

HLTH AGE 713: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON AGING Winter 2019 Term

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Course Description

This course draws on perspectives in critical gerontology to explore issues related to the political, social, and cultural aspects of aging.

Over the years, the socio-cultural context, the meanings of aging, and public responses to older people have changed. Also changed is what it means to engage in critical scholarship with regards to aging. The study of aging now regularly reaches across inter-disciplinary boundaries to take account of social, cultural and economic perspectives, and regularly includes subjects ranging from identity, to the body, to social exclusion, space, and 'age' itself.

This course explores the foundations and developments in the fields of social and critical gerontology in order to understand current approaches to the study of aging and late life. It engages in a critical review in order to reconsider taken-for-granted assumptions and expand the boundaries of our current research and practice.

Part One begins with an exploration of the various paths and ideas in the development of critical gerontology, variations in cultural contexts and themes, and what could be considered the current state of knowledge in the field. Part Two, led by student interests, focuses on contemporary issues that challenge existing perspectives and reconsidered and new studies of aging.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- Critically appraise an area of aging (usually in accordance with their MRP or thesis)
- Identify key developments and trends within social and critical gerontology
- Situate scholarship and their work within the available critical traditions
- Highlight major tensions or contradictions in the field
- Identify emerging issues and contemporary challenges
- Appraise the available models for their capacity to respond to new forms of aging
- Demonstrate a critical approach in a subject area of their choice
- Reach across disciplines and approaches to explore alternate forms of knowledge
- Understand and discuss the implications for future planning
- Suggest change to a particular problem or practice

The study of aging from a critical perspective

The approach taken in this course draws on understandings of language, power, diverse social locations, and change over time. This includes the ways in which social and cultural forms of knowledge can impact older people in various ways. Using a

critical perspective to explore the study of aging, one can begin to understand the connections and/or contradictions that exist in our research and practice—and in particular, between formal and informal knowledge.

The course offers students the opportunity to think critically about the study of aging contemporary issues, and new/emerging forms of aging. It allows students to develop a more complex understanding of the intersections between theory, research, practice and lived experience. It is a course that allows students to exercise their curiosity and question taken for granted language and practices in social and critical gerontology.

This course is open to graduate students at the Masters and PhD level from across McMaster. Learning takes place inside and outside the classroom and is facilitated by the instructor and students themselves. In-class learning takes place through active student involvement in facilitating discussions, participating in lectures and discussions, and peer feedback. Learning outside the classroom takes place through assigned readings, critical thinking about class material, and applying what we learn to a particular area of interest in oral and written assignments.

Required Materials and Texts

- Required readings for each week are listed under the Weekly Course Schedule

Class Format

The course is structured according to an experiential and collaborative learning model. Each class will be comprised of lecture and in-class tutorial time. The lecture will focus on the content of a particular area as outlined in the schedule. The in-class tutorial time will involve exercises and activities meant to help students integrate course content and stimulate thinking. Student involvement is very important. Self-reflection, open exchange of ideas, and critical analysis are encouraged.

Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Ten weekly summaries/blog and question (15%), due weekly starting January 17th, 2019
2. Synthesis (25%), due February 28th, 2019
3. Student Led Presentations (25%), due February 28th - March 28th, 2019
4. Academic Paper (35%), due April 11th, 2019

Course Evaluation – Details

Ten weekly summaries/blog and question (15%), due weekly starting January 17th, 2019

All students are expected to complete the readings, attend classes, and take part in the discussion. On a weekly basis, each student will be required to turn in a one page

summary of the readings and one question related to the readings (remember to include your name). These will be reviewed by the instructor at mid-term (**February 14th**) and the end of the term (**April 4th**). Questions will be used to facilitate class discussion and clarify material. Students are only required to submit 10 in total. One student per week may opt to write their entry as a blog for INCG. Students not present in class cannot submit their summaries and will not receive the points for that week (unless medical note is provided).

