

**Sociology of Aging**  
**Sociology 469/569, CRN# 44877/44879, WEB**  
**Winter 2021 Syllabus**

**INSTRUCTOR**

- Hyeyoung Woo, PhD, Professor of Sociology
- Email: hyeyoung@pdx.edu (I will respond to your email within 24 hours during the weekdays.)
- Office hours: Weds at 10-11am (<https://pdx.zoom.us/j/86203024774>) and by appointment

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

In this course, we will review the major theories in the areas of aging and the life course, and examine how several important substantive life transitions and social roles experienced over the life course, such as family relationships and caregiving roles, work and retirement, economic well-being, health, and politics, can be understood in the context of individual's aging and aging society.

Throughout the course, students will also have an opportunity to learn how aging and aging related social issues are intersected with race/ethnicity, gender, social status and culture within society. Toward the end of the course, students are expected to have a good understanding of the prominent sociological theories and research methods in the field of aging as well as the ways in which the experience of aging is socially constructed, and in turn, how these constructions shape social relations and society.

For those who register this course for SOC 569, this course is a graduate-level introduction to the study of aging, with a particular focus on sociological perspectives on aging and aging population. Students can take this course either as an elective for the Sociology major or for the **Graduate Certificate in Gerontology** and/or the **Graduate Certificate Program in Applied Social Demography** at Portland State University.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To understand sociological perspectives on aging and aging society;
2. To understand the diversity of older population and the impact of race/ethnicity, gender, social status, and culture on aging and society;
3. To understand major substantive areas of aging, such as health, family relationships and caregiving roles, work and retirement, economic well-being, and politics;
4. To improve students' skills at reading, critiquing, integrating sociological theory and research, and writing an academic paper; and
5. To apply obtained knowledge for comprehending research-based information to understand current issues related to aging and aging society.

**TEXTBOOK AND READINGS**

- Quadagno, Jill. 2018. *Aging and the Life Course: An Introduction to Social Gerontology*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Other readings will be accessible via D2L.

## **COURSE WEBSITE USE**

- All of the class materials, including lecture slides, supplemental readings, assignments, and grades, will be posted on D2L (<http://d2l.pdx.edu>).
- It is your responsibility to check D2L and your email regularly to stay informed for the course, and to track your progress.

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

All of the course activities will occur online:

- Lecture slides will be posted every Monday (ten times during the term).
- You can do the course work anytime during the week.
- All submissions of your work are through D2L by the deadlines.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COURSE**

**This is a completely on-line course.** In order to succeed, you must have a computer (rather than a tablet or a phone) and reliable internet access, which will allow you to navigate/search the web, use email, attach and upload documents, and download and save files.

**One-Movie Related Worksheet (5% of grade):** You will watch one movie during the second week of the course. After watching it, answer the questions I provide related to the movie. See lecture slides for information about the movie and how to access it, and a document under “Assignment” folder for the questions to answer.

**Interview Assignment (15% of grade):** You will interview someone who is at least 65 years old to learn about their life and write a short paper of 1,000-1,500 words by answering the questions I provide on D2L. The word count range includes both the questions and your answers to the questions.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, please do not have an in-person meeting for an interview for this assignment, unless your interviewee resides in the same household with you. Instead, your interview should be conducted remotely via telephone, emails, Skype, or Zoom, and record the conversation if possible. In this way, you do not have to take full notes of the conversation during the interview. An interview audio file (or interview transcripts) are not required for this assignment.

The purpose of this assignment is to explore important social aspects of life events over a longer time period in the context of specific time periods when the events occurred. For the interview, you should ask about major events in their lives, the ages when they have experienced the events, the period in which they have experienced, and the impact of those experiences on their lives and significant others' around them. The major events may include, but are not limited to, completing their education, getting a first full time job, marital transition (i.e. getting (re)married, and/or divorced/separated/bereaved), buying a first house, becoming a parent, major employment status shifts, major milestones at work and/or career change(s), serious health issues that they or significant others experienced, and retirement. However, major events can also be defined by your interviewee's own term.

