



**Sociology 444 – Sociology of Aging**

**Instructor: Prof. Anne Martin-Matthews**

**Winter Term – January - April 2015**

**Course Schedule: Classes Tuesday and Thursday 2:00- 3:20 pm**

**Location: MATH 103**

**Course Description (UBC Calendar):** Demographic, economic, and social trends associated with aging, ageism, and aging populations in North America.

**Content Description:** Sociology 444 provides an introduction to the sociology of aging, framed within the broader context of social gerontology. Aging is examined at both individual and population levels. Through lectures, discussions, and student-led in-class debates, the course examines the social construction of aging and old age. Representations of apocalyptic demography, social and family life, work and retirement, and age-related access to health and social services are examined in media, popular culture, and social policy. The course emphasizes the diversity and variability of aging and later life, with particular focus on gender and ethno-cultural diversity.

**Course Goals:** 1) to provide an introduction to the sociology of aging and social gerontology; 2) to examine the complexity and diversity of later life and old age, challenging the homogenization characteristic of popular discourse; and 3) to provide opportunities to debate controversial issues in aging, with particular emphasis on policies that impact health and social care, and work and social engagement in later life.

**Prerequisites and/or Course Restrictions:** One of SOCI 100, SOCI 200

**Instructor: Prof. Anne Martin-Matthews**

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## Required Reading:

Andrew Wister and Barry McPherson (2014), *Aging as a Social Process, Canadian Perspectives, 6<sup>th</sup> edition*. Oxford University Press. (Also available on library reserve)

## Required Viewing:

“Andrew Jenks, Room 335” (2006). (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0762070/>) (USA) 90 minute Documentary (excerpts will be shown and discussed in class).

“56 Up” (2012). <http://putlocker.is/watch-56-up-online-free-putlocker.html> (UK) 144 minute Documentary (excerpts will be shown and discussed in class).

**Format of course:** This course includes lectures, student-led debate presentations on controversial issues in aging and in-class discussion of materials. This approach enables learning both from the instructor and from one another, through the exchange of ideas in discussion and debate. The goal is to learn new information, critically examine the assumptions and implications of that information, and then to learn to apply that information in various contexts. Therefore, scheduled class time, especially in the second half of the semester, includes interactive components. A lot of course material must be covered in a short time frame, and the success of these activities depends on student engagement and participation. Classroom discussion is an important part of this course and all students will be expected to contribute to debates and ‘media minutes’. Regular attendance and knowledge of assigned reading materials is therefore essential.

## Course Assignments, Due Dates and Grading:

### Mid-term exams:

#1: Thursday, February 12, 2015: 15%

#2: Thursday, March 26, 2015: 15%

**Debate Presentation:** (Scheduled by topic, see below) 25%

**Participation:** (including debate peer-review, ‘media minute’) 15%

**Term paper:** (Due in exam period: April 17, 2015) 30%

<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Required Readings</b>
Week 1: Jan. 6, 8	Introduction to Aging as a Social Process	Ch. 1, pp. 3 – 38
Week 2: Jan. 13, 15	Population Aging: Historical and Cultural Perspectives	Ch . 2, pp. 39- 64
Week 3: Jan. 20, 22	Understanding Aging: Apocalypse Now?	Ch. 4, pp. 93-118
Week 4: Jan.27, 29	Conceptual and Methodological Approaches	Ch. 5, pp. 123-163
Week 5: Feb. 3, 5	Our Aging Selves in Social Context	Ch. 3, pp. 65-91
Week 6: Feb. 10, 12	Review	Ch. 6, pp. 164- 192
<b>Midterm #1: February 12 (Chapters 1- 6)</b>		
<b>February 16 – 20: Reading Week No Classes</b>		
Week 7: Feb 24, 25	Social Inequalities and Aging	<i>View: Andrew Jenks; remainder of 56Up</i>
Week 8: March 3,5	Kinship and Caring in Aging Families	Ch. 9, pp. 269 – 301
Week 9: March 10,12	Health Status and Health Care	Ch 7, pp. 193-230
Week 10: March 17,19	Work and Retirement	Ch 10, pp. 302-336
Week 11: March 24, 26	Social Participation and Engagement	Ch. 11, pp. 338- 368
<b>Midterm #2: March 26 (Chapters 7 -11)</b>		
Week 12: March 31, April 2	Environments and Aging	Ch. 8, pp. 232-264
Week 13: April 7, 9	End of Life Issues	Ch. 12, pp. 370-412

