

Soci 4650. The Sociology of Aging.  
Dr. James J. Dowd  
[weberian@uga.edu](mailto:weberian@uga.edu)

Office Hours. Mon, Tues: 3:15 - 4:15.  
Baldwin Hall, Rm. 320  
Phone: 542-3231/2421

## Course Syllabus<sup>1</sup> Fall 2009

The focus of this course will be on the sociological and social psychological factors that affect human aging, the age structure of social systems, and age-group social policies. We are particularly interested in this course with the ways in which these factors influence aging and age relations in the U.S. and elsewhere. We will also attempt to achieve a balance between the purely theoretical and methodological issues involved in research on aging, and issues that are concerned more directly with social policy and other "applied" concerns.

### Getting Started

In order to get off on the right foot in this course, it is important that you complete each of the following tasks:

Explore the WebCT page set up for this course. This website will serve as the definitive source of information about the course. Please refer to its pages for the most up-to-date information, links to assignments, supplementary material, and much more.

Obtain a copy of the book we'll be reading this semester. [A Place Called Canterbury](#) is available at the university bookstore but you might find a cheaper copy on Amazon.com or another internet book store.

Get the Readings. All of the readings are available in paper and electronic format (e-reserve through GIL) either from the reserve desk in the main library or, in a few cases, from the internet. You are free to get the readings any way you wish, but please note that computer problems are not an excuse for not reading. If you are having trouble getting the readings in electronic format please go to the reserve desk where you can get a hard copy or contact one of your classmates who may already have printed out a copy. Since we won't be using any of these readings until a few weeks into the course, you have some time on this. The password for e-reserve is *socaging*.

### Course Requirements.

The most essential requirement for this course is to be in class every meeting prepared to discuss the issues raised by the required reading. My approach to our classroom sessions is to integrate lectures with discussion. I will present ideas and information that will introduce and supplement material covered in our texts but also material on subjects not covered in our required texts. It is essential that you come to class ready to take part in these discussions.

---

<sup>1</sup> University regulations require that I remind you that a course syllabus is a flexible document. According to our Vice President for Instruction, the syllabus "is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary."

Doing this not only will make our class time more enjoyable but will also prepare you for the tests and improve your final grade.

### *Tests*

There will be two tests in this course, in addition to a final exam. The tests will include both short-answers and essay questions. The first test is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup>, and the second test for Tuesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The final exam is scheduled for Friday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 3:30 – 6:30. Each test is worth 20% of the final course grade; the final exam counts 30% of the grade. All of the tests will be divided approximately equally between an take-home essay and an in-class test.

### *Papers*

There are two short writing assignments in this course in addition to the essays written for the tests and exam. The first paper is worth 10% of the grade; the second paper counts 15%. For the first paper, outside sources are not necessary. Each of the two topics requires more an application of thought, imagination, and insight. The second topic, however, will require the usual documentation and library research. Here are the two topics for the first paper from which you will select one:

1. Although people of the same age share much in common, period and cohort influences often create a different aging experience. When your parents were the age that you are now, they were similar to you in some ways but also different. Describe some of the principal ways in which your parents may have been similar to you when they were, say, twenty years old. Also describe some of the likely differences between your experience of being the age you are now and your parents' experience of being the same age.
2. Imagine yourself twenty-five years from now (2034). What do you imagine some of the positive aspects of being that age will be? What might be some of the less positive aspects of being that age? Now imagine yourself fifty years from now (2059). Again, what do you imagine some of the positive aspects of being that age will be? What might be some of the less positive aspects of being that age?

For the second paper topic, students will write on one of the following topics:

1. Is age a source of stratification in developed societies such as the United States? Explain your answer.
2. The experience of aging (which is another way of describing the experience of living) is profoundly affected by social class. Analyze what you consider to be the central ways in which social class impinges upon the aging experience.
3. What are some of the principal ways that people become more similar over time? What are some of the ways that people become more different? Do people become more similar or more different as they age from midlife into old age?
4. Is the experience of aging different for men and women? Support your analysis with evidence and argument from the published literature.

5. Is Erik Erikson correct in his argument that generativity is a major life challenge of midlife? What is generativity and what is the scientific evidence that men and women feel a need to be generative in midlife?
6. Does wisdom develop later in life and does it take the same or different forms for women and men?

