Gerontology 402: THE AGING NETWORK

(Spring 2014)

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PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the programs that form a network of support for the elderly and assist them in living independently and purposefully. While learning about the appropriateness of every available service for different persons and situations, the emphasis will always be on offering options and opportunities to the elderly for self-direction.

The core function of the course will be to explore the inner workings of the most common programs: regulations governing the delivery of services, relevant issues, gaps and barriers, as well as model projects and results from aging research. The course also explores who uses these resources and how they are delivered. By combining both theory and practice, the course will allow students to better understand the issues and problems related to the continuum of care of services for aging persons and prepare them to offer their expertise in any of the programs that form the aging network.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The goal of the course is to enable students to understand the network of services and programs available to motivate and support older persons as participants in their community. Students will:
1) Learn the basics of every social service program that constitutes the “aging network” (funding, policies, service delivery, requirements, challenges, program support, etc.).
2) Understand the social and psychological dynamics of help-seeking behavior: why people benefit from, do not access, or refuse to accept services.
3) Gain greater knowledge of current services, best practice models, gaps in services, unmet needs, and appropriate as well as inappropriate delivery of services.
4) Explore in-depth two different topics of interest in the aging network by means of case studies, learning activities and writing a research paper.

The course has relevance for social workers, health professionals and anyone concerned about or serving the aged. To assist in bringing to reality the concepts learned, the course will include guest speakers representing the network of services and some related videos.

REQUIRED TEXT:

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

A. Participation

Attendance - Each student is expected to attend class with no more than 3 absences, and to actively participate in class discussions and activities. For every absence, there will be a deduction of 10 points from the grade under “participation” (half time attendance counts as half absence, 5 points). To have the points restored in the case of an absence, the student will need to submit a three page summary incorporating both the assigned book reading and powerpoint for that day.

At the fourth absence, the attendance grade will drop to 50 points and there will not be an option of submitting any more make up work.

Class Participation - Students are expected to complete all exercises, assignments and tests by the dates identified in the syllabus. Note that for late assignments there will be a deduction of 10 points from the maximum possible 100 points assigned to that task, and after 2 weeks, the point deduction will be 20. No papers or make up work will be accepted after the last day of class. The final paper cannot be turned in late. If a student misses the final exam, the grade for it will be 0 points. There will be no retro-grading after the final session/final exam. THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP FINAL EXAMS. Job related excuses and other conflicting schedules are not acceptable. Students are responsible for arranging their schedules around classes.

Students are expected to a) interact with lecturers through the use of appropriate questions or discussion; and b) read all assignments before the session in which the material will be discussed. I realize that some students are more vocal than others; however, efforts to participate in class will be recognized and rewarded. (Sleeping, reading unrelated materials, web surfing, text messaging, etc… are insulting behaviors). No laptops will be allowed when we have a guest speaker.

It is the student’s responsibility to access the “blackboard” site for this course at least on a weekly basis. Additional readings might be posted there. Blackboard will also include advanced copies of the powerpoints presented in class. Note that the powerpoints will not be complete so that students have to be in class and take notes. I will not be providing notes on incomplete powerpoints missed (you might need to get them from a fellow student).

Incompletes - University policy on "incomplete" is restricted to situations where a student is doing passing work in a course, but is unable to complete course requirements due to significant, documented circumstances beyond the student's control. There are strict guidelines for incompletes and the student is responsible for understanding the requirements.

B. Case Study & Learning Activities: Due February 26th.

In order to stimulate critical thinking and to understand the many challenges inherent in providing services, each student will choose a chapter of the textbook and complete all the activities listed at the end (Case Study plus Learning Activities). A typed (double spaced) 6+ page report will be submitted (1 inch margins; times-new roman, 12 point). The questions and the learning activities from the textbook should be briefly included in the paper with their number at the beginning of every section. Papers will be graded based on completeness and in-depth review of issues and the answers to the questions. Creativity will also be rewarded and evaluated: for “learning /special activities” one should show resourcefulness and not have to rely on guidance from the professor.
In order to avoid duplication, each student should list their choices on Blackboard, under Discussion Board (Chapter #, Title), “first come first served.” In case of a large class, two students can pick the same chapter.

**Alternate Option: Site Visits**

The student will visit two different (i.e. not two nursing homes) social service agencies or organizations helping older persons. For a better learning opportunity, visit a place/service you’ve never been involved in (internship sites are not allowable!). As part of the site visit, try to “participate” in the activities (i.e. eat a meal with seniors, visit with a participant, ride along with a social worker, attend a board or staff meeting, etc.). A typed (double spaced) 3-4 page narrative report will be completed for each visit (see guidelines below). In order to avoid several students visiting the same agency, enter your choice on Discussion Board: “Site Visit to X & X agencies”

**Guidelines for conducting a site visit:**
Ask the five typical questions of basic journalism:
WHO: Who is the service provider. What are their goals. Staffing
WHAT: What is the service or services provided (what makes it special, participant/family feedback?). Cost to client. Funding support.
HOW: In what ways are services provided. How is quality measured. Any evaluations.
WERE: Where is service delivery conducted and where are the clients.
WHEN: When are services available; eligibility, age-based or needs-based programs.

