org](http://aarp.org)

Alzheimer Association [http://www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

Center for Medicare and Medicaid [http://www.cms.hhs.gov](http://www.cms.hhs.gov)

Gerontological Society of America [http://www.geron.org](http://www.geron.org)

Family Caregiver Alliance [http://www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)

International Longevity Center [http://www.ilcusa.org](http://www.ilcusa.org)

National Academy on an Aging Society [http://www.agingssociety.org](http://www.agingssociety.org)

National Caregivers Association [http://www.nfcacares.org](http://www.nfcacares.org)
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
