

AGING AND DEATH
SOC 4810 – Section 001
Fall 2016

Class Meetings: 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. TTh in Brackett 113

Instructor: Jennifer Holland, LMSW
Office: 130-D Brackett Hall
Phone: (864) 656-2018
Email: hollan2@clemson.edu

Office Hours: M 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.,
Tu 12:45 – 1:45 p.m. & 3:30 – 4:00 p.m.,
Th 12:45 – 1:45 p.m., F 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.,
and by appointment

Official Course Description: Sociological orientation to aging populations focusing on the impact of health care, welfare, and retirement systems. Includes dying as a social phenomenon, suicide, euthanasia, and funerals. Prerequisites: SOC 2010 or SOC 2020 and junior standing.

Critical Thinking Emphasis: This course is part of the Clemson Thinks² program, the university's Quality Enhancement Plan, which seeks to enhance the critical thinking skills of Clemson students through transformative learning experiences; therefore, this course will be discussion-based, communication-intensive, and engagement-rich. Students will be expected to challenge their own assumptions and stretch the limits of their imaginations to identify and analyze existing social patterns, problems, policies, and programs as they relate to issues of aging and dying.

Critical Thinking Methods and Testing: Although traditionally common pedagogical methods such as lecture, reading, and class discussion will be employed, much of the learning in this course will take place as students wrestle individually with complex social problems, communicate their thoughts to others, and then reflect upon the processes by which their thoughts developed. We will rely heavily upon case work, group activities, and projects and presentations. Critical thinking methods such as SEEI (State, Elaborate, Exemplify, and Illustrate) and the case method will be employed. Students will also learn to work their way around the Elements of Thought wheel and will have the opportunity to engage in critical thinking activities and assignments with their classmates. Finally, all students in the class will be responsible for completing the California Critical Thinking Skills Test at the beginning and end of the semester in order to allow for measurement of changes in critical thinking ability that occur over the course of the semester. Students will take this test online, and although the results will not affect students' course grade, it is expected that all class members will give their best effort on the exam, as test results will provide valuable assessment information for the university and the Clemson Thinks² program.

Course Goals and Objectives: After completing this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Identify and analyze various demographic, historical, and cross-cultural trends related to aging and dying.
- 2) Compare and contrast several current theories of aging and death within the fields of gerontology and thanatology, respectively.
- 3) Explain how human behavior is shaped by the physical and cognitive changes associated with aging and dying, as well as by shifts in social interaction involving support networks, family relationships, work, finances, and living arrangements of the elderly and terminally ill.
- 4) Evaluate the societal and personal impact of special problems experienced by the elderly and their caregivers, and learn to locate resources and programs appropriate to the needs of older Americans.

- 5) Trace changes in attitudes toward death across time and culture.
- 6) Outline the physical, emotional, and behavioral processes that accompany the dying experience and suggest ways to address the special needs of the terminally ill.
- 7) Examine and debate legal and ethical issues related to end-of-life care, including euthanasia, assisted suicide, and advance directives.
- 8) Describe the impact on individuals and societies of sudden and traumatic death associated with suicide, homicide, accidents, and mass disasters.
- 9) Compare and contrast the variety of societal customs and individual grieving processes that follow a death, including those related to funerals, burial rituals, and bereavement.
- 10) Gain skills to critically evaluate patterns and problems related to issues and processes of aging and death in today's society.
- 11) Synthesize information from a variety of sources in order to create proposed solutions to social problems outlined in sample cases.

Required Text: This course requires students to read a number of articles that have been compiled by the instructor into a McGraw-Hill custom textbook entitled *Aging and Death (3rd ed.)* that is available in the University Bookstore. Additional readings are posted on Blackboard in the Information folder.