### *Class Participation*

Class participation includes attendance, contribution to class discussions, and willingness to answer questions posed about the readings. I expect everyone to be in class for every class meeting, prepared and willing to take part in our discussion of the assigned readings and films. We all know that courses in the social sciences and humanities in which no one participates are almost invariably dull. The success of this course depends upon your willingness to take part in class discussion and to learn and apply the sociological perspective.

Part of our class work in this course is the discussion of required readings. I should emphasize that the success of class discussions depends at least as much on the active listening and participation of the audience as it does on the introduction to the discussion that I will provide. Students who are reluctant to respond to the questions are not actively participating. Class participation is weighted 5% of the final course grade.

If any student is participating in a sponsored school activity that requires periods of time away from campus, please see me *during the first week of the semester during office hours* so that we may discuss the ways in which missed classes will be made up. Concerning any other absence, I always presume, unless convinced otherwise, that there is a good reason for a student's having missed class. For this reason, then, I do not need to see excuses for class absences.

### *Grades*

Final grades for the course are based on the following scale:

A = 93-100	C+ = 77-79
A- = 90-92	C = 73-76
B+ = 87-89	C- = 70-72
B = 83-86	D = 60-69
B- = 80-82	F = 59 and below.

### **Miscellaneous Policies**

#### *1. Academic Honesty.*

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. Everything you do in this class must be done within the letter and spirit of the UGA academic honesty policy. In particular, I expect everyone to abide by the student honor code (section 7 of the honesty policy). Cheating or assisting someone who cheats is serious; penalties are severe, and ignorance is not an acceptable excuse. All academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty." Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. The link to

more detailed information about academic honesty can be found at:  
<http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/honesty/acadhon.htm>

## 2. *Disabilities.*

If you have a disability and would like to request classroom accommodations, please see me after class or make an appointment during office hours.

## 3. *Grievances.*

Any student who feels that he or she has not been treated in a fair or professional manner should follow the Department of Sociology grievance procedures, the first step of which is to discuss the matter with the professor.

## 4. *Classroom Behavior.*

Please be in your seat prior to the start of class. More important, ***if you come to class stay until the end.*** It is distracting for everyone when individuals leave class while it is still in progress. Use common sense in this regard. If you become suddenly ill, by all means leave the room. Please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices during class. This prohibition applies to laptop computers as well.

## Course Calendar

Tuesday	Thursday
Aug. 18. <i>Introduction to the Sociology of Aging.</i>	Aug. 20. <i>Aging and the Life Course</i> Reading: Debra A. Street. "Sociological approaches to understanding age and aging."
Aug. 25. Readings: (1) Gunhild O. Hagestad, 1999. "Gray zone? Meetings between sociology and gerontology." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. ix-xxv.	Aug. 27. Reading: Richard A. Settersten, Jr. 2006. "Aging and the life course."
Sept. 1. <i>Demography of Aging.</i> Readings: (1) James H. Schulz and Robert H. Binstock. 2006. "The phony threat of population aging." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. 1-23.	Sept. 3. Reading: Nicholas Danigelis, Melissa Hardy, and Stephen J. Cutler. 2007. "Population Aging, Intracohort Aging, and Sociopolitical Attitudes."
Sept. 8. <i>Social Policy: Social Security.</i> Readings: (1) Judie Svihula and Carroll L. Estes. 2007. "Social Security Politics: Ideology and Reform." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. 24-60.	Sept. 10. <i>Social Policy: Age Discrimination.</i> Reading: David Neumark, 2009. "The Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Challenge of Population Aging."

