EDHD 400 Section 0101 Introduction to Gerontology
Spring 2015
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Elizabeth A. Robertson-Tchabo, Ph.D.
Office: 1117E Benjamin Building
Telephone: (301) 405-2804
Instructor E-mail: erobert1@umd.edu
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:30-2:00 p.m.; Thursday 11:30 - 1:00 p.m. or after class. Additional hours by appointment.
Graduate TA: Doireann Hobbs
E-mail: dhobbs@umd.edu
Class meeting time: Thursday 2:00 – 4:45 p.m.
Room: EGR 1202

Required Textbook:
ISBN: 10:0-205-72764-6

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, a student will:
1. Have acquired an understanding of the major theories of adult development and aging and a broad base of knowledge in terms of age differences and age changes in physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and self-processes.

2. Be familiar with environmental factors that influence adult development and aging including family variables (e.g., family structure, siblings, birth order) and socio-cultural variables (e.g., cultural differences, social class, poverty, ethnicity, and gender).

3. Have acquired an understanding of the nature of individual differences, including differences in developmental competence, physical and mental abilities, and self-regulation.

4. Have engaged in self-exploration to understand factors that are related to successful aging and to increase awareness as a participant in the aging process.
Course Requirements:

Class preparation and participation (10%)
Each student is expected:
1. To attend class and to complete all assigned reading and other activities in preparation for class.
2. To raise questions about the assigned readings and to be an active participant in class discussions and activities. Your participation will enhance your understanding of the course content. Some material which will be discussed in class is not covered in your textbook but will be included on exams. Thus, make a point to attend all lectures and presentations.

On-line Discussion (35%)
Each student will be assigned to a discussion group. Beginning the week of February 12th, students will respond to discussion questions which pertain to the assigned reading and applications of that information. These discussion questions will be posted on ELMS/CANVAS.

During the week, each student will post to ELMS three substantive comments to these discussion questions. "Substantive" may be defined as contributing factual information, describing an observation, introducing a new variable for consideration, or suggesting a different perspective for consideration in the ongoing discussion. Your initial responses to the week's 3 discussion questions must be posted no later than 11:59 p.m. on the SUNDAY following Thursday’s class. Your second and third responses to your group's discussion must be posted to ELMS/CANVAS no later than 11:59 p.m. on the following THURSDAY.

Requirements for Discussion Group posts: Make a total of 3 posts.

1. Answer ALL THREE of the discussion questions in your first post. Your responses to these discussion questions should be a minimum of 600-800 words.
   Your first post to the discussion group in which you answer the 3 discussion questions will be worth 3 points.
2. The second post MUST be a comment on one of your discussion group members' posts.
3. The third post may be:
   i. A comment on another discussion group member's post
   ii. A relevant question posed to the group
   iii. An additional comment with reference to the discussion questions, a CITATION to a relevant newspaper article, to a pertinent online article, or to a journal article AND a comment on this information.
Grading Rubric for Discussion Group Posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5     | Made at least three posts  
  • Each post was substantive  
    **AND**  
  • Followed all requirements, e.g. length of response; one post was a comment to a discussion group member’s post |
| 4     | Made at least three posts but  
  • only 2 initial responses posts were required length and substantive  
    **OR**  
  • Did not comment on group member’s post  
    **OR**  
  Made only two substantive posts |
| 3, 2, 1 | Made at least three posts  
  • Some responses were not substantive  
    **AND**  
  • Did not meet any requirements  
    **OR**  
  Made only one substantive post |
| 0     | Did not submit/completed the assignment |

**Class Activities (20%)**
To promote appreciation of various aging issues, each student will complete six assignments. The results of these activities should be posted to ELMS/CANVAS as noted. **Other students will not be able to access your postings of the results of these exercises.**

1. **Life Expectancy Questionnaires.** *(Due Thursday, February 12th, 2015).* Please complete both of the life expectancy questionnaires which you will find at the following websites.

   **www.livingto100.com**

   [http://gosset.wharton.upenn.edu/mortality](http://gosset.wharton.upenn.edu/mortality)  
   *(Please use the longer version of the life calculator.)*
Include in your response the personal projected life expectancy that was estimated for each of the questionnaires. If the projected life expectancies estimated by these questionnaires were substantially different, how do you explain this disparity?

For each of the questionnaires, what were some of the genetic factors and life style/health habits reported in the summary for each survey that affected your projected life expectancy? What health habits and/or life style changes might you consider to increase your projected life expectancy?

Please post your answers to ELMS no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, February 12th, 2015.

