GEY 7601 Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Psychology

School of Aging Studies
University of South Florida
Spring Semester, 2013

Meets: Wednesday, 2:00 – 4:45 pm, MHC 1506

Instructor: Dr. Ross Andel
(Office hours by appointment)
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Goals and Objectives of the Course

The broad objective of this course is to provide an advanced overview of current trends in adult development and aging research. Of particular interest will be current issues in various aspects of psychological aging. Upon completion, the students will (a) gain knowledge in current perspectives regarding psychological aging including theory, (b) understand commonly used research methods, (c) improve critical thinking skills, and (d) further develop writing skills necessary for successful preparation of research manuscripts. The course material will include textbook-based readings and research articles. Each class will include a general discussion of the assigned book chapter and a thorough analysis one or more research articles (led by a student). A theory-based essay and a term paper written in a style of a qualifying exam are important components of this class.

Course Requirements

1. Participation. Each student is expected to come to class, read all assigned readings, and prepare at least one question about the assigned book chapter to discuss with the class. This is worth 20 points.

2. Each student will prepare a one-page summary of one scientific article during three class sessions. The articles are listed at the end of the syllabus.

   The document will include the reference, summary (the most important idea in the article), plus 3-4 bullets each for main points, strengths, and weaknesses. The final portion is to include three issues to discuss with the class.

   Oral summary of the article is limited to 3-5 minutes. If the summary exceeds 5 minutes, 5 points will be automatically deducted. This is based on my previous experience of going through the excruciating pain of listening to long monologues. Remember, (a) the class has already read the article and (b) this class is about discussion.

   The objectives are: (1) to develop skills in abstracting the major ideas of a scholarly paper; (2) to develop skills in teaching other class members the most important contributions of an
article; and (3) to build a library of abstracts that will be useful in studying for the qualifying exam, writing papers for other courses, and developing your dissertation proposal.

This assignment is worth 30 points (each article critique/discussion is worth 10 points).

3. Each student will prepare a critical essay that summarizes and critiques a theory in the psychology of aging.

The following is just to help you outline this assignment, you do not need to cover each point exhaustively:

- Present the context of the theory–what is to be explained, why that’s important, and why past explanations have been less than adequate.
- Present the major elements of the theory: the concepts or constructs, the linkages, the empirical evidence for and against the theory. Try to diagram the theory.
- Discuss the adequacy of the theory, both formally (logically) and substantively (explaining empirical findings).
- Give an example of an application of the theory to your own research interests and professional concerns (or its inadequacy in potential applications).
- What more do you need to know in order to assess the adequacy of the theory? What should the next steps in theory development be?

The essay should be 3-4 pages of text, double-spaced. The assignment is worth 30 points. Remember that, as in any essay, clearly stating and supporting your opinion is essential. Also keep in mind the basic essay structure (Introduction—say what this is about and what main points will be discussed, Body—discuss the main points, 3 main points is a good standard but not necessary, Conclusion—reiterate what the essay is about and synthesize information from the body).

4. A final term paper will be required. The topic is of your choosing, but should obviously be related to psychological aging in some broad sense. Papers that have been submitted as part of the requirements of other courses are not allowed. However, students are encouraged to use this opportunity to create something that will be useful for them in the future (e.g., a draft of a qualifying exam question, dissertation introduction, manuscript, etc.). The structure of the paper should resemble a shortened version of a qualifying exam answer. The paper should be 10-11 pages of text, double-spaced. The term paper will be worth 100 points. Communicate your topic via email by the fourth class session. Ten Points will be subtracted if the topic is turned in late.

5. Students will be expected to prepare a brief (10-12 minutes) presentation on the topic of their term paper. This assignment is worth 20 points.

Grading:

Your grade will be based on how many of the total points (200 points) you attain. Your final grade will be on the following scale:

90% and above = A; 80% - 89% = B; 70% - 79% = C; 60% - 69% = D; Below 60% = F.
Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

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READINGS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION (look for additional readings on Blackboard)

General issues, the SOC model

1. Lang et al. (2002). Adapting to aging losses: Do resources facilitate strategies of selection, compensation, and optimization in everyday functioning?


General issues, successful aging

1. Strawbridge et al. (2002). Successful aging and well-being: Self-rated compared with Rowe and Kahn (plus Kahn’s brief reply to this article).


Mental health


3. Andel et al. (2012). Work-related stress may increase the risk of vascular dementia.

Personality


2. Chapman et al. (2012). Personality predicts cognitive function over 7 years in older persons.


Intelligence

1. Salthouse (2009). When does age-related cognitive decline begin?

2. Finch’s, Schae’s, and Nilsson et al.’s reply to Salthouse.

Cognitive function


Dementia


Relationships


Work, retirement, and aging


Person-environment interaction


Death and dying


3. Bryant (2013). Is pathological grief lasting more than 12 months grief or depression?