<p>Sep. 15. <i>Social Policy: Medicare</i>  Readings:  (1) James H. Schulz and Robert H. Binstock. 2006. "Health and longevity: What lies ahead?"  (2) <u>Canterbury</u>, pp. 61-88.</p>	<p>Sep. 17. <i>Retirement</i>  Reading: James H. Schulz and Allan Borowski. 2006. "Economic security in retirement: Reshaping the public-private pension mix."</p>
<p>Sep. 22.  Reading: Phyllis Moen. 2003. "Midcourse: Navigating Retirement and a New Life Stage."</p>	<p>Sep. 24. <b>Test #1.</b></p>
<p>Sep. 29. <i>Everyday Life.</i>  Readings:  (1) James A. Davis. 2004. "Did Growing up in the 1960s Leave a Permanent Mark on Attitudes and Values? Evidence from the General Social Survey."  (2) <u>Canterbury</u>, pp. 89-113.</p>	<p>Oct. 1.  Reading: Benjamin Cornwell, Edward O. Laumann, and L. Philip Schumm. 2008. "The social connectedness of older adults: A national profile."</p>
<p>Oct. 6.  Readings:  (1) Amy Cuddy, Michael I. Norton, and Susan T. Fiske. 2005. "This Old Stereotype: The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Elderly Stereotype."  (2) <u>Canterbury</u>, pp. 114-136.</p>	<p>Oct. 8. <i>Theory</i>  Reading: Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney and Malcolm L. Johnson. 2005. "The problem of theory in gerontology today."</p>
<p>Oct. 13. <i>Theory of Agency.</i>  Readings:  (1) Steven Hitlin and Glen H. Elder, Jr. 2007. "Time, self, and the curiously abstract concept of agency."  (2) <u>Canterbury</u>, pp. 137-167.</p>	<p>Oct. 15. <i>Stratification and Inequality across the Life Course</i>  Reading: Angela M. O’Rand, 2006. "Stratification and the life course: Life course capital, life course risks, and social inequality."</p>
<p>Oct. 20.  Readings:  (1) Jerry W. Boyd and James J. Dowd. 1988. "The diffuseness of Age".  (2) <u>Canterbury</u>, pp. 168-193.</p>	<p>Oct. 22  Reading: Carroll L. Estes. 2005. "Women, ageing and inequality: A feminist perspective."</p>
<p>Oct. 27. <b>Test #2.</b></p>	<p>Oct. 29. <i>Life-span Adult Human Development: Wisdom.</i>  Reading: Susanne Scheibe, Ute Kunzmann, and Paul B. Baltes. 2007. "Wisdom, life longings, and optimal development."</p>

Nov. 3. Readings: (1) Kathleen Woodward, 2002. "Against Wisdom: The Social Politics of Anger and Aging." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. 194-228.	Nov. 5. <i>Life-span Adult Human Development: Generativity</i> . Reading: Dan McAdams. 2001. "Generativity in Midlife."
Nov. 10: Readings: (1) Dan P. McAdams, 2006. "The redemptive self: Generativity and the stories Americans live by." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. 229-257.	Nov. 12 Reading: Kai Erikson. 2003. "Reflections on Generativity and Society: A Sociologist's Perspective."
Nov. 17. <i>Love, Desire, and the Wish of Eternal Youthfulness</i> . Readings: (1) James J. Dowd, "Aging and the course of desire." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. 258-292.	Nov. 19. Reading: Robert H. Binstock, Jennifer R. Fishman, and Thomas E. Johnson. 2006. "Anti-aging medicine and science."
Nov. 24. Thanksgiving break	Nov. 26. Thanksgiving break
Dec. 1. Readings: (1) J.A. Vincent. 2006. "Ageing Contested: Anti-ageing Science and the Cultural Construction of Old Age." (2) <u>Canterbury</u> , pp. 293-366.	Dec. 3. <i>Last class</i> . Reading: Barbara L Marshall and Stephen Katz. 2006. "From androgyny to androgens: Resexing the aging body."
Dec. 8. No class. Friday schedule in effect.	Final exam date: Fri., Dec. 11 3:30 - 6:30 pm

## Topics

### 1. Aging and the Life Course

- Debra A. Street. "Sociological approaches to understanding age and aging." Pp. 143-168 in James A. Blackburn and Catherine N. Dulmus (eds.) 2007. Handbook of Gerontology. N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hagestad, Gunhild O. 1999. "Gray zone? Meetings between sociology and gerontology." Contemporary Sociology. 28 (5): 514-517.
- Settersten, Richard A. Jr. 2006. "Aging and the life course." Pp. 3-19 in R.H. Binstock and L.K. George (Eds.) Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Diego: Academic Press.

## 2. Demography

- James H. Schulz and Robert H. Binstock. 2006. “The phony threat of population aging.” Pp. 25-41 in Aging Nation: The Economics and Politics of Growing Older in America. Westport: Praeger.
- Danigelis, Nicholas, Melissa Hardy, and Stephen J. Cutler. 2007. “Population Aging, Intracohort Aging, and Sociopolitical Attitudes.” American Sociological Review. 72:812-830.