Based on the major events that they have experienced and their impacts on their lives, you should provide your sociological interpretations of the aging process for your interviewee as a human being in a social context using relevant theories that you learn from the class.

**Discussion Participation (20% of grade):** There will be four online discussions under “Discussions” on D2L. I will post issues/questions for discussion, and everyone is expected to review relevant readings *and* participate in the discussions by raising questions to generate discussion with other students and/or answering questions raised by other students.

**Two Exams (40-60% of grade):** There will be two exams throughout the course. The mid-term will account for 30% (20% for graduate students) and the final will account for 30% (20% for graduate students) of the final grade. The exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. There will be no make-up exams except in extreme circumstances (e.g. death in the family, or serious illness). If you do need to make up an exam, contact me as soon as possible.

**Additional Requirement for Students Who Take This Course as a Graduate Course:**

**Reading Summary and Response (20% of grade):** Students choose one area out of ten topics covered in the course, and then narrow it down to a specific topic in the areas to further delve into the topic.

For this work, you are expected to search for previous studies published in peer reviewed academic journals (at least 5-6 articles) and review them thoroughly. Then, briefly summarize what you learned from the studies by indicating social issue(s) that motivated the topic of the studies, the key research gap(s) in knowledge identified in existing literature, the research questions addressed, data and methods used, and major findings reported. After the summary, critically evaluate the papers by discussing the conceptual/theoretical/methodological strengths and limitations of the studies, how successful each paper has been in answering the research question(s), and what future research directions might yield further understanding(s).

This review should be comprehensive and written cohesively, rather than listing summaries of each study you found. Your Reading Summary and Response should be about 8-12 pages including references (no more than 15 pages), with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins.

**FINAL GRADES ARE DETERMINED BY THE FOLLOWING REQUIREMENTS**

One-Movie Related Worksheet	5%
Interview Assignment	15%
Four-Discussion Participation	20%
Two Exams	40-60%
(Grad Student Only)	
Reading Summary and Response	20%
Total	100%

## Grading Scale:

A	94 – 100%	B+	86 – 89%	C+	76 – 79%	D+	66 – 69%	F	≤ 59%
A-	90 – 93%	B	82 – 85%	C	72 – 75%	D	62 – 65%	P	≥ 70%
		B-	80 – 81%	C-	70 – 71%	D-	60 – 61%		

**Extra Credit (1 extra percentage point):** One extra point will be given to those who post under Discussions to introduce yourself by answering a few questions I post and make comments on at least one another peer's introduction during the first week.

## COURSE POLICIES

**COVID-19:** I want to acknowledge that we continue to operate in unusual circumstances this term. The current COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all of us in various ways, either big or small. PSU is working to keep the community informed, and I would like you to know that you are not alone as we all try to get through the pandemic. Although this course has been designed as a fully online course, regardless the pandemic, I anticipate we may have to make additional changes as the term progresses, and we learn what is working and what is not working for our course community. Please reach out to me if you have questions or concerns.

**Net Etiquette:** In all course communications, you are required to observe the rules of net etiquette. For example, your email message to me should include an appropriate subject, a proper greeting, a body text, and a signature (your name). Rules for the D2L use include:

- Avoid using all CAPS as it can give the impression that you are shouting. If you want to emphasize a point, use \*asterisks\* around a word or underline a word.
- Avoid personal attacks, otherwise known as "flaming." If you read a message that you suspect might be a personal attack, resist the temptation to fire off a response. Instead, let your response sit before sending or request that your instructor resolve the situation.
- If you disagree with a fellow student, describe your perspective clearly and politely rather than primarily criticizing her/his comments. Avoid any personal criticism or potentially offensive language.