Some additional questions to be asked during the site visit:
How do people find out or come to the services.
How are people screened and then terminated from receiving services?
What kinds of services do they receive? Are there other services that should be provided?
Where are the gaps in the delivery of service?
What recommendations can be made to improve these programs?
Give some comments as a result of interaction with workers/participants.
Remember to do your homework beforehand regarding the agency, i.e. study their web site.
Afterwards send a “thank you” note.

**C. Research Paper. Due April 30th.**

**Topic Selection:** Each student will select a topic (service or issue) relevant to the aging network (different from the “case study” done previously). The themes should be specific rather than general (ex. “home equity conversions” or “shared housing” rather than housing programs; “challenges to recruit older volunteers” rather than senior volunteer programs).

In addition to “direct services,” other components of the aging network could be investigated as they relate to improving the network of services for older persons. Examples of additional areas to research could be: role of state and federal agencies; national and advocacy organizations; role of religious organizations; role of the business community; business and marketing issues in the delivery of social services; integration of services, partnerships; internet aging service organizations.

Topics chosen should be listed on Blackboard under Discussion Board (Title or Subject). No duplications. Please be specific so other students have more options.
**Requirements for the research paper:** Each paper will be between 6 – 8 pages (times new roman, or similar, 12 point font; 1 inch margins, double spaced) not counting cover, table of contents, references and appendices. Tables, graphs, pictures, supplementary documentation, etc. go in the appendix. You need a minimum of 5 scholarly sources (research based books and journal articles, not older than 2004) – no quotes from the textbook! – in addition to any web-based information that you find, daily publications and magazines, etc.

The paper cannot include a repetition of what the service is, as explained in the textbook or powerpoints. Rather, it should use library research, census data, other textbooks, agency information, the internet, etc. In addition to an Introduction and a Conclusion/Summary, the paper should: a) highlight current needs, problems (backed by facts and figures); b) current services and its availability; c) identify gaps in service delivery systems; d) identify barriers and access issues (including funding); and e) offer recommendations for improving services and for the future.

The paper should be divided into logically connected sections with headings for each one (include a Table of Contents that includes the sections -like a mini-outline). Paper should show evidence of research and an understanding of the issues. Creativity of thought process and understanding of the issues is what should be reflected in the paper (comparing articles and authors, and staying away from personal and undocumented opinions). A mere description of the service and a compilation of quotes doesn’t do it. A rubric as well as a sample outline will be made available.

Plagiarism and not “referencing” properly is unacceptable and has severe academic consequences. Plagiarism is the act of using someone else’s words, sentences, or ideas and passing them off as your own without giving credit by citing the original source. It includes piecing together phrases, ideas, and sentences from a variety of sources to write an essay; also, submitting your paper in more than one course. I assume that every student has taken the plagiarism quiz at [http://infotutor.sdsu.edu/plagiarism/index.cfm?p=graphic](http://infotutor.sdsu.edu/plagiarism/index.cfm?p=graphic)

**D. Tests**

There will be two tests. A mid-term (March 12) and a final (May 14). Both will include a combination of true/false and multiple choice format dealing with the issues from the readings, lectures and class presentations and discussions (this includes guest speakers and videos).

**E. Grading** - The standard university grading scale will be used. (A = 95 to 100; A- 90 to 94.99; B+ 86.66 to 89.99 and so forth (no “rounding up” to the highest grade!).

Proportions of the final grade.

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<td>Case Study/ Activities</td>
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COURSE OUTLINE AND TOPICS

Jan. 22: Course Overview. Introduction
Jan. 29: Chapter 1 & 2: New Era Demographics. Legislative Foundations
Feb. 5: Chapters 3 & 4: Patterns of Services & Information & Referral
Feb. 12: Chapter 5: Volunteer and Intergenerational Programs
Feb. 19: Chapters 6 & 7: Senior Centers and Educational Programs
Feb. 26: Chapters 8 & 9: Employment and Income Programs
(Case Study/ Site Visit Paper Due)
March 5: Chapter 10: Nutrition and Meals Programs
March 12: Mid-Term Test
March 19: Chapter 11: Health Care & Wellness
March 26: Chapter 12: Mental Health Services
April 9: Chapter 13: Legal Services
April 16: Chapter 14 & 15: Transportation and Housing
April 23: Chapters 16 & 17: Care Management & Home Care.
April 30: Chapter 18: Respite Care & Caregiving. (Paper Due)
May 7: Chapter 19: Long-term Care Services
May 14: Final Exam