

Course Syllabus

GERO 520 ONLINE: LIFE-SPAN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

Leonard Davis School of Gerontology
University of Southern California
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Course Overview and Goals

Gerontology 520 (online) will introduce graduate level students (e.g., MSG; PhD) to the issues, concepts, and research methodology of life-span developmental psychology, with emphasis on older adulthood (young- and old-old age). Topics will include: longitudinal methods, cognitive aging (perception, memory, learning, etc.), life span developmental issues (intelligence, wisdom, expertise, personality, emotion), relationships, well-being, and mental health (depression, dementia, etc.). Emphasis will be placed on integration of research in both the pure and applied research domains. For MSG students, this course will act as a foundation for applied courses that will be taken later in your degree program. It will provide an overview of the scientific basis for applied topics (e.g., counseling, program evaluation).

The major goals of this course are to: (1) develop critical thinking about psychological research and aging, and (2) gain insight on psychological issues in aging, (3) develop a greater understanding of methodology, (4) integrate knowledge with your professional and personal beliefs.

Required Texts

- Hoyer, W. J., Roodin P. A. (2002). *Adult Development and Aging (5th Ed.)* Burr Ridge, IL: McGraw-Hill.
- Woods, R. T. (Ed.). (1999). *Psychological problems of Aging: Assessment, treatment, and care*. New York: Wiley.

TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE and READINGS*

* *Additional readings may be assigned as the semester proceeds.*

Week 1 (January 9-13): COURSE OVERVIEW and INTRODUCTION

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapter 1
- Additional reading:
 - Carstensen, L. L., Isaacowitz, D. M., & Charles, S. T. (1999). Taking time seriously: A theory of socioemotional selectivity. *American Psychologist*, 54, 154-181.

Week 2 (January 16-20): SCIENTIFIC PSYCHOLOGY and LONGITUDINAL METHODS

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin: Appendix
- Additional readings:
 - Schaie, K. W., & Hofer, S. M. (2001). Longitudinal studies in aging research. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (5th ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
 - Hertzog, C., & Dixon, R. A. (1996). Methodological issues in research on cognition and aging (pp. 66-121). In F. Blancher-Fields, & T. M. Hess (Eds.), *Perspectives on cognitive change in adulthood and aging*. Boston: McGraw Hill.

Week 3 (January 23-27): PHYSICAL and SENSORY AGING

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapters 3
- Additional readings:
 - Fozard, J. L. & Gordon-Salant, S. (2001). Changes in vision and hearing with aging. . In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (5th ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Week 4 (January 30- February 3): COGNITIVE AGING (ATTENTION and MEMORY)

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapters 7
- Additional readings:
 - Schacter, D. L. (1999). The seven sins of memory: Insights from psychology and cognitive neuroscience. *American Psychologist*, *54*, 182–203.
 - Rubin, D. C. (2000). Autobiographical memory and aging. In D. C. Park, & N. Schwarz, N. (Eds.). *Cognitive aging: A primer*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.
 - Backman, L., Small, B. J., & Wahlin, A. (2000). Cognitive functioning in very old age. In F. I. M. Craik, & T. A. Salthouse (Eds.), *The handbook of aging and cognition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Week 5 (February 6-10): INTELLIGENCE and CREATIVITY

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapters 8
 - Woods chapter 2
- Additional readings:
 - Berg, C. A., & Klacznski, P. A. (1996). Practical intelligence and problem solving: Searching for perspectives. In F. Blancher-Fields, & T. M. Hess (Eds.), *Perspectives on cognitive change in adulthood and aging*. Boston: McGraw Hill.
 - Horn, H. L., & Cattell, R. B. (1967). Age differences in intelligence. In M. P. Lawton, & T. A. Salthouse (Eds.). (1998), *Essential papers on the psychology of aging*. New York: New York University Press.

Week 6 (February 13-17): WISDOM and EXPERTISE

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapter 9

- Additional readings:
 - Czaja, S. J. (2001). Technological change and the older worker. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (5th ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
 - Baltes, P. B. (1997). On the incomplete architecture of human ontogeny: Selection, optimization, and compensation as foundations of developmental theory. *American Psychologist*, *52*, 366-380.
 - Baltes, P. B., & Staudinger, U. M., (2000). Wisdom: A metaheuristic (pragmatic) to orchestrate mind and virtue toward excellence. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 122-136.