### **Additional Rules for the Class:**

- Be respectful when making a comment or responding to others' comments. This rule is the same as for face-to-face classroom behavior. However, as we are not going to have body language and tone of voice in our online communications, please use formal English appropriately.
- Be extra polite, careful, and kind about how you express yourself while posting to a discussion board, and emailing me or your colleagues.
- Avoid lengthy post, and avoid posting dozens of messages a week. In the interests of time only, which I know none of you have enough of, please work on being succinct.
- Avoid the twitter and text message abbreviations. Not everyone knows them.
- Finally, if you run into any net etiquette-related problems—if something has offended or hurt your feelings, for instance—please e-mail me directly about it. I would like to be aware of any problems.

**Policy on Academic Dishonesty:** Students who violate PSU rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the university. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of PSU, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For more information on university policies check the web page (<http://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct#AcademicDishonesty>). In the context of this course, the first incident of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the task. Any further future incidents will result in an F for the course.

**Academic Accommodations:** If you have a physical, psychiatric/emotional, or learning disability that may impact your ability to carry out assigned course work, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC), 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150 or [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu) and arrange appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with disability. For more information about the resources that the DRC provides, refer to the DRC web page (<http://www.drc.pdx.edu/>).

**Title IX Reporting Obligations:** Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, know that help and support are available. PSU has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and on-housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672.

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors **are required to report** information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor, the University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus (<https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/safe-campus-module>) in your D2L.

**Writing Tips:** All of the assignments for this course should be with double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins. Please follow ASA style guidelines when you cite reference(s) in your assignments. I provide several links that would help you write your written assignments as below. They are also accessible via D2L.

- Quick Tips for ASA Style (available on D2L)
- [Plagiarism Resources](#)
- [How to Avoid Plagiarism from PSU Library](#)
- [Research Writing at the Graduate Level from PSU](#)

### Appendix 1. Course Calendar (Subject to Change)

Week	Date		Section	Readings	Exam <sup>1</sup>	Other work/Assignments
1	1/4	M	Introduction to the Course and Review of the Syllabus Movie "Golden Years: Secret Life of Growing Up"	the Syllabus		Tell Us about Yourself by 1/8 (Fri.) Discussion #1 <sup>2</sup>
2	1/11	M	Demography of Aging Society Movie "Don't Grow Old: Holding Back the Years"	PB 2002; 2011		
	1/17	Sun				Movie Work #1 due on 1/17 (Sun.)
3	1/18	M	(No class work -- MLK)			
	1/19	T	The Field of Social Gerontology	Ch.1; 4		Discussion #2 <sup>2</sup>
4	1/25	M	Theories of Aging	Ch.2; 3		
5	2/1	M	Biological Perspectives on Aging	Ch.6	Mid-term (open)	
	2/7	Sun			Mid-term (close)	
6	2/8	M	Psychological Perspectives on Aging	Ch.7		
7	2/15	M	Social Aspects of Aging (Family and Social Support)	Ch.8; 9		Discussion #3 <sup>2</sup>
8	2/22	M	Social Aspects of Aging (Work and Finances)	Ch.10; 14; 15		
	2/28	Sun				Interview Assignment due on 2/28 (Sun.) <sup>3</sup>
9	3/1	M	Health and Health Care	Ch.11; 12; 13		Discussion #4 <sup>2</sup>
10	3/8	M	Aging and Society	Ch.16		
11	3/15	M	Final Week		Final Exam (open)	
	3/19	F			Final Exam (close)	Summary and Response due on 3/19 (Fri.) <sup>4</sup>
<sup>1</sup> Exams will open at 8:00am and close at 11:59pm on the dates indicated. <sup>2</sup> Discussion will open at 8:00am on Monday and close at 11:59 on Friday during the week. <sup>3</sup> Interview Assignment is due on 2/28 (Sun.) at 11:59pm. <sup>4</sup> Summary and Response is due on 3/19 (Fri.) at 11:59pm (Grad only).						