## 3. Social Policy

### a. Social Security

- Harrington Meyer, Madonna. 1996. “Making claims as workers or wives: the distribution of Social Security benefits.” American Sociological Review. 61 (3): 449-465.
- Street, Debra and J. Cossman. 2006. “Greatest generation or greedy geezers? Social spending preferences and the elderly.” Social Problems. 53 (1): 75-96.
- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2002. “Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens.” The American Political Science Review. 96 (Sep.): 565-574.
- Svihula, Judie and Carroll L. Estes. 2007. “Social Security Politics: Ideology and Reform.” Journal of Gerontology. B Psychol Sci Soc Sci 62: S79-S89.

### b. Medicare/Medicaid and Other Health Issues

- Kane, Robert L. And Rosalie A. 2005. “Long term care.” Pp. 638-646 in Malcolm L. Johnson (ed.) The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.
- James H. Schulz and Robert H. Binstock. 2006. “Health and longevity: What lies ahead?” Pp. 171-199 in Aging Nation: The Economics and Politics of Growing Older in America. Westport: Praeger.

### c. Age discrimination and Agism

- Nelson, Todd D. 2005. “Ageism: Prejudice Against Our Feared Future Self.” Journal of Social Issues, 61 (No. 2): 207-221.
- Neumark, David. 2009. “The Age Discrimination in Employment Act and the Challenge of Population Aging.” Research on Aging 31: 41-68.  
<http://roa.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/31/1/41>

## 4. Retirement

- Schulz, James H. and Allan Borowski. 2006. “Economic security in retirement: Reshaping the public-private pension mix.” Pp. 360-379 in R. Binstock and L. George (eds.). Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Moen, Phyllis. 2003. “Midcourse: Navigating Retirement and a New Life Stage.” Pp. 269-291 in Jeylan Mortimer and Michael Shanahan (eds.) Handbook of the Life Course. NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

- Manheimer, Ronald J. 2008. “The Paradox of Beneficial Retirement: A Journey into the Vortex of Nothingness.” Journal of Aging, Humanities, and the Arts, 2 (2): 84-98.

## 5. Everyday Life

- Davis, James A. 2004. “Did Growing up in the 1960s Leave a Permanent Mark on Attitudes and Values? Evidence from the General Social Survey.” The Public Opinion Quarterly. 68 (Summer): 161-183.
- Cornwell, Benjamin, Edward O. Laumann, and L. Philip Schumm. 2008. “The social connectedness of older adults: A national profile.” American Sociological Review. 73 (April): 185-203.
- Katz, Stephen. 2005. “Busy bodies: Activity, aging, and the management of everyday life. Pp. 121-139 in Cultural Aging: Lifecourse, Lifestyles, and Senior Worlds. Ontario: Broadview Press.
- Cuddy, Amy J. C., Michael I. Norton, and Susan T. Fiske. 2005. “This Old Stereotype: The Pervasiveness and Persistence of the Elderly Stereotype.” Journal of Social Issues 61 (2): 267-285.
- Hawkey, Louise C., Mary Elizabeth Hughes, Linda J. Waite, Christopher M. Masi, Ronald A. Thisted, and John T. Cacioppo. 2008. “From Social Structural Factors to Perceptions of Relationship Quality and Loneliness: The Chicago Health, Aging, and Social Relations Study.” Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences. 63B, (6): S375 –S384.

## 6. Theory

### a. General

- Bass, S.A. 2006. “Gerontological theory: The search for the Holy Grail.” The Gerontologist, 46, 139-144.
- Bengtson, Vern L., Norella M. Putney and Malcolm L. Johnson. 2005. “The problem of theory in gerontology today.” Pp. 3-20 in Malcolm L. Johnson (ed.) The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.
- Bengtson, Vern L., Cara J. Rice, and Malcolm L. Johnson. 1999. “Are theories of aging important? Models and explanations in gerontology at the turn of the century.” Pp. 3-20 in V.L. Bengtson and K. W. Schaie (eds.) Handbook of Theories of Aging. N.Y.: Springer.

### b. Agency

- Glen H. Elder, Jr. 1994. “Time, human agency, and social change: Perspectives on the life course.” Social Psychology Quarterly. 57: 4-15.
- Steven Hitlin and Glen H. Elder, Jr. 2007. “Time, self, and the curiously abstract concept of agency.” Sociological Theory. 25 (June): 170-191.
- Dale Dannefer. 1989. "Human action and its place in theories of aging." Journal of Aging Studies. 3 (Spring): 1-20.

