



Course Syllabus: AGING (Online)
College of Health Sciences and Human Services
SOWK 4113x10
Fall 2025

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course will explore a wide variety of topics associated with the aging process including the physical, mental, and emotional changes occurring in the body as it ages; environmental factors affecting older adults, such as rising health care costs, and limited housing; family issues, role changes, facing death and dying; and as well as other life issues. Theories of life stages and human development will also be discussed to provide students with a framework of practice. This course is designed to prepare students to obtain an actual “person in environment” perspective when interacting with older adults, expose them to sensitive issues when working with this population, and assist those seeking generalist practice skills.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

McInnis-Dittrich, K. (2014). Social Work with Older Adults (5th Ed). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Course Goals and Objectives

- Develop an understanding of the aging process and how physical, mental, and emotional changes affect older adults
- Identify the extent to which societal, cultural, and economic factors may influence
- Apply theoretical knowledge into practice to acquire general practice skills in the gerontological field
- Recognize cultural differences within the older adult population

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify a wide variety of environmental factors that affect older adults
- Apply information regarding physiological, emotional, mental, and psychological health issues commonly faced by the aging population to complete a biopsychosocial assessment
- Recognize their fears, assumptions, or perspectives associated with the aging process
- Locate and evaluate community resources helpful to the older adult population, their families, and their caregivers
- Identify employment opportunities and research on aging
- Develop a sensitive and environmental viewpoint when interacting or offering services to the older adult population

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individuals to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Grading

Weekly discussion questions	Weekly	100 points
Mental Illness/Cognitive Issue Paper	Oct. 20	100 points
Interview	Sept. 22	100 points
Quizzes (10)	Weekly	100 points
Social Service Agency Paper	Nov. 24	100 points

A= 500-450

B= 449-400

C= 399-350

D= 349-300

F= 299 or below

*Please note: A course grade less than C in social work classes is considered failing, and the course will have to be repeated.

Quizzes

Ten points each: There will ten multiple choice quizzes.

Interview

100 points: The objective of this assignment is to understand the aging process from the perspective of an older adult. Students will select one individual over the age of 65 to conduct an interview. This person should be from a different cultural or ethnic group (someone not in your immediate family). Students will type the information in a **narrative format**. Papers must be double-spaced using a 12-point font, and the interviewee's identity should be kept confidential. Students can use the sample questions suggested below or formulate their questions.

- What year were you born? Where? Siblings?
- What was the house/apartment that you grew up in like?
- What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in?
- What did your parents do for a living?
- What was your life like when you were a child? Teenager?
- What was your school experience like?
- What is your family life like now?
- How different is society today from when you were young?

- What are some essential life lessons you have learned?
- Have you had any influential people in your life? Who and how did they influence you?
- What is the best part of growing older? What is the worst (if any)?
- Do you have any regrets or unfulfilled dreams? What are they?
- Do you have any advice for younger generations?

Social Service Agency Paper

100 points: This assignment aims to build knowledge about different resources for older adults. Students will contact a social service agency/organization serving older adults and write a paper about it. The paper must be double-spaced using 12-point font and in APA format. Students will be graded on the completeness of information and writing style (grammar, punctuation, and flow of ideas). The information in the paper does not need to come in any specific order; if any information does not apply to the agency, it should be stated in the paper. The paper does not have a number of required pages but should include, at a minimum, all the following information:

- Name of agency
- Type of agency (i.e., public, private, for/nonprofit, etc.), funding source, and type of services
- Mission statement, vision, and values
- Estimated number of people served a year
- Requirements to receive services
- How are services accessed (by phone, in person, through a referral)?
- Accessibility to the facility for people with physical, visual, or hearing impediments
- Estimated number of employees/staff members
- Number of social work positions (if any)? What is their primary role?
- Challenges the agency may be facing (i.e., high staff turnover, high caseloads, complex cases, funding)
- Student's opinions on the agency (i.e., is the facility clean, is it welcoming, staff members friendly, barriers to receiving services, etc.)

Social Service Agency Papers will be posted for your classmates to view so the class can learn about the variety of services available for older adults.