Course Policies

- 1) *Academic Integrity:* In accordance with Clemson University's official statement on academic integrity, which is outlined in detail beginning on page 30 of the *Undergraduate Announcements*, academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Acts of academic dishonesty include lying, cheating, stealing, and plagiarism. If there is evidence that a student has committed any of these acts, a charge of misconduct will be submitted by the instructor to the Office of Undergraduate Studies for further investigation. If a student is found to be in violation of Clemson's academic integrity policy, a grade of F for the assignment, and possibly the course, will result. (Please note that, for the purpose of this course, reuse of one's own work is not considered a violation of the academic integrity policy.)
- 2) *Accommodations:* Students with documented disabilities who need accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services as soon as possible within the semester and then bring an academic access letter to the instructor so that a plan can be made to address any special needs.
- 3) *Attendance:* Regular attendance is critical to students' success in this course; therefore, attendance will be taken during every class period. Students are allowed two absences without penalty. For each subsequent absence, points will be deducted from a student's final point total for the semester in the following manner: 5 points for the third absence, 10 additional points for the fourth, 15 for the fifth, and 20 for the sixth. This policy applies to all absences, regardless of cause (illness, family and relationship problems, work obligations, extracurricular activities, late enrollment, etc.); however, the instructor may choose to waive the point deduction if a student provides a valid, written excuse for an absence. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor within one week of the absence and to provide appropriate documentation to support the excuse; otherwise, the absence will be considered unexcused and the point deduction will apply.

Please note that if a student misses more than six class periods, the instructor will drop the student from the roll (if the last day to withdraw has not yet passed) or assign a grade of F for the course. Even if some absences are excused, no student may miss more than six class periods.

Students who anticipate the need for an extended period of absence should contact the Dean of Students Office (656-0935).

When absent from a regular class period, students should contact a classmate to secure any notes that they have missed. If a student is absent when an in-class assignment or exam is administered, he or she must contact the instructor within 24 hours and provide a valid written excuse for the absence in order to be allowed to make up the assignment. Unless the absence is prearranged or due to an emergency, ten percent of the total possible points for the assignment will be deducted from the student's grade for each day that passes before the assignment or test is submitted. Make-up assignments may vary in format from those administered in class, and there may be some assignments that, due to their nature, are impossible to make up; in these instances, students will receive a grade of zero. Also, students who do not take the initiative to arrange make-up tests and exercises according to these guidelines will receive a grade of zero for the assignments that they miss.

Because it is in the best interest of the class, the student, and the instructor for students to be present during each class period, those students who attend every class session during the semester—from the first to the last—will have five points added to their point total at the end of the semester. Please note that these points represent *extra* credit for those students who are present during *every* class period; failure to receive these points in no way constitutes a grade penalty against those who must miss class.

4) *Conduct*: Students are expected to arrive to class prepared and on time, to participate in class activities, and to remain in class until dismissed by the instructor. Students who arrive to class excessively late or who leave early will be counted absent for half of a class period; therefore, every other (i.e., the second or fourth) late arrival or early departure will incur the same penalty as one absence. Before class, students are expected to silence and put away all electronic devices, including cell phones and laptops. Questions and comments related to the course material are always welcome; however, individual conversations and acts of incivility and disrespect will not be tolerated. Any student who is disruptive may be asked to leave the classroom, which will result in a lowering of his or her class participation score by fifteen points for each infraction.

5) *Preparation for Class*: Students are expected to complete all assigned readings by the due dates indicated on the course schedule. Partial outlines of the instructor's lecture notes may be found in the Content folder on Blackboard, and students are encouraged to print these notes and bring them to class. (Please note that portions of the lecture notes and presentations may contain copyrighted materials that are provided in compliance with the provisions of the Teach Act and that are intended to be used only by students within the course and only for instructional purposes. Please do not disseminate these materials further.) When written assignments are due, they must be turned in during class on the dates indicated on the course schedule. Ten percent of an assignment's total value will be deducted for each day that an assignment is late. An extension of one class period will be given to all students if the university cancels class (i.e., due to inclement weather) on the day that a test or assignment was due.

6) *Tardiness of the Instructor*: Students may dismiss themselves from class if the instructor fails to arrive within fifteen minutes after a class period was scheduled to begin.