**Mid-term Exams:** Each mid-term is a short-answer, essay style examination, with a choice of 1 out of 2 or 3 questions based on required readings and viewing materials, and material presented in class.

**Debate Topics and Presentation Dates:** A sign-up sheet will be provided in class at end of week 2 (January 15<sup>th</sup>). Students will sign up on a first come basis. There are a maximum of four students per topic, with presentations by each in a five-minute 'debate' style. Guidelines and peer-evaluation instructions will be distributed and discussed in class. On the scheduled date of the debate, each student will hand in a 2-3 page overview of the key points and argument of the debate presentation. (This will form part of the material assessed in the grading of the debate).

Schedule of topics:

- 1) Aging & Societal Perceptions – Thursday, January 29
- 2) Aging Bodies & Aging Selves – Thursday, February 5
- 3) Gender issues in Aging – Thursday, February 26
- 4) Ethno-cultural Diversity in Aging – Tuesday, March 3
- 5) Kingship and Caring in Aging Families – Thursday, March 5
- 6) Health Status and Health Care – Thursday, March 12
- 7) Social Participation and Engagement – Thursday, March 19
- 8) Environmental Factors – Tuesday, March 31
- 9) End of Life Issues – Thursday, April 2

Please note: this schedule of topics may change, depending on course enrolment and sign-up preferences for topics. The final schedule will only be determined by end of week 2, after sign-up for topics.

In the past, debate 'statements' have included the following: *Population aging is a catastrophe for many societies; Canada provides adequate resources to help those 'aging in a foreign land'; The 'rising tide' of dementia is the most serious challenge facing Canada's aging population; Anti-aging products and advertising are forms of ageism; The care of family members is a 'private trouble' to be worked out by the individual, not a 'public issue' of concern to employers and/ or government.* These are the kinds of issues that will be debated in the class.

**Participation:** (including debate peer-review, ‘media minute’)

As part of the expectations of the participation grade, each student will participate in peer evaluation of a number of the debate presentations. In addition, in the last two weeks of the semester, there will be a rotation of two minute ‘media minute’ presentations of topics related to aging, that each student has identified in popular culture.

**Term Paper Assignment:** Due Friday, April 17, 2015 – 5pm PST.

You may elect to link the topic of your term paper to your debate presentation topic (but this is not required). Your term paper must be 10- 12 pages in length (excluding title page and reference section), typed (12 point font), and double spaced. Papers exceeding this length will not be graded. Only journal articles or scholarly book chapters may be used as references (this will be clarified further in class). Text readings may be referenced but cannot be a primary source of information.

**Additional Information:**

**Hand-out of course materials:** I do not post course notes or power-point materials online. However, each week I provide a one-two page handout of key slides and material presented in class. These hand-outs are provided in paper format and are distributed in class only.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Please review the UBC Calendar “Academic regulations” for the university policy on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Also visit [www.arts.ubc.ca](http://www.arts.ubc.ca) and go to the Students’ section for useful information on avoiding plagiarism and on correct documentation. You should **retain a copy of all submitted assignments** (in case of loss) and should also retain all marked assignments. Students have a right to view marked examinations with the instructor, providing you apply to do so within a month of receiving final grades. This review is for pedagogic purposes. The examination remains the property of the University.

**Late assignments:** Failure to submit material on the due date will result in a point reduction for the assignment for each day late, to a maximum of three points. After this time, a grade of zero (0) will be assigned for that component. Changes to this policy will only be granted for medical and other such excused absences (*bone fide* documentation is required).