## 7. Stratification and Inequality across the Life Course

- O’Rand, Angela M. 2006. “Stratification and the life course: Life course capital, life course risks, and social inequality.” Pp. 145-162 in R.H. Binstock and L.K. George (Eds.) Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Diego: Academic Press.
- Boyd, Jerry W. and James J. Dowd. 1988. "The diffuseness of Age". Social Behaviour. 3: 85-103.
- Estes, Carroll L. 2005. “Women, ageing and inequality: A feminist perspective.” Pp. 552-559 in Malcolm L. Johnson (ed.) The Cambridge Handbook of Age and Ageing. N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.

## 8. Aging in Culture

- Calasanti, Toni. 2007. “Bodacious Berry, Potency Wood and the Aging Monster: Gender and Age Relations in Anti-Aging Ads.” Social Forces, 86 (Sep.): 335-355.
- Fry, Christine L. 2002. “The life course as a cultural construct.” Pp. 269-294 in Invitation to the life course: Toward new understandings of later life, edited by R. Settersten. Baywood Publishing.
- Nussbaum, Jon F.; Margaret J.Pitts, Frances N. Huber, Janice L. Raup Krieger, and Jennifer E. Ohs. 2005. “Ageism and Ageist Language Across the Life Span: Intimate Relationships and Non-intimate Interactions.” Journal of Social Issues. 61 (June): 287-305.

## 9. Life-span Adult Human Development

- Scheibe, Susanne, Ute Kunzmann, and Paul B. Baltes. 2007. “Wisdom, life longings, and optimal development.” Pp. 117-142 in James A. Blackburn and Catherine N. Dulmus (eds.) 2007. Handbook of Gerontology. N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Crosnoe, Robert and Glen H. Elder Jr. 2002. “Successful Adaptation in the Later Years: A Life Course Approach to Aging.” Social Psychology Quarterly, 65 (Dec.): 309-328.
- Woodward, Kathleen. 2002. “Against Wisdom: The Social Politics of Anger and Aging.” Cultural Critique. 51 (Spring): 186-218.
- McAdams, Dan P. 2006. “The redemptive self: Generativity and the stories Americans live by.” Research in Human Development: 81-100.
- McAdams, Dan P. 2001. “Generativity in Midlife.” Chapter 12 in Margie E. Lachman (Ed.) Handbook of Midlife Development. N.Y.: Wiley.
- Kai Erikson. 2003. “Reflections on Generativity and Society: A Sociologist's Perspective.” Chap. 4 in Ed de St. Aubin, Dan P. McAdams, and Tae-Chang Kim (eds.) The Generative Society: Caring for Future Generations. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

## 10. Love, Desire, and the Wish of Eternal Youthfulness

- Dowd, James J. “Aging and the course of desire.” Forthcoming, Journal of Aging Studies.
- Binstock, Robert H., Jennifer R. Fishman, and Thomas E. Johnson. 2006. “Anti-aging

- medicine and science.” Pp. 436-455 in R. Binstock and L. George (eds.). Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Vincent, J.A. 2006. “Ageing Contested: Anti-ageing Science and the Cultural Construction of Old Age.” Sociology, 40(4): 681 - 698.  
<http://soc.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/40/4/681>
  - Marshall, Barbara I. and Stephen Katz. 2005. “Forever functional: Sexual fitness and the aging male body.” Pp. 161-187 in Stephen Katz (ed), Cultural Aging: Lifecourse, Lifestyles, and Senior Worlds. Ontario: Broadview Press.
  - Leibovici, Solange. 2007. “Aging and Desire in a Few Novels.” Journal of Aging, Humanities, and the Arts, 1 (Jan.): 53 - 60
  - Marshall, Barbara L. and Stephen Katz. 2006. “From androgyny to androgens: Resexing the aging body.” Pp. 75-97 in Toni M. Calasanti and Kathleen F. Slevin (eds.) Age Matters: Realigning Feminist Thinking. N.Y.: Routledge.

Possible inclusions on the Soci 4650 syllabus, Fall 2009.

**Films:** *About Schmidt*                      *Venus*                      *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*  
*Lost in Translation*                      *Innocence*                      *Something's Gotta Give*

**Documentaries:** *7-Up; 14-Up; 21-Up; 28-Up; 35-Up; 42-Up*

**Novels:**

Philip Roth. 1998. The Human Stain  
Trollope, Joanna. 1993. The Men and the Girls.

**Memoirs:** Diana Athill. Somewhere Near the End: A Memoir. N.Y.: W.W. Norton.

**Books, Articles and Chapters:**