PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION

The XXIst. century might as well be called the Century of Aging. We are on the leading edge of a major demographic and health revolution that will reshape all aspects of human life. Increasing life expectancy is a reality. Living into a very healthy old age is a possibility for most everyone. The fact is that the process of aging involves various personal changes and it is also impacted by historical events and social values. Unfortunately, not everyone sees aging as a positive event. There are too many stereotypes that tarnish the great potential and the many contributions possible during the most creative years of our lives. Age discrimination – ageism- in its many forms is quite common in our society.

How the aged are viewed and treated in any society is based on the traditions, expectations and values of that particular group. Cultural attitudes and values are reflected in art, advertising, marketing, and media such as movies, newspapers/magazines, television, musical recordings and web sites. There is a need to study, understand and, often, question the accuracy of the images of aging promoted by our society. Similarly, we should get involved in changing unacceptable portraits of any group (the elderly, in this case) in our society.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The primary goal of this course is to sensitize students to the fact that personal attitudes toward older people and their outlook on the aging process are shaped by the constant, and sometimes negative, images presented through various media sources. A secondary goal is to enable students to understand the role of media in shaping societal attitudes toward the aged. There is a need to find ways of changing the potentially negative impact of media on values and cultural attitudes that impact the aging processes. A final goal is to recognize that the quality of life for people of all ages depends largely on choices made by the individual and the society.

Objectives: Students will:

1. Understand that increased longevity presents opportunities as well as problems for individuals and society, depending on how the challenges are perceived and met.
2. Learn practical ideas to construct a sense of passion and meaning in later life for self and for other older persons.
3. Be exposed to practical situations involving the media treatment of older people and learn how to distinguish between facts and stereotypes.
4. Develop research-based tools for understanding and analyzing the implications of negative or positive media presentations.
5. Be able to explain the main components of successful aging.
TEXT AND READINGS
The concepts presented in this course are not summarized in a formal textbook. There is an easy-read book which is required: “The Upside of Aging” (How long life is changing the world of health, work, innovation, policy and purpose), edited by Paul H. Irving, Wiley & Sons, Hoboken, New Jersey (2014).
There will be additional required readings, all of them will all be posted on blackboard ahead of the class dates. The total compilation of articles posted will constitute a highly comprehensive “reader” for this course.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Readings and lectures are the basis for the course, and students are encouraged to become involved in class (question, disagree, bring articles, etc.) and share views on readings, observations and personal experiences. Portions of the class will also include exercises, and watching videos. Some experts in different media and related professions might be invited to share views about the state-of-the-art in their respective professions and organizations as they relate to issues of aging.

It is the student’s responsibility to access the “blackboard” site for this course at least on a weekly basis. Required readings, reference web sites and media materials will be posted there. Blackboard will also include advanced copies of the powerpoints used in class to facilitate note-taking. Note that the powerpoints posted will not be complete so that students have to be in class and take notes.

1. ATTENDANCE, EXERCISES, LATE ASSIGNMENTS

*Attendance* - Regular attendance is necessary to fully benefit from all aspects of the class. There are concepts and ideas that cannot be completely presented and explained by means of reading a few pages. All the information shared in class, including guest speakers, videos, etc… will be required for the tests. (Sleeping, reading unrelated materials, web surfing, text messaging, etc… are discourteous behaviors). No laptops/tablets will be allowed on days when we have a guest speaker.

I understand that sometimes students decide not to come to class for a variety of reasons. But I do believe in the value of class attendance. I will check class attendance, mostly by means of exercises/reflections and sign in sheets.

*Exercises/ Reflections* - This section of the grade covers special videos and other exercises done in class. Not doing a class exercise will deduct 5 point from this section. Some exercises, like watching a video, might be completed later if not present in class and the points will be re-instated after submitting a two page summary of the video and/or a summary of the readings and powerpoint assigned for that day. No more than three absences can be made up. The deadline to turn in any late “class exercises” is the final day of class, i.e. the week before the final.
**Late Assignments** - Students are expected to complete and turn in all assignments at class time by the dates identified in the syllabus. For assignments turned in late, there will be a deduction of 10 points from the maximum possible 100 points assigned to that task, and, after 1 week, the deduction will be 20 points; after that, they will not be accepted. No final “research papers” will be accepted after the due date. If someone doesn’t take an exam, they’ll get 0 points on it. There will be no retro-grading after the final session/final exam. THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP FINAL EXAMS. Job related excuses and conflicting schedules are not acceptable. Students are responsible for arranging their schedules around classes.