2. **Health Calculator Quizzes** *(Due Thursday, February 26th, 2015)*

(a) Using the following website, answer the questionnaire items honestly.

   [http://www.healthcalculators.org](http://www.healthcalculators.org)

   Please answer the questionnaires for Asthma, Bladder Control, Body mass index, Caregiver readiness, Cholesterol Reduction, Depression, Diabetes, Heart Disease Risk, HIV Risk, Nicotine Dependency, Stress, and Waist-Hip Ratio. Summarize your risk factors for these various diseases/conditions. Please also list the reasons that you may be at risk.

(b) Use the following website to assess your risk for cancer, diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, and stroke. With respect to the questionnaires that assess cancer risk, women should answer the questionnaires for bladder, breast, cervical, colon, kidney, lung, melanoma, ovarian, pancreatic, stomach, and uterine cancer. Men should assess their cancer risk for bladder, colon, kidney, lung, melanoma, pancreatic, prostate, stomach cancer.

   [www.yourdiseaserisk.wustl.edu](http://www.yourdiseaserisk.wustl.edu)

   Please summarize your risk for the respective diseases/conditions addressed by these questionnaires. Please also note the reasons that you may be at risk.

   In addition to noting your current, assessed risk, also please consider the implications of these results for your quality of life in old age. If you are at risk for these diseases/conditions currently, the risk will be carried with you as you age unless there is appropriate treatment available and you comply fully with the intervention.

   Please submit the results of your health calculator quizzes to ELMS no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, February 26th, 2015.)
3. **Personality Inventory.** *(Due Thursday, April 9th, 2015).*

Following is the website for the 300-item version (the long form) of the IPIP-NEO, an objective, standardized measure of five factors of personality. **Save your answers to each item as well as the summary of test results compiled for your profile. You will need to retain this information for your final examination.** Measurement error, misunderstandings, carelessness, and mischievous responding can invalidate the report.

http://www.personalitytest.net

In what ways do you believe that your personality characteristics affect your cognitive appraisal of your life experiences, your choice of coping responses, and ultimately your experience of aging?

Do you believe that these data provide an accurate description of your personality characteristics?

Did you answer the questions honestly or were your answers influenced by social desirability bias?

How do your personality characteristics affect your adaptation and adjustment to life events?

**Please include the interpretive summary for this questionnaire** as well as your answers to the posed questions. Please submit this assignment to ELMS by **11:59 p.m. on Thursday, April 9th, 2015.**

4. **Retirement Planning** *(Due Thursday, April 30th, 2015).*

**Retirement Planning: Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER)**

www.wiserwomen.org

Since 1998, the Administration on Aging has awarded a competitive grant to the Women’s Institute for a Secure Retirement (WISER) for the design, execution and maintenance of the National Education and Resource Center on Women and Retirement Planning. The Center’s overriding goal is to assist the Aging Network in educating women of all ages about planning for their future financial, health and long-term care needs. (Men need to know the same information!)

Two publications that are available through the Center are **Financial Steps for Caregivers: What You Need to Know about Money and Retirement** and **A Simple Guide to What Everyone Needs to Know about Money & Retirement.** The latter publication also is available in Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, and Vietnamese.
The most important thing that you can do is to start early to plan for the future. The longer you wait, the less time you have to save for retirement and the less time your retirement funds will have to grow.

After you have read these documents, please answer the following questions.

I realize that you are more concerned with starting your career, but have you given any thought to planning for retirement? Would you ask questions of a prospective employer about retirement benefits?

Do you now have a better idea of the information that is necessary to begin to plan for your retirement?

Are you planning to save enough money (or building assets) for a secure retirement?

What are the sources of your retirement income?

Estimate the monthly benefit that you will receive from Social Security, pensions from private or government employment, IRA and 401(k) retirement savings.

What steps can you take now to control your financial future?

With respect to providing care for an elderly family member, what additional information do you need to know about the individual's financial status to secure the help that he/she may require?

What steps will you take "to live beneath your means"? Remember that is how people build wealth.

Please submit your response to ELMS no later than 11:59 p.m. on Thursday, April 30th, 2015.

Examinations (20%)

These examinations are Major Scheduled Grading Events. There will be two in-class examinations. The first exam will be on Thursday, March 12th, 2015, and the second exam will be on Thursday, April 23rd, 2015. I will provide a study guide for these examinations. For the first test, the 100 multiple-choice questions will cover the material from the first six weeks of class. The second test will examine material covered from March 26th through April 16th, 2015.

