

**MIDDLESEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE**  
**SOCIOLOGY OF AGING**  
**SPRING 2019**

Dr. Rebecca M. Loew, Professor

**COURSE TITLE** : SOC F114, Sociology of Aging, CRN 1388

**CREDIT HOURS**: 3

**COURSE PREREQUISITES**: English 101 placement

**INSTRUCTOR/ph.#/e-mail**: Dr. Rebecca M. Loew/ 860-343-5813/ There is internal email built into the course. Please use that email.

**OFFICE LOCATION**: Snow Hall, Rm. 508. Office Hours: Tu. 1:45- 3:30 & Th. 1:45- 3:00 & by appointment

**COURSE MEETING TIME**: This is a distance learning course, and you are required to log on regularly at your convenience to complete class assignments by their due dates.

**TEXT: Aging: Concepts and Controversies**, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, by Harry R. Moody and Jennifer R. Sasser, Sage Publishing, 2017.

**SCOPE OF THE COURSE**:

This course will explore the impact of social and cultural conditions on the psychological, physiological, and social processes of aging. It will examine the demographics of aging and how the diversity of the aging population has an impact on the societal, clinical, therapeutic, and institutional responses to the needs of those ages 65 years and older.

The course will facilitate the development of students' critical thinking skills by situating the construct of "older person" in a historical context, examining differences and similarities between the roles of older persons in various cultural, ethnic, and gender groups, and by assessing the impact of changes in life expectancy and social policies on the problems and opportunities experienced by older persons.

**PARTICIPATION POLICY**: You are required to log on weekly and perform tasks and assignments online per the course outline in the syllabus. For weekly discussions, the initial message responding to the questions is due midnight, Saturday of the week. The response to two (2) other students is due midnight, Sunday of the same week. All other assignments are due according to the course outline. Your classmates depend on your timely submissions as part of their learning. Therefore, credit will not be given for late submissions.

**CLASS CANCELLATION POLICY**: Not applicable

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**:

Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. *Recognize the scope of social gerontology*. Define aging, gerontology, and geriatrics. Describe the aging framework and the person-environment perspective. Discuss the important demographic trends affecting the U.S. and other developed countries. Explain the research methods and designs for studying older adults as well as the importance of representative samples for gerontological (and other social science) research.
2. *Social Theories of Aging*. Understand the theoretical question of what is the optimal way for older persons to relate to their environments. Explore and apply the major social theories of aging, including both micro theories (activity, continuity, social constructionist theories) and macro theories (modernization, age stratification, political economy, and feminist theories).

3. *Cognitive Changes.* Discuss the research related to cognitive functions and normal aging. Identify the individual and environmental factors that influence intelligence. Explain how we learn and how aging affects the learning process. Describe the environmental factors that affect how older people learn. Discuss the current understanding of wisdom and creativity in old age. Summarize cognitive retraining and other ways to help older adults improve their learning and memory skills.
4. *Personality and Mental Health.* State the normal developmental changes and stability in personality across the life span. Explain key person-environment interactions that affect personality development. Identify older persons' responses to life events and stressors. Note the predictors and critiques of successful aging and active aging and resilience. Outline the major psychological disorders and dementias in old age.
5. *Family Relationships and Social Support Systems.* Apply the life course perspective and the person-environment model to older adults' informal social support systems, including elders' families, friends, and neighbors. Discuss the central role of informal caregiving within the long term care system, including issues related to benefits and costs of caregiving, the gendered nature of family care, caregivers of elders with dementia or Alzheimer's disease, policies and programs to support family caregivers, and direct care workers in long term care.
6. *Living Arrangements.* Outline the impact of the natural and built environment on older persons' social functioning. Illustrate the influence of an aging population on community planning and housing. Describe the new options in long-term care for frail elders. List the services to help elders remain independent in the community and the new technology to help aging in place.
7. *Work and Retirement.* Define and critique the concept of productive aging. Describe retirement as a status and a social process that affect economic well-being, roles, and activities in old age. Explain the employment status, socioeconomic status, and sources of income for older adults. Summarize the activity patterns common among older adults.
8. *Health and Health Care.* Explain the major theories of biological aging. Summarize the research on reversing the effects of aging. Identify the impact of age-related changes on different organ systems and the implications of these changes for older people's ability to interact with their social and physical environment. Discuss the ways in which the environment can be modified to help accommodate the biological changes experienced by most older persons. Identify the social and psychological factors that affect perceptions of health and use of health services. Summarize the use of health services by older adults. Explain the concept of health promotion and its benefits in old age.
9. *Dying, Death, and Bereavement.* Discuss the dying process and its meaning to the dying person. Understand the conditions for care of the dying and pain management. Identify the ethical, medical, and legal issues raised by developments in life-sustaining technologies. Note the legal options of advance directives available to individuals.
10. *Economics of Aging.* Understand the changing economic status of the aged including the diversity in the aging experience. Consider the dynamics of income inequality in later life and its consequences for certain social strata. Discuss patterns of gender inequality. Discuss racial and ethnic inequality among the aged.
11. *Social Policies.* Provide an overview of the history of aging policies in the U.S. Explain Social Security benefits, Medicare, Medicaid, and direct social services funded through the Administration on Aging and Title XX. Contemplate future directions in aging policies.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION:**

### Competence/Assessment

Competence will be demonstrated in each chapter:

- Examinations
- Discussion Board participation

### Course Requirements and Evaluation Methods

Weekly discussions (15 discussion assignments; 10 points each)

150 points

Exams (2 exams; 75 points each)  
TOTAL

150 points  
300 points

### Weekly Discussions

Every week, you will be asked by the instructor to answer questions relating to assigned chapter on the week discussion board. You also need to respond to the posts of at least TWO classmates. YOUR RESPONSES TO YOUR CLASSMATES SHOULD BE CONNECTED TO COURSE CONTENT. A weekly discussion assignment is worth 10 points.