7) *Title IX*: Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions, and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sexual harassment and sexual violence as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Students may contact Mr. Jerry Knighton, Clemson's Title IX Coordinator and Director of Access and Equity, with any questions or concerns related to this policy.

Methods of Evaluation

Each student's final grade for the course will be determined by his or her performance on two exams, a group service learning project, a final paper, and a number of small in-class and homework assignments. Instructions for all assignments, as well as grading rubrics (when applicable), will be provided in class and/or on Blackboard.

Exams: Each exam will consist of a variety of multiple choice, matching, true-false, short answer, and essay questions that will be drawn from the readings, lectures, class discussions, group activities, guest presentations, and videos. When required, Scantron forms will be provided by the instructor. Each exam will be worth 100 points.

Final Paper: In lieu of a traditional final exam, students will conduct an interview with an older adult and submit a final paper in which they apply and synthesize material learned throughout the course of the entire semester. This paper will be worth 100 points, and further instructions will be provided in class and on Blackboard.

Group Service Learning Project: In groups of three to five, students will complete a project that is worth 100 points and that focuses upon one aspect of the aging or dying experience. Groups will first research the topic and explore it using the Elements of Thought wheel. They will then write a brief paper and present their findings and experiences to the class in a creative and engaging format (i.e., video, skit, musical performance, PechaKucha). Using the Elements of Thought wheel, groups will identify the question at issue, important assumptions, concepts, information, and conclusions related to the selected issue, different points of view on it, and potential implications and consequences of the problem and related policies. This project will serve as students' CT² artifact and will allow students to demonstrate successful accomplishment of learning objectives such as explaining how human behavior is shaped by the physical and cognitive changes associated with aging and dying and evaluating the societal and personal impact of special problems experienced by the elderly and terminally ill and their caregivers.

Small Assignments and Participation: In order to apply course concepts and engage with class material, students will complete a number of smaller in-class and homework assignments throughout the course of the semester. Examples include case write-ups, reflection essays, quizzes, SEEI's, and group activities. Points may also be awarded for participation in class discussion during some class periods. All of the assignments and participation points together will be worth a total of 100 points.

Extra Credit: Up to five extra credit points are available to students with exemplary attendance records, as noted in the Course Policies section above. Additional opportunities for extra credit may be offered to the class at the instructor's discretion; however, no individual requests for extra credit will be granted, so students who are struggling with the course material should contact the instructor in a timely manner to request assistance.

Grade Computation:

NOTE THAT POINT CUT-OFFS ARE FIRM AND WILL NOT BE NEGOTIATED.

All grade disputes must be submitted in writing within one week of the return of the assignment.

2 Exams @ 100 points each	200 points	A = 450 or more points
Final Paper	100 points	B = 400 – 449.5 points
Group Project	100 points	C = 350 – 399.5 points
<u>Small Assignments/Participation</u>	<u>100 points</u>	D = 300 – 349.5 points
Total Possible Points	500 points	F = 299.5 or fewer points

Group Project Guidelines

Each class member will complete a service learning project as part of a group of three to five students this semester. Each group will choose a topic related to aging and/or death that may be explored further through interviews and encounters with individuals affected by the issue. Some examples of possible topics include family caregiving, long-term care, Alzheimer's disease, widowhood, hospice care, and bereavement. This project involves three components, as outlined below.

- 1) Conduct a preliminary literature review on the topic, and write a 4-5 page paper that covers the basic issues surrounding it, using the Elements of Thought wheel as a guide. (For example, what is the question at issue? What information and concepts are important to understand? Whose point of view should be considered? What are some potential consequences of this issue?) Groups should consult at least five academic sources (journal articles, book chapters, government reports, etc.) for the review and include citations and a bibliography in either APA or MLA format. **(45 points)**