**Incompletes** - University policy on “incompletes” 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 and the student is responsible for understanding the requirements.

2. **ESSAY ON “My Good Old Age”**

Write an essay on what you think will constitute “a good old age” for you (or, more generally, what “successful” aging means for you). Write 4 or more pages (double spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins). Hardcopy due by class time.

Critical components to complete the project successfully:

a) *The focus should be on how you’ll age*; what’s essential for you; what will give meaning to your life in old age. Write it using first person.

b) To get started, you must first *interview three or more older persons* (70 or older, who are not friends or family members; no need to give their real names) about their perceptions of the aging process. Blackboard will have detailed guidelines as well as sample questions.

c) *The essay should combine the views of your interviewees with your opinions* —i.e. be a result of personal reflection and all the interviews— and be related to the specific topics being discussed in this class. **Note** that the essay is not a summary of responses to the interview! but do include some worthwhile quotes (“pearls of wisdom”) from your interviews, to support your opinions.

d) Make sure the paper has an introductory paragraph, next the narrative and support for your ideas, and a concluding paragraph. This is not a research paper. Do not quote from books or articles (only from the older persons you’ve interviewed). Try to present a balanced and realistic view of your old age.

e) Essay grades will be based on following all the requirements above and, also, on completeness (i.e. giving a realistic and balanced view), clarity, and creativity of write up (a rubric will be provided in advance).

Assignment is due on or before **March 3rd. at 4:00 pm**.

3. **RESEARCH PROJECT**

Complete a “special project” where you research a specific area of images of aging in society. This project is a written paper that, in addition to reviewing and analyzing some research articles, may involve personal creativity and active involvement in a specific issue. Students should think of original ways to approach their chosen subject area. When the subject for a project is chosen you should enter the topic in blackboard, under Discussion Group. This will avoid having two
people pick the same topic (it’s on a first come first served basis), no duplications allowed. At least 5 scholarly sources – books, research journals, not older than 2004, should have been consulted and listed in the appendix. Blackboard and lecture materials can be briefly referenced, if needed, but do not count as part of the 5 minimum required. The same applies to information from web sites (they are not journals!). Research will be summarized in a paper of 6 or more pages (double spaced, 22-23 lines per page, Times New Roman, 12-point font, 1 inch margins), not counting cover, appendices, references and supplementary information. Any generally acceptable style may be used as long as it is clear and consistent (APA, MLA, etc.). A hardcopy is due by class time. The paper should include the following items/sections:

1. Introduction: What you’ll do; your thesis; why the subject area was chosen; relevance/relationship to the course; issues/problems that need to be addressed.
2. The history of that area’s treatment of elderly issues and/or background information from literary/research sources – this is not a summary of some articles.
3. Include “items” (examples, people’s views, pictures, results of your own surveys, etc.) from real life that can either confirm, validate, or question, illustrate what research and experts say;
4. Negative and/or positive impact of what was presented on attitudes toward the elderly;
6. Appendices (include complete references/bibliography, pictures, questionnaires, results of surveys in tables/charts, supporting documentation, etc.).

As you work on your paper, keep on asking yourself: “what does this have to do with, how does it relate to, images of aging?”

Papers will be graded based on originality/creativity, content, work difficulty, compliance with the requirements listed above, and course relevance (spelling & grammar, transitions, source documentation, etc. also count).

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 in http://infotutor.sdsu.edu/plagiarism/index.cfm?p=graphic

Papers’ due date is on or before April 21st. at 4 PM, in a hard –paper- copy. Late papers not accepted.

