

AGING AND DEATH
SOC 4810 – Section 001
Spring 2020

Class Meetings: 8:00 – 9:15 a.m. TR in Brackett 114

Instructor: Jennifer Holland, LMSW
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Office Hours: M 9:15 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.,
T 11:00 a.m. – 2:15 p.m. (later some Tuesdays),
R 11:00 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.,
F 9:15 a.m. – 1:45 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, which seeks to enhance the critical thinking skills of Clemson students through transformative learning experiences; therefore, the class 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.

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. Course activities will revolve around case work, group assignments, personal reflection, and service learning projects and presentations. Students will have many opportunities to engage in critical thinking and discussion with their classmates.

Student Learning Outcomes: 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 that address the needs of older Americans.
- 5) Outline the physical, emotional, and behavioral processes that accompany the dying experience and suggest ways to address the special needs of the terminally ill.
- 6) Examine and debate legal and ethical issues related to end-of-life care, including euthanasia, assisted suicide, and advance directives.
- 7) Describe the impact on individuals and societies of sudden and traumatic death associated with suicide, homicide, accidents, and mass disasters.
- 8) 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.
- 9) Gain skills to critically evaluate patterns and problems related to issues and processes of aging and death in today's society.

Required Text: Students in this course are required to read a number of articles that have been compiled by the instructor into a McGraw-Hill custom eBook entitled *Aging and Death (4th ed.)*. This reader may be purchased directly online from McGraw-Hill, or an access code may be obtained from the University Bookstore. There are also additional readings posted under the Modules tab on Canvas.

Course Policies

1) *Academic Integrity:* In accordance with Clemson University’s official statement on academic integrity, which is outlined in the “Academic Regulations” section of the undergraduate catalog, 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 class, reuse of one’s own work is not considered a violation of the academic integrity policy.)

2) *Accessibility:* Students with documented disabilities or injuries who need accommodations to meet the requirements of this course should contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services as early in the semester as possible. After an academic access letter is supplied to the instructor, a plan will be made to address any special needs.

3) *Attendance:* Regular attendance is crucial 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, five points will be deducted from a student’s final point total for the semester, up to a total of twenty points. 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 (864-656-0935) for assistance.

When a student is absent from a regular class session, he or she should secure any missed notes from a classmate. If an exam or in-class assignment was administered during the absence, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours and provide a valid written excuse in order to be allowed to make up the assignment. Unless the absence was prearranged or due to an emergency, ten percent of the total point value of the assignment or test will be deducted from the student’s grade for each day that passes before it 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 for missed assignments. 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 everyone to be present during each class meeting, those students who attend all class sessions throughout the semester—from

the first to the last—will have five points added to their final class point total. 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.

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 Modules folder on Canvas, 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. [See the Use of Copyrighted Materials and Fair Use Guidelines policy on Clemson's website for more information.]) 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 passes before a late assignment is submitted.

Academic Continuity: In the event that the university administration determines that classes cannot physically meet on campus, class will be conducted online in accordance with the university's academic continuity plan for academic operations. After receiving notification of such an event through official university channels, please check Canvas for assigned learning activities. Specific instructions for accessing assignments will be listed in the Announcements section for the course. Please consult the Announcements on Canvas to find the assignment for our course for that date. Also note that an extension of one class period will be given for all tests and assignments due on the date of an official class cancellation.

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 Alesia Smith, Clemson's Title IX Coordinator and Executive Director of Equity Compliance (110 Holtzendorff Hall), with any questions or concerns related to this policy.

8) *University Safety Procedures*: Clemson University is committed to providing a safe campus environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. As members of this community, students are encouraged to take the following actions to be better prepared in case of an emergency: sign up for emergency alerts; download the Rave Guardian app; and learn how to be prepared in the event of an active threat.

Methods of Evaluation

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

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.

Group Service Learning Project: In groups of three or four, 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 their topic and provide an overview of it in a brief paper before exploring it in-depth through one-on-one interactions and volunteer experiences with individuals who are impacted by the selected issue. Finally, groups will present their findings and experiences to the class in a creative and engaging format at the end of the semester. This project will allow groups 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.