Week 7 (February 20-24): MIDTERM

- Midterm: The essay test will be available February 20th and is due February 24th by 5:00 pm PST.
- No readings for this week

Week 8 (February 27-March 3): PERSONALITY and RELATIONSHIPS

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapters 10 & 11
- Additional readings:
 - Carstensen, L. L., Gottman, J.M., & Levenson, R. W. (1995). Emotional behavior in long-term marriage. *Psychology and Aging*, *10*, 140-149.
 - Staudinger, U. M., & Pasupathi, M. (2000). Life-span perspectives on self, personality, and social cognition. In F. I. M. Craik, & T. A. Salthouse (Eds.), *The handbook of aging and cognition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
 - Smyer, M. A., & Qualls, S. H. (1999). *Family Systems Models (103-117)*. In: M. A. Smyer, & S. H. Qualls *Aging and Mental Health*. Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Week 9 (March 6-10): WORK, LEISURE, and RETIREMENT

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapters 12
- Additional readings:
 - Moynagh, M., & Worsley, R. (2004). Reshaping Retirement: Scenarios and options. *The Futurist*, *Sept/Oct*, 44-49.
 - Cox, H., Parks, T., Hammonds, A., & Sekhon, G. (2001). Work/retirement choices and lifestyle patterns of older adults. *Journal of Applied Sociology*, *18*, 131-149.

Week 10 (March 13-17): SPRING RECESS

Week 11 (March 20-24): SOCIAL and CULTURAL ISSUES

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapter 2
- Additional readings:
 - Chasteen, A. L., Schwartz, N., & Park, D. C. (2002). The activation of aging stereotypes in younger and older adults. *Journals of Gerontology*, *57B*.

- Hummert, M. L. (1999). A social cognitive perspective on age stereotypes. In T. M. Hess, & F. Blanchard-Fields (Eds.), *Social cognition and aging*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Week 12 (March 27-31): MENTAL HEALTH

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapter 5
 - Woods chapters 4, 9, 10
- Additional reading:
 - Meeks, S., Murrell, S. A., & Mehl, R. C. (2000). Longitudinal relationships between depressive symptoms and health in normal older and middle-aged adults. *Psychology and Aging, 15*, 100-109.

Week 13 (April 3-7): DEMENTIAS and ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

- Text:
 - Woods chapters 5, 8, 12
- Additional reading:
 - Gatz, M., & Smyer, M. A. (2001). Mental health and aging at the outset of the twenty-first century. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (5th ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Week 14 (April 10-14): DEATH and DYING

- Text:
 - Hoyer & Roodin chapter 13
- Additional readings:
 - Vitaliano, P. P., Zhang, J., & Scanlan, J. M. (2003). Is caregiving hazardous to one's physical health? A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin, 129*, 946-972.
 - Lawton, M. P. (2001). Quality of life and the end of life. In J. E. Birren & K. W. Schaie (Eds.), *Handbook of the psychology of aging* (5th ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
 - Fulton, G. B. & Metress, E. K. (1997). Perspectives on death and dying. (Chap. 4: Pp. 119-167). Boston Mass: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

Week 15 (April 17-21): COURSE PROJECT AND PAPER DUE

- Course project and paper is due April 21st by 5:00 pm PST

Final (May 3-10): FINAL EXAM

- The essay final will be made available April 21st, and is due May 3rd by 5:00 pm PST

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation

Your participation in this class will make this course much more valuable for you and the class as a whole. Each week you will be asked to participate in the online Cyber class discussions. In the discussions various topics will be presented and discussed among the students. Class participation is worth 25 points (roughly 2 points per week).

Essay tests

In order to assess learning of the material presented in the readings and online lectures, you will be asked to complete two essay tests (a midterm and a non-comprehensive final). Each test will consist of seven questions of which you will be asked to answer five. Your answer to each question should be no longer than 5000 characters (including spaces) or about two type written doubled spaced pages. The test dates can be found in the *course schedule* section of the syllabus. Each test is worth 50 points.

