Graduate Certificate in Gerontology Curriculum: Social Work with Older Adults

The Graduate Certificate in Gerontology (GCG) is an interdisciplinary course of study offered through the Institute on Aging within the College of Urban and Public Affairs. The School of Social Work is a member of this consortium of disciplines and offers students the opportunity to obtain a certificate in gerontology studies while pursuing the MSW degree. This option is only available in the Portland-campus-based MSW program.* Students must satisfy the requirements for both the MSW degree and the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology, although some of the courses will meet the requirements for both programs.

Application to the Certificate program should be made through the Institute on Aging. Applications are available on-line at http://www.pdx.edu/ioa/graduate-certificate-in-gerontology. It’s preferable if applications are made before or during the student’s first year in the MSW program, but it is also possible to apply later in the program. Please notify Dr. Vicki Cotrell at cotrellv@pdx.edu or Dr. Maria Talbott at talbottm@pdx.edu if you are applying to the program. The GCG program has agreed to waive the admissions requirement of letters of reference for students who have already been admitted to the MSW program.

With careful planning, it should be possible to complete the requirements for both the MSW and GCG with 79 total credits (This is one more than the usual MSW curriculum.)

Some students who are obtaining both the MSW degree and the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology choose to take a few extra courses, so that they can take more social work electives.

Some students may not be able to simultaneously complete both the MSW and the Certificate; they may need an extra term to complete the requirements for the Certificate.

For advising, students who are completing both the MSW and the GCG programs will need to be in regular contact with either Dr. Cotrell or Dr. Talbott on the social work side. If the student is assigned a faculty advisor other than Dr. Cotrell or Dr. Talbott as their MSW advisor, the student will need to also maintain contact with that assigned advisor. And on the Institute on Aging (IOA) side, the student will need to be in regular contact with the Director of IOA, Dr. Margaret Neal (nealm@pdx.edu) or her designee.

The MSW curriculum is adapted in the following ways for students who are simultaneously pursuing both the MSW and the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology:
1. **PHE 558 Perspectives in Aging** must be taken. This course is offered in the fall and is considered the first course in the Certificate program. This course may be used as an elective in the MSW program of study and is usually taken in the fall of the second year.

2. **SW 574 Social Work with Older Adults** must be taken. This course is usually offered in the fall term only. This course is usually taken in the fall of the second year.

3. **SW 544 Midlife and Beyond** must be taken. This course is offered only in the winter term. This course is usually taken in the winter of the second year.

4. Two additional electives must be taken from the following list. The Institute on Aging can determine whether other aging-specific courses may satisfy this requirement, as well. These can be 3-credit or 4-credit classes and satisfy elective requirements for both the Certificate and the MSW.

   PHE 510 Business & Aging (3 cr.) — offered every term (online) except in winter term during odd years (e.g., 2017)

   PHE 516 Families & Aging (3 cr.) — offered every winter and spring term

   PHE 556 Health Aspects of Aging (4 cr.) — offered every term

   PHE 557 National Long Term Care Policy (3 cr.) — offered every spring term

   PHE 559 Economics of Aging (3 cr.) — offered in winter term during odd years (e.g., 2017)

   PHE 560 Mental Health and Aging (3 cr.) — offered spring term during even years (e.g., 2016)

   PHE 561 Cultural Variations in Aging (3 cr.)— offered irregularly (typically fall term during even years)

   PHE 562 Global Aging (3 cr.)— offered every spring term

   SW 569 Social Work in End-Of-Life and Palliative Care (3 cr.) — usually offered spring term

   SOC 569 Sociology of Aging (4 cr.) – usually offered spring and summer terms (online)

   USP 585 Housing and Environments for the Elderly (3 cr.) – offered irregularly

   USP 564 Political and Administrative Issues in Aging (3 cr.) – offered irregularly
5. Most students must also take the elective that is required by her/his concentration (for HAL and Clinical SW, this is SW 555 Perspectives on Mental Disorders; for PLCO, it is either Research in Racial Disparities or Community and Organizational Research). For students in the CYF Concentration, you may take any social work elective of your choice in this slot.

6. An internship is required of students in both programs. The MSW degree requires a more substantial field placement experience than the GCG. To satisfy both programs, the second year of field placement (and preferably both years) must take place in an agency serving primarily older adults. Two credits of that field instruction are counted toward the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. Each program has paperwork requirements prior to and following the internship that the student must complete. For the MSW, the field placement must be made through the Field Education office of the SSW. Students and field instructors must complete and submit the field educational plan, and supervisors must complete the quarterly evaluations and records of hours. These are submitted to the student’s advisor at the SSW. For the GCG, the Gerontology Certificate Internship Application and Learning Contract should be completed by the student after the student receives notification of their placement: http://www.pdx.edu/ioa/final-requirement-internship-or-independent-research-project.