Synthesis (25%), due February 28th, 2019

Based on the readings and class material to date, please synthesize the development of critical gerontology and the key challenges to the field, as outlined in Part One. This paper should be no longer than **5 pages double-spaced**. You may wish to consult additional sources, although this is not necessary. This assignment may be submitted by email on **February 28th**.

Student Led Presentations (25%), due February 28th - March 28th, 2019

Each week in Part Two will involve a student guiding the class through a critical examination of a particular topic related to aging. Students will select a particular subject area and explore new developments in this area, and ground their critique in an example. They will demonstrate familiarity with the conceptual/theoretical issues, and incorporate subjective interpretations that are available through literary, cultural and new media sources. It is suggested that you select the same area of study for your presentation and the final paper, but this is not required.

The assignment is to include a review of a particular policy document, film, novel, or media source related to your topic. Presentations must include descriptive and analytical elements (e.g., what does this reveal about aging; how does it challenge our current knowledge and practice?)

Students will select themes on **January 17th** at the latest. Two students per week will be permitted (although work will be independent and address a different source of knowledge). Presentations will be 15 minutes maximum with a discussion period of 30 minutes. Seminar members will assess the oral presentation according to a scale that we will develop in a class exercise. Materials are also to be submitted to the instructor on your presentation day (slides, points of discussion, etc.).

Academic Paper (35%), due April 11th, 2019

Please write an academic paper on the contemporary issue of your choice, using the critical perspective learned throughout the class. The paper must present a clear argument and evidence for your point. It must include a clear theoretical perspective/standpoint, articulation of challenges/contradictions for the field, discussion of what this means both for the study of aging, and an incorporation of the voices or experiences of older people. The paper will be 15-18 double spaced pages. There will

be in-class discussions and exercises to help guide you in the development of this paper.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Part One: The foundations and development of critical perspectives on aging and late life

Week 1 (January 10th): Introduction & Syllabus

Readings:

There are no readings for this week.

Week 2 (January 17th): Critical Perspectives on Aging

Readings:

Estes, C. L., Biggs, S., & Phillipson, C. (2003) Social theory and ageing. In social theory, social policy and ageing: a critical introduction (pp. 8-24). Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.

Moody, H. R. (1993). Overview: what is critical gerontology and why is it important? In T. R. Cole, W. A. Achenbaum, P. L. Jakobi, & R. Kastenbaum (Eds.), *Voices and Visions of Aging: Toward a Critical Gerontology* (pp. xv-xli). New York, NY: Springer.

Minkler, M. (1996). Critical perspectives on ageing: new challenges for gerontology. *Ageing and Society*, 16, 467-487.

Notes: Ten weekly summaries/blog and question begin

Last day for students to select themes for Student Led Presentations

Week 3 (January 24th): Development of Critical Approaches

Readings:

Estes, C. (1993). The aging enterprise revisited. *The Gerontologist*, 33(3), 292-298.

Walker, A. (1981). Towards a political economy of old age. *Ageing and Society*, 1(01), 73-94.

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayAbstract?fromPage=online&aid=297390&fileId=S0144686X81000056>

Phillipson, C. (2005). The political economy of old age. In Johnson, M.L., Bengtson, V.L., Coleman, P.G., & Kirkman, T.B.L (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing* (pp. 502-509). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/oculmcmaster/reader.action?docID=10298215&pg=9>

Week 4 (January 31st): 'The Cultural Turn'

Readings:

Twigg, J. & Martin, W. (2014). The challenge of cultural gerontology. *The Gerontologist*, 00(00), 1–7.

<http://gerontologist.oxfordjournals.org/content/55/3/353.short>

Featherstone, M., & Hepworth, M. (2005). Images of ageing: cultural representations of later life. In Johnson, M.L., Bengtson, V.L., Coleman, P.G., & Kirkman, T.B.L (Eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing* (pp. 354-362). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/oculmcmaster/reader.action?docID=10298215&pg=382>

Katz, S. (2010). Sociocultural perspectives on ageing bodies. In D. Dannefer and C. Phillipson (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Gerontology* (pp. 357-366). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Gilleard, C. & Higgs, P. (2000). The inevitability of the cultural turn in ageing studies. *Cultures of ageing: Self, citizen and the body*. Edinburgh: Pearson, 193-208.

