

**PSY 598 – Psychology of Gerontology**  
Fall 2014 -- Online Course

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**Office Hours:** Wednesday 3 – 4 pm (Metroplex); Tuesday and Friday 10 am – 12 pm (BIN 220); Skype appointments available for virtual meetings.

**Required Textbook:** Erber, J. T. (2013). *Aging & Older Adulthood* (3rd ed.). Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN: 9780470673416

**Course Description:**

Description from the Graduate Course Catalog: “This course will cover topics in gerontology including physical and mental changes in older adults, transitions such as retirement, mental health issues for the older adult, and health issues. The course will provide needed information to help the older adult adjust to changes in life. The course will focus on positive sides of aging which are often neglected.”

**Course Objectives:**

1. Recognize the importance of aging research along with understanding how this research is conducted, including research methodology, need for more research given the population shift, and ethical issues
2. Understand physical, cognitive, and socioemotional changes that occur across later adulthood
3. Recognize individual differences in aging
4. Further develop communication skills and reasoning skills to discuss and critique psychological research and issues
5. Relate knowledge learned in this course to the real world.

**Course Format:**

This is an online course through eCollege. Each week you will be assigned a chapter to read, and the instructor will provide an overview of some of the major issues related to the chapter. \*Please note that the overviews provided are not exhaustive – you are responsible for reading the entire chapter and understanding the chapter content.\* During the majority of the weeks there will be a discussion forum assignment for you to post a response related to the assigned reading. The postings will help to create an environment similar to a face-to-face course. Namely, students may read and comment on their classmates’ posting as to promote a group learning

environment. Exams will be given during weeks when a discussion forum posting is not assigned. There will also be chapter quizzes to help keep you up-to-date with the readings and to prepare you for the exams. The course will conclude with a final written report that is on a topic selected by the student that is related to aging and older adulthood. Descriptions of the assignments will be posted on eCollege.

### **Course Philosophy:**

This course should be educational and interesting to you. After all, this is a course that will directly apply to your life. Simply put, regardless if you work with older adults in your selected career or not, aging affects us all. As we age and we see our family members aging we are aware that changes are occurring. Many times it seems that the changes are cast in a negative light, but there is both growth and decline in development throughout our lifespan, including older adulthood. Each of us is directly touched by the issues that we will cover in this course. I encourage you to really engage yourself in this course. Read the materials, ponder the different issues, and be involved in discussions. I also challenge you to take on the glass-half-full perspective and identify positive aspects of aging. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am here to facilitate your learning needs.

### **Course Assignments:**

- I. **Discussion Postings** – Because this is an online course, discussion through written dialogue is critical. This helps students feel engaged in the course, and it also allows for students to enhance their writing skills. Students will participate in online discussions via the Discussion Forum on eCollege. Specific instructions for each week's Discussion Forum will be posted, and some discussion posting require that you respond to your classmates' postings. ***You should check the discussion posting link for the due dates of these assignments.*** There are 10 discussion assignments, and they are worth 20% of your total grade.
  
- II. **Quizzes** -- Quizzes will be administered to provide an assessment of your knowledge of the assigned chapter reading for the week. These quizzes will be taken without aid – closed notes, closed book, and no Internet aid. You will have to retrieve from your memory your responses. I find that these quizzes help students to keep up with the reading, and they also aid in the long-term retention of information (See Roediger & Karpicke, 2006, for information about the “testing effect.”) Nine quizzes will be administered, but only eight will count toward the final grade. Therefore, each student can drop one quiz grade. For each quiz that you earn 70% or better you will receive 1 point. If you earn a score less than 70% you will receive zero points for that quiz. Quizzes are worth 5% of your course grade.

III. **Exams** – You will be administered three exams. The questions will be based on material covered in assigned readings, lecture, and videos. **The exams will be closed notes and closed books.** You will have to retrieve from your memory your responses. This is a graduate course, and it is expected that students will follow these rules when taking the exam. Each student will be asked to pledge their exams. Violations will result in a ZERO on the exam. Each exam will be worth 100 points total, and the exams are worth 15% each. (**Exam 1 = 15% ; Exam 2 = 15% ; Exam 3 = 15%**).

IV. **Graduate Research Project Written Report** – Students will be required to write a report linking peer-reviewed educational research to applications related aging and older adulthood. Guidelines for this assignment will be posted on eCollege. Please email the instructor if you have questions about this assignment. The written report is worth 30%.