Final Examination (15%)

As required by the University, there will be a final examination in this course. It is a take-home examination that will cover course material from readings, lectures, class discussions, and presentations. Throughout the semester, through various exercises, you will collect information that you will need to answer the questions on the final examination. The final examination will be due no later than 11:59 p.m. on Saturday, May 16th, 2015.
CLASS POLICIES

Academic integrity: The University of Maryland, College Park has a student-administered Honor Code and Honor Pledge. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. The code prohibits students from cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, and plagiarism. Instances of this include submitting someone else’s work as your own, submitting your own work completed for another class without permission, or failing to properly cite information other than your own (found in journals, books, online, or otherwise). Any form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and any sign of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate University officials.

Special needs: If you have a registered disability that will require accommodation, please see the instructor so necessary arrangements can be made. If you have a disability and have not yet registered with the University, please contact Disability Support Services in the Shoemaker Building (301.314.7682, or 301.405.7683 TTD) as soon as possible.

Religious observances: The University of Maryland policy on religious observances states that students not be penalized in any way for participation in religious observances. Students shall be allowed, whenever possible, to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. However, the must contact the instructor before the absence with a written notification of the projected absence, and arrangements will be made for make-up work or examinations.

Course evaluations: As a member of our academic community, students have a number of important responsibilities. One of these responsibilities is to submit course evaluations each term though CourseEvalUM in order to help faculty and administrators improve teaching and learning at Maryland. All information submitted to CourseEvalUM is confidential. Campus will notify you when CourseEvalUM is open for you to complete your evaluations for fall semester courses. Please go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will have the privilege of accessing online, at Testudo, the evaluation reports for the thousands of courses for which 70% or more students submitted their evaluations.

Missed single class due to illness: Once during a semester, a student’s self-authored note will be accepted as an excuse for missing a minor scheduled grading event in a single class session if the note documents the date of the illness, acknowledgement from the student that information provided in the note is correct, and a statement that the student understands that providing false information is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Students are expected to attempt to inform the instructor of the illness prior to the date of the missed class.*
**Major scheduled grading events:** Major Scheduled Grading Events (MSGE) are indicated on the syllabus. The conditions for accepting a self-signed note do not apply to these events. Written, signed documentation by a health care professional, or other professional in the case of non-medical reasons (see below) of a University-approved excuse for the student’s absence must be supplied. This documentation must include verification of treatment dates and the time period for which the student was unable to meet course requirements. Providers should not include diagnostic information. Without this documentation, opportunities to make up missed assignments or assessments will not be provided.

**Non-consecutive, medically necessitated absences from multiple class sessions:** Students who throughout the semester miss multiple, non-consecutive class sessions due to medical problems must provide written documentation from a health care professional that their attendance on those days was prohibited for medical reasons.

**Non-medical excused absences:** According to University policy, non-medical excused absences for missed assignments or assessments may include illness of a dependent, religious observance, involvement in University activities at the request of University officials, or circumstances that are beyond the control of the student. Students asking for excused absence for any of those reasons must also supply appropriate written documentation of the cause and make every attempt to inform the instructor prior to the date of the missed class.

**Course Schedule**


Feb. 5  Ch. 1 & 2. The Growth of Social Gerontology: The Demographic Imperative

Feb. 12  Ch. 3 The Social Consequences of Physical Aging

**SUBMIT RESULTS OF LIFE EXPECTANCY QUIZZES TO ELMS**

Feb. 19  Ch. 3. Managing Chronic Diseases and Promoting Well-Being in Old Age

Feb. 26  Ch. 5. Cultural Issues/Social Theories.

**SUBMIT RESULTS OF HEALTH STATUS QUIZZES TO ELMS**

Mar. 5  Ch. 6. Social Support

Ch. 11. Living Arrangements, Activities, and “Aging in Place”

Ch. 12. Aging and Technology

Mar. 12  **EXAMINATION 1**

Mar. 19  Spring Break

Mar. 26  Ch. 4. Personality, Mental Health and Aging
April  2  Ch. 10 Retirement and Economic Well-being

April  9  Ch. 4 Cognition: Normal Aging
        SUBMIT RESULTS OF PERSONALITY TEST TO ELMS

April 16  Cognition: Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias

April 23  EXAMINATION 2

April 30  Ch. 9 Death, Dying, Bereavement and Widowhood
        SUBMIT RESULTS OF RETIREMENT PLANNING EXERCISE

May  7   Ch. 13. Social Policy and Social Programs for Elderly Americans

May 16  LAST DAY TO SUBMIT TAKE HOME FINAL EXAMINATION