



**Sociology 495B – ADV STUDIES SOCI:
Aging & Society
Instructor: Prof. Anne Martin-Matthews
Winter Term 2: January – April 2015**

Course Schedule: Classes Wednesday 1:00 – 4:00pm

Location: ANSO 202

Course Description: Aging and Society: Population aging is transforming societies and the lengthened life course is transforming lives. This course examines ways in which aging is experienced by individuals in societal context. It critically examines societal attitudes toward aging societies, focusing on such issues as changing definitions of age, family and generational relations, and health and social care. It also consider how later life is itself changing as a result of social and cultural shifts. ‘Ways of knowing about’ aging are also changing. This course introduces students to perspectives from social science and humanities, and to diverse methodologies – visual and literary – to advance understanding of later life.

Prerequisites and/or Course Restrictions: SOCI 100

Course Goals: 1) to provide an in-depth examination of select issues in the sociology of aging, focusing on the social construction of aging and old age; 2) to examine the complexity and diversity of later life and old age, challenging the homogenization characteristic of popular discourse; and 3) to examine representations of age and aging in media (literature and film), through the lens of cultural gerontology.

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Required Reading:

1. Chris Phillipson (2013.) *Ageing*. London, UK: Polity Press.

This book interrogates various understandings of aging, and provides a critical assessment of attitudes and responses to the development of aging societies, placing these in the context of a variety of historical and sociological debates. The course Soci 495B includes readings from this book on such topics as: demographic change across high- and low-income countries, theories of social aging, changing definitions of 'age', family and intergenerational relations, poverty and inequality, and health and social care in later life.

(For students with no course background in aging – such as Sociology 444 or KIN 489 or PSYC 322 – all of the chapters in this book will be required reading. For students with one of more of these courses – or some other background of courses in aging -, readings are assigned in the 'weekly topics' outline below).

2. Mieka Loe (2011). *Aging our Way: Lessons for Living from 85 and Beyond*. Oxford University Press.

This book follows the everyday lives of 30 elders – aged 85 – 102 years – living in their own homes, and primarily alone, and examines how they create and maintain meaningful lives in 'deep' old age. For students in Soci 495B, readings focus on the importance of social networks in the lives of very elderly people, and on continuity, autonomy and agency over the life course.

3. A small selection (2 -3 papers) of short entries (max 4000 words each) from the forthcoming *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (2015). This will include an introduction to the field of cultural studies of aging, illustrating how it has brought new aspects of later life into view.

Additional reading OR viewing requirements.

Each student will be required to read **ONE** literary work **OR** view **ONE** film and then examine how its cultural representation of aging links with themes and concepts considered in the class. At the beginning of the semester, students will be provided with a 'selection list' of literary and video materials from which to choose one for presentation to the class. Students will be asked to select **ONE**

from such books as: autobiographies of aging and old age: examples include Penelope Lively (2013), Dancing Fish and Amonites: A Memoir or May Sarton's (1984) At Seventy or (1997) Coming into Eighty; **OR** literary accounts of the life course (Carol Shield's The Stone Diaries; Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel; Kazuo Ishiguro's The Remains of the Day); **OR** from video materials such as *Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* (2011), *Still Mine* (2012), *Harry and Tonto* (1974); *Beginners* (2010). The final list for selection will be provided in the first class; the instructor will have copies of each book or video.

Format of course:

This is a seminar course, and therefore it is intended to be a collaborative effort in which participation, group discussions, and student presentations are vital to the success of the class. Students' attendance and active participation in class are crucial components. As an upper year seminar course, the structure and content of the course give students an opportunity to engage in more advanced and in-depth learning on the subject of aging and society. The seminar format also provides students with a smaller classroom environment experience. This fosters the development of critical thinking, and presentation and writing skills.

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. Classroom discussion is an important part of this course and all students will be expected to contribute. Regular attendance and knowledge of assigned reading materials is therefore essential.

The course is held on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00 – 4:00 pm. The first part of the class includes presentation by the instructor concerning key theoretical concepts and background knowledge. This is followed by discussion (facilitated by students) of the weekly readings. More details on the course facilitation role will follow.

EVALUATION:

Participation 10%

Discussion Facilitation 20%

Presentation 30%

Research Paper 40% (Due on the last day of class, April 8, 2015)

Participation – Each student’s participation mark will be based on the contributions made in class each week in a variety of capacities. Specifically, each student is expected to come to class having read the readings and being fully prepared to actively engage in class discussions. Therefore, a primary way in which the participation grade is determined is based on attendance. As well, each student will be expected to hand in two questions at the beginning of class based on that week’s readings (one question per reading). These questions could be something that was left unanswered by each of the articles, a thought-provoking query regarding the arguments made by the authors, or a short (one or two sentence) excerpt from the reading followed by the posing of a question.

Discussion Facilitation – Students will take turns facilitating class discussions of the weekly readings. The facilitator role has two components: first, to briefly summarize the main issues or findings of the required readings for that week; secondly, leading the class in a discussion of the readings based on a series of questions prepared in advance of the class. Ultimately, the job of the reading facilitator is to help move the class towards better understanding of the material covered in the readings and to foster active participation. Further details about this assignment will follow.