Exercises

On seven occasions you will be assigned an exercise at the beginning of the online lecture. Your assignment will consist of applying theory or relevant concepts from assigned readings or web based materials to an identified question. Students are required to submit a 1-2 page double spaced paper (not including references), due the following week. Late papers will not be accepted. Each exercise will be worth 5 points for a total of 25 points.

Course project and paper

You will be asked to write an 15 to 20 page paper on a topic that you are interested in that is also relevant to the course material. The paper can take one of three forms: (1) literature review and proposal of future research; (2) literature review and program assessment with recommendations; or (3) literature review and treatment plan. However, I am also open to novel ideas, as long as integrity of the project is upheld.

The paper should be written in American Psychological Association format and should include the following sections: (1) *title page*; (2) *introduction* (approx. 5 to 10 pages); (3) *method* (approx. 2-4 pages); (4) *results and discussion* of possible outcomes and the implications of those outcomes (approx. 3-5 pages); and (5) *references*. Also, append tables and figures when appropriate.

In the *introduction* section you should review the relevant literature that relates to your topic. However, before doing this, include a paragraph explaining the topic and your goals of the paper (what you are going to propose). In the introduction, it is best to proceed topically as opposed to a study-by-study basis. That is, define and discuss the major sub topics citing literature that pertains to each. Towards the end of the introduction summarize the research and identify the question(s) that you want to study. Briefly summarize the method and make some predictions (1 paragraph).

The *method* section should summarize what you plan to do if you were to complete the project. Identify whether you will be conducting an experiment, survey, program evaluation, treatment evaluation, etc. Identify the participants and outline their anticipated demographics (Ns, ages, education, health, etc.). Discuss in some detail the tests or measures you will be using to assess performance. Outline the procedures (what you will be doing) in a step-by-step basis. Finally, briefly and broadly discuss the types of analyses that you would do to analyze the data.

In the *results and discussion* section should summarize some the major expected results. Discuss what the anticipated results mean in relation to the questions posed and the relevant literature. Summarize the main findings and identify anticipated shortcomings of your research.

Choosing a topic is perhaps the most important step in the process. Chose a topic that has a reasonably sized literature associated with it. Also chose a topic that is focused enough that you can delve into “meaty” issues.

When wiring the introduction and discussion sections maintain focus on the topic and avoid extraneous issues. For example, if your project is on caregiver issues and Alzheimer’s disease, minimize discussion about diagnosis or patient symptoms. That is briefly summarize the disease to illustrate the types of behaviors caregivers deal with. Do not get lost in a description of the symptoms or other minutia.

References should be cited in the text and listed in an appended reference section (counted in the page count). A minimum of 8 references will be required. The best way to obtain references/articles is to find a fairly recent article and work backwards from its reference section. The most common reference types are *edited book* and *journal article*, which are presented below, respectively:

Zacks, R. T., Hasher, L., & Li K. Z. H. (2000). Human memory. In F. I. M. Craik, & T. A. Salthouse (Eds.), *The handbook of cognition and aging (2nd ed.)*(pp. 293-357). Manwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Zelinski, E. M., & Burnight, K. P. (1997).Sixteen-year longitudinal and time lag changes in memory and cognition in older adults. *Psychology and Aging, 12*, 503-513.
The paper is worth 100 points (Introduction = 50; Method = 20; Results and Discussion = 30).

Grading

| Assignment | Points |
|--------------------------|------------|
| Exercises (5) | 25 |
| Essay Tests (2) | 100 |
| Course project and paper | 100 |
| Class participation | 25 |
| TOTAL | 250 |

| Grades | Points |
|----------|---------|
| A to A- | 250-225 |
| B+ to B- | 224-200 |
| C+ to C- | 199-175 |

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Disability Services

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructor as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to know what constitutes academic dishonesty and to abide by the rules set forth by the University. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism and the Guide to Understanding and Avoiding Academic Dishonesty. Issues that arise in this course relating to academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the policies of USC.

Late work

Assignments that are turned in after the assigned date will not be graded. The only exception to this policy is in the event of an health emergency that can be documented.