*\* The gradebook in eCollege shows the total point and assigned weights per assignment. When assignments have been graded, the instructor will update the gradebook in eCollege so that students can access their grades.*

#### **Grade Distribution:**

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

#### **Course Policies**

**“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment” (Code of Student Conduct; Policy 13.02.99.R0.06)**

**Plagiarism:** Texas A & M University-Commerce views plagiarism as a serious offense. Plagiarism occurs when individuals take ideas and/or words from another source and claim these ideas as their own without giving credit to the original author(s). This can include copying words from an Internet website, reading an article and taking the authors ideas without giving them credit, or writing work that is remarkably similar to other written work (e.g., Changing words to synonyms is still plagiarism). If any written work contains ideas that are not your own, you need to give credit to the author(s) by including citations. Instructors are obligated to report instances of plagiarism to university officials. Please refer to the American Psychology

Association (APA) manual for instructions on citing materials. When in doubt, ask me. Ignorance will not be tolerated as an excuse for plagiarism. The first offense of plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment. Additional accounts of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero in the course.

**Scholarly Expectations:** All works submitted for credit must be original works created by the scholar uniquely for the class. It is considered inappropriate and unethical, particularly at the graduate level, to make duplicate submissions of a single work for credit in multiple classes, unless specifically requested by the instructor. Work submitted at the graduate level is expected to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills and be of significantly higher quality than work produced at the undergraduate level.

**Late Work: *Late work is not accepted!*** \*\* Please note that technology issues are not an excuse for submitting assignments late. Keep that in mind while budgeting your time. Do not wait until the last minute to complete assignments.\*\*

**Netiquette:** Offensive language and aggressive correspondence online will not be tolerated. Students are expected to be respectful of others' opinions when communicating.

**Technical Support:** This course is supported by Texas A&M University–Commerce through the eCollege course management system. There is a Student Orientation Tutorial in eCollege if you are unfamiliar with it. If you have technology questions please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by clicking the HelpDesk link in the Help pages in eCollege or by sending an email directly to [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org). You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Gee Library, Room 132, Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835; Fax (903) 468-8148; [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu).

## **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

### **Part I. Introduction**

#### **Week 1 August 25-August 31**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 1 — Introduction to Aging and Older Adulthood

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

## **Week 2 September 1- September 7**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 2 — Theory and Method in Study Aging and Older Adulthood

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

## **Part II. Physical Aspects of Aging in Older Adulthood**

### **Week 3 September 8 – September 14**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 3 – Biological Aging and Health

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

### **Week 4 September 15 – September 21**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 4 – Sensation, Perception, and Attention

**Assignment:** Exam over Chapters 1-4

## **Part III. Cognitive Aspects of Aging in Older Adulthood**

### **Week 5 September 22 – September 28**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 5 – Memory

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

### **Week 6 September 29 – October 5**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 6 – Intellectual Functioning

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

### **Week 7 October 6 – October 12**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 7 – Cognition and Problem Solving in the Everyday World

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

## **Part IV. Socioemotional Aspects of Aging in Older Adulthood**

### **Week 8 October 13 – October 19**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 8 – Personality and Coping

**Assignment:** Exam over Chapters 5-8

**Week 9 October 20 – October 26**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 9 – Social Interactions and Social Ties

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

**Week 10 October 27 – November 2**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 10 – Employment, Retirement, and Living Arrangements

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

**Week 11 November 3 – November 9**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 11 – Mental Health, Psychopathology, and Therapy

**Assignments:** Discussion Posting and Quiz

**Week 12 November 10 – November 16**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 12 – Coping with Death, Dying, and Bereavement

**Assignment:** Exam over Chapters 9-12

**Part V. Final Thoughts and Applications**

**Week 13 November 17– November 23**

**Required Chapter Reading:** Chapter 13 – Looking Ahead: Aging in the Future

**Assignment:** Discussion Posting

**Week 14 (mini) November 24 – November 26**

**Required Chapter Reading:** No chapter reading.

**Assignment:** None; Use this time to work on your final Graduate Research Project Written Report.

**Week 15 December 1 – December 7**

**Required Chapter Reading:** None

**Assignment:** **Graduate Research Project Written Report** – due by 11:59 pm on Dec. 7