Presentations (Weeks 10 and 11 [March 18 and 25, 2015]) – Over the course of these two weeks, the class will analyze literary and visual media for themes relevant to aging and later life. For each selected reading or film, the class will consider the ways in which the identified themes reflect contemporary popular cultural views on aging and later life; relate classroom material to everyday-life experiences; and integrate academic literature with thematic analysis of visual and print media.

This component of the course will be done through ***Narrated Powerpoint and Critique:***

Students will volunteer for (or be assigned to) groups and each group will choose (or be assigned) a literary work to read, or a film to view. Each group will use the Narration feature in Powerpoint to prepare a slideshow (maximum 10 slides with a maximum presentation time of 10 minutes) to be presented to the class on Week 10 (literary works) and Week 11 (films). This presentation is **worth 10%** of the final grade. This Powerpoint presentation will describe the literary or video material and provide a critique, relating it to materials from the course (lectures, readings, discussion). All students in the group will receive the same grade for the Powerpoint unless there are exceptional circumstances. Each student in each group will prepare an individual paper **worth 20%** on the literary work or video/film and the making of the Powerpoint presentation (**due in class at the end of the relevant session on either Week 10 or Week 11**). Additional information regarding project requirements will be provided in class. No late papers will be accepted. Each student is to keep a copy of her/his paper. Total Value = 30% (10% group Powerpoint; 20% individual paper).

Research Paper – Each student will write a review of the current literature on a topic that fits within the scope of the course. Students are strongly encouraged to write a research paper on the same topic as their presentation, linking it to a ‘cultural representation of aging in literature of film’ (although this is not a requirement). The paper must be 12 to 15 pages in length (Font: Times New Roman 12 or larger), excluding references and a title page. It is **DUE IN CLASS on Wednesday, April 8, 2015**. Further details about this assignment will follow.

Additional Information:

Academic Dishonesty: Please review the UBC Calendar “Academic regulations” for UBC policies on cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty. Also visit 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 and marked assignments** (in case of loss). Students have a right to view marked examinations with the instructor, 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 results in a point reduction for each day late, to a maximum of three points. After that, a grade of zero (0) is assigned for that component. Exceptions only granted for medical and other excused absences (*bone fide* documentation is required).

WEEKLY TOPICS

-Week #1 – Introduction

During our first class, we will discuss the scope and evaluation procedures of the course. Students will sign up for one reading facilitation week as well as one presentation topic (literary or video assignment). The required readings this first week are *primarily* for those students with no background of courses in aging (but all students are encouraged to read them).

Reading: Phillipson, Ch 1, pp. 1 – 8; Ch 2, pp. 11-28.

-Week #2 –“Ways of Knowing’ about Aging.

This week we will discuss understandings of aging, from theoretical perspectives within sociology, to broader societal understandings of age and aging.

Reading: Phillipson, Ch 3, pp. 29-52 and Ch 4, pp. 53-69
Loe, “Introduction”, pp. 1 – 29.

-Week #3 – Social Construction of Aging

This week we will discuss the impact of the welfare state and other institutional factors influencing old age.

Reading: Phillipson, Ch. 5, pp. 70- 85

-Week #4 –Aging and the Life Course

This week we will discuss the life course and factors influencing the lived experiences of ‘deep’ old age.

Reading: Loe, Lessons 1 -4, pp. 30 – 107.

-Week #5 –Aging as a Social Process

This week we will discuss societal and institutional supports for deep old age, and the challenges in availability, access and appropriateness of those supports.

Reading: Loe, Lessons 5-7, pp. 108-159.

-Week #6 – Families and Generations: Ties and Change

This week we will discuss the range of close ties that underpin population ageing in the 21st century, and changes in their nature and dynamics over time.

Reading: Phillipson, Ch. Ch 7, pp. 109-126.
Loe, Lessons 8 -10, pp. 160-212.

-Week #7 – Agency and Autonomy, Transitions and Change

This week we will discuss the ways in which aging intersects with end of life and dying, with implications for the exercising of agency and autonomy.

Reading: Loe, Lessons 11-13, pp. 213-254

-Week #8: Aging and its cultural representations

This week we will discuss cultural gerontology, which is moving discourses on aging away from frailty and the dominance of medical and social welfare perspectives, to the nature and experience of later life in the broadest sense.

Reading (Class Hand-out):

- Twigg and Martin (2014), “The Challenge of Cultural Gerontology”, *The Gerontologist*: doi:10.1093/geront/gnu061

-“Widowhood and its cultural representations”, AMM, *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (in press, 2015).

-Week #9: “Everything I know about aging, I learned from...”

This week we will discuss a selection of images of aging in popular culture, and consider how these relate to concepts and constructions of aging previously discussed in the course.

Reading (Class Hand-out):

-selected entries from *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (2015)

-Week #10: Representations of Aging: According to the Word

This week students will present their narrated powerpoints and critiques of literary depictions of aging.

-Week #11 – Representations of Aging: Images and Impressions

This week students will present their narrated powerpoints and critiques of audio-visual depictions of aging.

-Week #12: Aging and Society: Into the Future

This week we will discuss the opportunities and challenge of building a society that values and nurtures the possibilities and potential of aging and old age.

Reading: Phillipson, Ch 10, pp. 166-177

Loe, Conclusion and Post-Script, pp. 254-269; 271-286

Week #13: Wrap Up