Mental Illness/Cognitive Issue Paper

100 points: This assignment aims to build knowledge about different diagnoses for older adults. Students will choose a disorder/diagnosis (dementia, depression, etc.) often assigned to the elderly population. Students must include information about the diagnosis, symptoms associated with it, and one treatment modality that can be used for a client once they are diagnosed. Each paper must be double-spaced using 12-point font and in APA format. Please include a reference page showcasing your resources. Students will be graded on the completeness of information and writing style (grammar, punctuation, and flow of ideas). More information to come about what needs to be in the paper.

Weekly discussion questions

10 points each/100 points total: There will be general questions relating to the chapter, case vignettes, current events, or watching a video. You must participate in 10/13 of the weekly discussions (10 points each week). You can earn extra credit if you participate in more than 10 discussions.

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. **Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations; however, they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to <http://www.mwsu.edu/student-life/disability>.

Pregnant and Parenting Students

To support the academic success of pregnant and parenting students and students with pregnancy-related conditions, the University offers reasonable modifications based on the student's particular needs. Any student who is pregnant or parenting a child up to age 18 or has conditions related to pregnancy, may contact MSU's designated Pregnancy and Parenting Liaison to discuss support available through the University.

Obligation to Report Sex Discrimination under State and Federal Law

Midwestern State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. State and federal law require University employees to report sex

discrimination and sexual misconduct to the University's Office of Title IX. As a faculty member, I am required to report to the Title IX Coordinator any allegations, personally observed behavior, or other direct or indirect knowledge of conduct that reasonably may constitute sex discrimination or sexual misconduct, which includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, or stalking, involving a student or employee. After a report is made, the office of Title IX will reach out to the affected student or employee in an effort to connect such person(s) with resources and options in addressing the allegations made in the report. You are also encouraged to report any incidents to the office of Title IX. You may do so by contacting:

Laura Hetrick

Title IX Coordinator
Sunwatcher Village Clubhouse
940-397-4213
laura.hetrick@msutexas.edu

You may also file an online report 24/7 at
https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?MSUTexas&layout_id=6

Should you wish to visit with someone about your experience in confidence, you may contact the MSU Counseling Center at 940-397-4618. For more information on the University's policy on Title IX or sexual misconduct, please visit <https://msutexas.edu/titleix/>

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and

federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on university property or at university-sponsored activities.

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

Due:	CHAPTERS	Weekly Discussion Question to post	Weekly Assignments
Aug 31		<i>-Palmore's Facts on Aging Quiz</i> – What surprised you most about your answers to Palmore's quiz?	-All about me posting (no review question to submit in DTL this week)
Sept. 7	Chap. 1	Discuss an example of ageism you have witnessed or read about in the media.	
Sept. 14	Chap. 2	What is your biggest fear about aging in terms of biological changes? Why?	
Sept. 21	Chap. 3	<i>Video</i> - Harvey and Eddie Discuss/Comment	Interview Paper Due Sept. 22nd
Sept. 28	Chap. 4	Read Case Example in book – Mrs. Kingson p. 103-106. Identify Mrs. Kingson's strengths, goals, barriers to goals, and formal support services needed.	
Oct. 5	Chap. 5	Read Case 5.3 p. 129-130 – Identify what Rosa might be experiencing in terms of depression, dementia, or delirium. What symptoms led you to this conclusion?	
Oct. 12	Chap. 6	<i>Discussion</i>	
Oct 19	Chap. 7	Check Discussion Board	Submit your Mental Illness/Cognitive Disorder paper
Oct. 26	Chap. 8	<i>Video</i> – Man in nursing home reacts to music – post comments on video;	
Nov. 2	Chap. 9	No Discussion Post	
Nov.9	Chap. 10	<i>Video</i> – Edythe – post comments on video	
Nov. 16	Chap. 11	Check Discussion Board for Post	
Nov. 23	Chap. 12	Check Discussion Board for Post	Paper 3 due Nov 23
Dec. 2	Chap. 13	Start a thread and attach your Social Service Agency Paper. Read other papers and comment on at least 5 different papers.	