There is no list of approved internships on the part of the Institute on Aging (IOA); the only requirement is that the placement be in an agency that serves primarily older adults. In general agencies that contain “aging,” “aged,” “elder,” “elderly,” or “older adults” in their titles are acceptable. Other agencies may also serve predominantly older adults, such as hospice and some medical placements. Contact either Dr. Maria Talbott or Dr. Vicki Cotrell if there is any question about the eligibility of the placement. This should be done as soon as the student becomes aware of a potential placement for the next academic year. Questionable placements will be reviewed for eligibility by the Director of IOA, Dr. Margaret Neal (nealm@pdx.edu).

Once the Certificate Internship application is completed, the student should schedule an appointment with the advisor in the Certificate Program to review the plans and the application form and also to review a list of the coursework taken to assure that requirements for the Certificate will have been met.

In addition students must register for one credit for the internship requirement through IOA, which is separate and distinct from any other course work that is taken. Registration is handled through a “By Arrangement” form, available at: http://www.pdx.edu/sites/www.pdx.edu.registration/files/by_arrangement.pdf. Students register for 1 credit (non-graded) of PHE 504 with their advisor in the Certificate Program (generally Dr. Neal); usually this credit is taken in spring term. A one-page document describing the internship (one paragraph) and the learning objectives specific to working with older adults/the field of aging must accompany the “By Arrangement” form.
At the end of the internship (generally spring term), the student must have her or his field instructor complete a Performance Evaluation Form (see the IOA website). The student should complete the first part of the evaluation listing the activities performed during the internship. The field instructor will then complete the second part of the evaluation, which contains ratings of the student’s performance.


If a student is in the combined MSW & GSG program but does not wish to have her or his second field placement in a setting that serves older adults, it is possible to do the GCG internship separately. Please discuss this with Dr. Talbott or Dr. Cotrell if this is your situation.

7. Students entering the MSW program who have obtained the Gerontology Certificate within the last five years can transfer up to 12 credits into the MSW program. The courses that can be credited include PHE 558 Perspectives on Aging and two electives approved for the Certificate. Transferred credits will be used to satisfy elective requirements for the MSW. SW 544 Midlife and Beyond and SW 574 Social Work with Older Adults taken for the Certificate before entry into the MSW program can be counted as electives in the MSW program, although the maximum number of transferable credits is 12.

8. Students must complete PSU Graduation requirements for both the MSW and the GCG. The paperwork/online work to certify eligibility for graduation is handled through the School of Social Work for the MSW and through the IOA for the GCG. If the GCG will not be completed at the time that the MSW is obtained, this must be indicated on the student’s application for graduation (i.e., “Yes” must be checked in response to the question, “Are you currently admitted to another graduate program at PSU which you plan to continue after completion of this degree?” and the name of the Certificate program (Graduate Certificate in Gerontology) must be provided. This form, the Application for the Awarding of Master’s Degree, Doctoral Degree, or Graduate Certificate, must be filed by the first Friday of the anticipated term of graduation ([http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/sites/www.pdx.edu.ogs/files/Degree_and_Cert_app_2015.pdf](http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/sites/www.pdx.edu.ogs/files/Degree_and_Cert_app_2015.pdf)). For additional information, see [http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/application-awarding-masters-or-doctoral-degree/](http://www.pdx.edu/ogs/application-awarding-masters-or-doctoral-degree/).

*Students in the Distance and Online MSW Programs may be able to also get a GCG, but it will require coming to Portland for electives, and can only be done with special approval from the MSW Distance Coordinator or MSW Online Coordinator (Lisa Hawash).
Below is a chart to facilitate student course planning. Students in the Three-Year MSW Program will have a different course of study. This chart is a suggestion, and as long as the requirements listed above are met, students can choose other courses of study.

The **first year** of the combined MSW & GCG program is identical to the first year of the MSW program for all MSW students.

The **second year** of the combined MSW and GCG program is as follows.

### Course of Study for MSW & GCG: Second Year of Two-Year MSW Program

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SW 517 Health Across the Lifespan I</td>
<td>SW 518 Health Across the Lifespan II</td>
<td>SW 519 Health Across the Lifespan III</td>
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<tr>
<td>SW 533 Clinical Social Work Practice I</td>
<td>SW 534 Clinical Social Work Practice II</td>
<td>SW 535 Clinical SW Practice III</td>
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<td>SW 586 Social Work with Children, Youth and Families I</td>
<td>SW 587 Social Work with Children, Youth and Families II</td>
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<td>SW 588 SW with CYF III</td>
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<td>SW 593 Practice and Leadership with Communities and Organizations I</td>
<td>SW 594 Practice and Leadership with Communities and Organizations II</td>
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<td>SW 512 Field</td>
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<td>PHE 558 Perspectives on Aging</td>
<td>Concentration elective (e.g., SW 555)</td>
<td>Aging elective from the list under #4 above (e.g., PHE 557)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SW 574 SW with Older Adults</td>
<td>SW 544 Midlife and Beyond</td>
<td>Aging elective from the list under #4 above (e.g., SW 569)</td>
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<td>PHE 504 Internship (1 cr.)</td>
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