Final Paper or Web Page: In lieu of a traditional final exam, students will conduct an interview with an older adult and compose a final paper or create a web page in which they synthesize material learned throughout the course of the semester and apply it to their interview experience. This assignment will be worth 100 points, and further instructions will be provided in class and on Canvas.

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. Points will also be awarded for participation in class discussion during some class periods, and twenty points will be allotted for attendance, according to the policy noted above. All of the assignments and participation points together will be worth a total of 100 points.

Extra Credit: Five points of extra credit are available to students who maintain perfect attendance throughout the entire semester, as indicated 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 should take advantage of opportunities as they are offered to the class.

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 an assignment.

Exam 1 (Aging)	100 points	A = 450 or more points
Exam 2 (Death and Caregiving)	100 points	B = 400 – 449.5 points
Final Paper or Web Page	100 points	C = 350 – 399.5 points
Group Paper & Presentation	100 points	D = 300 – 349.5 points
<u>Small Assignments & Participation</u>	<u>100 points</u>	F = 299.5 or fewer points
Total Possible Points	500 points	

Group Project Guidelines

Each class member will complete a service learning project as part of a group of three or four 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. (You might consider using the Elements of Thought wheel as a guide for addressing important aspects of the issue. 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. **(50 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 (e.g., support group meetings, volunteer opportunities) and through 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 interview at least three individuals who have been affected by their issue to learn more about its impact 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-point small assignment grade)**

- 3) After completing the literature review and the service activity and interviews, each group will prepare a presentation that summarizes the findings of their service learning 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 (e.g., video, skit, musical performance). **(50 points)**

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 their classmates. Groups should synthesize and apply course material, cite specific readings and class discussions, and use the sociological vocabulary learned in class to strengthen their projects. As stated above, further tips and guidelines will be provided on Canvas.

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 (C) are posted in the Modules folder on Canvas.

Date	Topics for Class	Readings and Assignments Due
R Jan 9	Introduction to the Course	
T Jan 14	Aging from a Socio-Historical Perspective	Himes; Uhlenberg; Pipher
R Jan 16	Aging Theories and Concepts	Onedera & Stickle; Tanner
T Jan 21	Physical Aspects of Aging	Sahyoun, et al.; Duenwald/ Life Exp HW Due
R Jan 23	Cognitive Aspects of Aging	Begley; <i>The Economist</i>
T Jan 28	Introduction to the Group Project	
R Jan 30	<i>Living Old</i> Video and Discussion	Project Proposal Due
T Feb 4	Social Aspects of Aging	
R Feb 6	Work, Retirement, and Finances	Gupta; Cox, et al./ Retirement HW Due
T Feb 11	Special Problems of the Elderly	Henderson (C)
R Feb 13	Special Problems (cont.)	Brown
T Feb 18	<i>Young @ Heart</i> Video and Discussion	
R Feb 20	***AGING EXAM***	
T Feb 25	Death from a Socio-Historical Perspective	Durkin (C)/ Death References HW Due
R Feb 27	Models of Coping and Anticipatory Grief	Utne; Lague
T Mar 3	Physical Death and the Afterlife	Yeoman (C); Betty
R Mar 5	Hospice Guest Speaker and Discussion	
T Mar 10	Euthanasia and Legal Issues	Foley; Yeoman; Cohen & Kass
R Mar 12	Sudden and Traumatic Death	Parker-Pope (C); Rando (C)/ Group Paper Due
T Mar 24	Suicide Guest Speaker and Discussion	
R Mar 26	Funerals and Burial Rituals	Whalen (C); Basler/ Funeral Planning HW Due
T Mar 31	Grief and Bereavement	Leming & Dickinson
R Apr 2	Caregiving and Living Arrangements	Sheehy; Hannon; Crary; Fine
T Apr 7	Policies, Programs, and Resources	Hartman (C)
R Apr 9	***DEATH AND CAREGIVING EXAM***	
T Apr 14	Student Project Presentations	Group Time Sheets Due
R Apr 16	Student Project Presentations	
T Apr 21	Student Project Presentations	
R Apr 23	Course Wrap-Up	
F May 1 (9:30 p.m.)	*** FINAL PAPER OR WEB PAGE DUE ***	