- The initial message responding to the instructor's questions is due midnight (11:59 p.m.), Saturday, of each week.
- The responses to at least two classmates is due midnight, Sunday, of each week.

You will be graded on how completely you answer the assigned discussion questions and by the quality of your response to other students' postings. Refer to the grading rubric for a specific explication of how points are assigned to discussion responses. Your use of critical thinking skills, the research you conduct on the discussion board questions (drawn primarily from the course text), and your application of the readings will be assessed. You will have one week to conduct research and post. The discussion board is available Monday 12:01 am to the following Sunday Midnight EST. *No late postings will be accepted.*

The exams will draw from material in the text and readings, films, discussions, and instructor comments for the calendar period covered by the exam. They will be open for one week and students will have one two-hour session to complete each one. **The first exam is due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, March 10** and the **second exam is due by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, May 15.**

**Grading System:** *NO make-up will be given for missed exams or quizzes, unless the absence is excused. Please plan accordingly.*

Letter Grade	Percent Grade	4.0 Scale (BOR Policy)
A	93.0 - 100.0	4.0
A-	90.0 - 92.9	3.7
B+	87.0 - 89.9	3.3
B	83.0 - 86.9	3.0
B-	80.0 - 82.9	2.7
C+	77.0 - 79.9	2.3
C	73.0 - 76.9	2.0
C-	70.0 - 72.9	1.7
D+	67.0 - 69.9	1.3
D	63.0 - 66.9	1.0
D-	60.0 - 62.9	0.7
F	Less than 60.0	0.0

### IMPORTANT COLLEGE POLICIES!! PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!

For information about the college's policies and procedures regarding academic honesty, accessibility/disability services, attendance, audio-recording in the classroom, grade appeals, plagiarism, religious accommodations, weather and emergency closings, and more, please go to the following website: <http://mxcc.edu/catalog/academic-policies>



## **TAP COMPETENCY (designated)**

**Social Phenomena Knowledge/Understanding:** Students will develop an increased understanding of the influences that shape a person's or group's attitudes, beliefs, emotions, symbols, and actions, and how these systems of influence are created, maintained, and altered by individual, familial, group, situational or cultural means.

1. Explain social, organization, political, economic, historical, or cultural elements that influence and are influenced by individuals and groups.
2. Summarize different theories and research methods used to investigate social phenomena.
3. Explain ethical issues pertaining to social contexts and phenomena.
4. Explain issues of diversity within and across cultures.
5. Apply concepts or theories of social phenomena to real world situations, (e.g., service learning, group work, clubs, organizations, civic engagement, conflict resolution, and internships).

**COURSE OUTLINE**

<b>Weeks</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments (Readings in textbook)</b>
Weeks 1, 1/26 & 27	A Life Course Perspective on Aging	Prologue & Basic Concepts 1. Welcome and Introductions
Week 2 2/2 & 3	The Meaning of “Old Age”	Controversy 1
Week 3, 2/9 & 10	Why Do Our Bodies Grow Old?	Controversy 2
Week 4, 2/16 & 17	Intelligence and Creativity in Old Age	Controversy 3
Week 5, 2/23 & 24	Aging, Health Care, & Society	Basic Concepts II
Week 6, 3/2 & 3	Should we Ration Health Care for Older People?	Controversy 4
Week 7 , 3/9 & 10 <b><i>Spring Break, 3/11- 17</i></b>	Should Families Provide for Their Own?	Controversy 5 <b>TEST 1 (Basic Concepts I- Controversy 5) <u>Due 3/10</u></b>
Week 8, 3/23 & 24	Should Older People be Protected from Bad Choices?	Controversy 6
Week 9, 3/30 & 31	Should People Have the Choice to End Their Lives?	Controversy 7
Week 10, 4/6 & 7	Social & Economic Outlook for an Aging Society	Basic Concepts III
Week 11, 4/13 & 14	Should Age or Need be the Basis for Entitlement?	Controversy 8
Week 12, 4/20 & 21	What is the future of Social Security?	Controversy 9
Week 13, 4/27 & 28	Is Retirement Obsolete?	Controversy 10
Week 14 , 5/4 & 5	Aging Boomers: Boom or Bust?	Controversy 11
Week 15, 5/11 & 12	The New Aging Marketplace: Hope or Hype?	Controversy 12
<b>DUE Wed., MAY 15</b>	<b>Test 2</b>	<b>Test 2 (Controversy 6- 12)</b>