- 2) After completing this initial report, groups should make arrangements to interact with members of the population affected by their selected issue through encounters in both a service activity setting (i.e., support group meetings, volunteer opportunities) and in one-on-one interviews. For instance, a group examining long-term care might make arrangements to volunteer at a nursing home for a day and subsequently interview willing residents of the facility. A group studying family caregiving or Alzheimer's disease might attend a caregivers' or Alzheimer's support group meeting and then interview interested group members afterward. Ideally, each group should interact with at least three people who have been affected by the selected issue and interview these individuals to learn more about its personal effects on their lives. (Interview questions should be developed based upon the information obtained during the literature review and should focus upon application of course concepts to the personal experiences of the interviewees.) Each member of the group must achieve at least five hours of contact with members of the chosen population, and all service activities and interactions should be logged on a time sheet provided by the instructor. **(10 points)**

- 3) After completing the literature review and the service activity and interviews, each group will prepare a presentation that summarizes the findings of the project. The presentation should incorporate videos, photographs, and/or sound recordings taken by the group and illustrating the impact of the issue on the individuals with which the group interacted. (Note that groups must gain approval from any individuals featured in photos or videos before presenting them in class.) Findings and experiences should be presented in a creative and engaging format (i.e., video, skit, musical performance, PechaKucha). **(45 points)**

Groups should include, synthesize, and apply course material, cite specific readings and class discussions, and use the sociological vocabulary learned in class. This project will require students to demonstrate the ability to think deeply about multidimensional social issues and to communicate their thoughts effectively and creatively to the class. As stated above, further tips and guidelines will be provided on Blackboard.

SOC 4810 COURSE SCHEDULE

Below you will find a general outline of course topics for the semester. Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and/or by email. In the last column below, articles from the custom reader are identified by author's name only, while those followed by (BB) are posted in the Information folder on Blackboard.

Date	Topic	Reading/Assignment Due
Th Aug 18	Introduction to the Course	
Tu Aug 23	Aging from a Socio-Historical Perspective	Himes; Uhlenberg; Pipher
Th Aug 25	Aging Theories and Concepts	Onedera & Stickle; Tanner
Tu Aug 30	Physical Aspects of Aging	Sahyoun, et al.; Duenwald
Th Sept 1	Cognitive Aspects of Aging	Begley; <i>The Economist</i>
Tu Sept 6	Group Project Proposal Development	
Th Sept 8	<i>Living Old</i> Video	**Project Proposal Due**
Tu Sept 13	Social Aspects of Aging	
Th Sept 15	Work, Retirement, and Finances	Gupta; Cox, et al.; McDonnell (BB)
Tu Sept 20	Special Problems of the Elderly	Henderson (BB)
Th Sept 22	Special Problems (cont.)	Brown
Tu Sept 27	<i>Young @ Heart</i> Video	
Th Sept 29	***AGING EXAM***	
Tu Oct 4	Death from a Socio-Historical Perspective	Durkin (BB)
Th Oct 6	Models of Coping and Anticipatory Grief	Utne; Lague
Tu Oct 11	Physical Death and the Afterlife	Yeoman (BB); Betty
Th Oct 13	Hospice Guest Speaker	
Tu Oct 18	Euthanasia and Legal Issues	Foley; Yeoman; Cohen & Kass
Th Oct 20	Sudden and Traumatic Death	Parker-Pope (BB); Rando (BB)
Tu Oct 25	Suicide Guest Speaker	**Major Project Paper Due**
Th Oct 27	Funerals and Burial	Whalen (BB); Basler
Tu Nov 1	Grief and Bereavement	Leming & Dickinson
Th Nov 3	Caregiving and Living Arrangements	Sheehy; Hannon; Crary; Fine
Th Nov 10	Policies, Programs, and Resources	Social Security (BB)
Tu Nov 15	***DEATH AND CAREGIVING EXAM***	
Th Nov 17	Student Project Presentations	
Tu Nov 22	Student Project Presentations	
Tu Dec 29	Student Project Presentations	
Th Dec 1	Course Wrap-Up	
W Dec 7 (3:00 p.m.)	*** FINAL PAPER DUE ***	