Week 5 (February 7th): Macro & Micro Analysis: The Life Course Perspective

Readings:

Grenier, A. (2012). Critical perspectives on ageing and the lifecourse. In *Transitions and the Life Course: Challenging the constructions of growing old* (pp. 19-36) Bristol: Policy Press.

Elder Jr, G. H. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 4-15.

http://www.jstor.org/stable/2786971?seq=10#page_scan_tab_contents

Dannefer, D., & Settersten, R. (2010). The study of the life course: Implications for social gerontology. *The SAGE handbook of social gerontology*. London: Sage, p.3-19.

Settersten, R. (2013). Chapter one: Propositions and Controversies in Life-Course Scholarship. (pp. 15-45). In Settersten (Ed). *Invitation to the Life Course: Toward New Understandings of Later Life*.

Week 6 (February 14th): Aging Studies & the Humanities

Readings:

Cole, T. R., & Sierpina, M. (2007). Humanistic gerontology and the meaning (s) of aging. *Gerontology: Perspectives and issues*, 245-263.
https://static1.squarespace.com/static/560557d1e4b076a3e921a90b/t/56166cd1e4b02dbaff2663f/1444310225397/Humanistic_Gerontology_1-28-05.pdf

Gullette, M. (2015). Aged by culture. In J. Twigg & W. Martin (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 21-28). London and New York: Routledge.

Baars, J. (2010). Time and ageing: Enduring and emerging issues. In D. Dannefer, and C. Phillipson (Eds.), *International Handbook of Social Gerontology* (pp. 367-76). New York and London: SAGE Publishers.

Week 7 (February 21st): Midterm Recess

No class this week

Part Two: Contemporary issues and debates (*will be adjusted based on student areas of interest*)

Week 8 (February 28th): Student Led Topic(s) (Example- *The Body, Aging and Care*)

Readings:

* Readings will be selected according to student areas of interest and seminar topic

Notes: Synthesis assignment due

Week 9 (March 7th): Student Led Topic(s) (Example- *Diversity and Inequality*)

Readings:

* Readings will be selected according to student areas of interest and seminar topic

Week 10 (March 14th): Student Led Topic(s) (Example- *Retirement / “Extended Work Life”*)

Readings:

* Readings will be selected according to student areas of interest and seminar topic

Week 11 (March 21st): Student Led Topic(s) (Example- *Technology*)

Readings:

* Readings will be selected according to student areas of interest and seminar topic

Week 12 (March 28th): Student Led Topic(s) (Example- *Globalisation and Care*)

Readings:

* Readings will be selected according to student areas of interest and seminar topic

Week 13 (April 4th): Wrap-up and Discussion

Notes: Academic Paper due next week (April 11th)

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on the due date by the end of the class. In addition, please adhere to the following criteria for assignment preparation:

All assignments must include a title page with all relevant course information, adhere to the page limits specified, be formatted with 12 pt. font and standard margins, and be stapled.

The citations and references in all assignments (where applicable) must use APA style. Please consult an APA guide directly or your library e-resource.

Privacy Protection

To protect your privacy, please submit all assignments in an envelope with your name written clearly on the front of the envelope. This will ensure your privacy when picking up the assignments. Should you wish to receive your final paper by mail please provide a self-addressed envelope with proper postage.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
0-69	F

Late Assignments

Assignments must be submitted on the due date by the end of the class. A 2% reduction will be applied each day after the due date. Assignments that are not submitted within a week after the due date will automatically receive a grade of zero. Late assignments submitted to the main office must have the date stamped on the front cover.

Absences, Missed Work, Illness

Students must discuss absences, missed work, and illness with the instructor.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services \(SAS\)](#) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a RISO accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.