PROJECT EXAMPLES (Note that these are only suggestions. There are hundreds of possibilities. Be creative)

1. Analysis of advertisements, commercials, or cartoons.
2. Review and analysis of aging related songs, or poetry, or stories.
3. Magazines and newspapers’ coverage and views of aging issues
4. How is love and intimacy in later years presented in the movies?
5. Health care and aging: views (ageism?) of health care professionals and administrators
6. Review of children’s books/literature (or TV cartoons) about the elderly
7. Design a comprehensive media campaign to promote “positive aging” or any other positive aspect of aging.
8. Images of aging throughout history (as reflected in literature, or art, etc).
9. Stand-up comedians and their views/treatment of the elderly
10. Cosmetic surgery: latest research and views of society and/or of older persons
11. A package (web site, brochures, ads) to encourage businesses to hire older workers.
12. Write a children’s book about aging. Develop background material, a teacher’s guide.
13. Views of older adults from a certain group (i.e. students, employers, finance experts, clergy, etc.).
14. Views of aging based on a certain religion (or a holy book)
15. Development of an aging specific web site (or a new magazine!) to address some of the ageism issues discussed in class.

4. TESTS: There will be two tests: a mid-term (March 17) and a final review (May 5) that covers material since the mid-term. Both will include a combination of true/false and multiple choice questions dealing with the issues from the readings, lectures and class presentations and discussions (this includes guest speakers and videos).

5. GRADING: Be assured that I want students to learn and to receive the good grades you deserve. So please make an appointment with me should you have undue difficulty with your work in the course. Don’t wait till it’s too late. Final grades are the result of several components that you put together during the semester. I will not adjust the final grade.

University guidelines, as spelled out in the grading system of the current catalog will be followed (A = 95 to 100; A- 90 to 94.99; B+ = 86.66 to 89.99 and so forth).

Proportions of the final grade:
- Exercises 10%
- Paper/ Essay 15%
- Research Project 25%
- Tests (each 25%) 50%

IMAGES OF AGING IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY
COURSE TOPICS AND OUTLINE
(Daily content listed might change as the course progresses. If so, the instructor will always notify the class in advance)

Jan. 21: Course Overview. Introduction
Readings: “Overview” (Blackboard); Foreword and Preface from book

Jan. 28: Definitions, Major Myths and Types of Ageism

Feb. 4: The Meaning of Chronological Age
Readings: Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 from book

Feb. 11: The New Aging: Guest Speaker
Readings: Chapter 4 (book); “Why gerontologists should join forces with the business community” (blackboard)

Feb. 18: Individual and Social Sources of Ageism
“Individual & Social Sources of Ageism,” “The Aged and Cultural Change;” “A Terror Management Perspective on Ageism.” (Blackboard)

Feb. 25: The Power of Culture. Social Influences
Readings: “Aged in Culture”; “5 Must-do’s as age wave bears down on the USA” (Blackboard); Chapter 5 (book)

Readings: “Marketing to Mature Persons;” “Aging boomers befuddle marketers aching for $15 trillion prize” Blackboard); Chapter 6 (book)

March 10: Impact of Media. Views of Aging as presented in TV, Movies, Songs, Literature, Art, and Photography.
Readings: “Media Takes: On Aging. A styleguide for journalism, entertainment and advertising;” “Aging and the Media;” “Ageism in Literature” (Blackboard)

March 17: Mid-Term

March 24: Work and Income: Availability. Discrimination?
The New Meanings of Retirement

April 7: Families interactions with elders.
Intimacy/sexuality in old age
Readings: “The diversity of American families,” “Intimacy in old age,” “Never too old –for sex or AIDS” (Blackboard)

Readings: “Ageism said to erode care given to elders,” “Second-class care: discrimination against older patients,” “Life in the age of old, old age”

April 21: The Anti-Aging Industry (Research Project Papers Due)
Readings: “Is there an anti-aging medicine?” “Boomers will be spending billions to counter aging” (Blackboard)
April 28:  * Changing the Person: Successful Aging
Readings: “The new aging: Self construction and social values”
(Blackboard); Chapter 16 (book)
* Changing Society: Elders’ Involvement & Contributions
Chapters 9 & 15 (book)

May 5: Final Review (since mid-term)

Special Note for Students with Disabilities
If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that I cannot provide accommodations based upon disability until I have received an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.