HDFS 378K
Longevity in the 21st Century

Meeting Time and Place
T/Th 12:30-2:00
RLM 6.114

Instructor:
Dr. Karen Fingerman
Email: kfingerman@austin.utexas.edu
Office hours: Tuesday 10:30 to 11:30 plus by appointment
SEAY 2.326

Overview:
In early human history, people survived an average of 25 to 30 years. By 1900, the average person in the U.S. could expect to live to age 40. From 1900-2012, however, life expectancy nearly doubled! In 2012, the average person born in the U.S. can expect to live to close to age 80.

This course addresses questions concerning the rapidly changing world in which people routinely live into old age. We will consider the challenges adults face at the individual, familial, and societal level due to a prolonged adulthood.

*Increased life expectancy affects every facet of our lives.* This course will start by examining how adulthood has been understood in the past and how is it changing in the 21st century. We will consider biological and societal explanations for long life. We will discuss how a prolonged adulthood shapes young adulthood, midlife and old age. Young adults look forward to 60 years of adulthood, and spend 4 to 10 years in secondary education. Middle-aged adults are healthier than ever, “50 is the new 30.”

And individuals may survive decades after they retire. We will address how society and public policies structure adulthood to deal with changing longevity. The course covers young adulthood and midlife, followed by an in depth examination of the 30 or 40 years that may constitute “old age.” Finally, we will consider the ethical implications of prolonging life further or of permitting individuals decisions in their own death.

Course readings and assignments are available on Blackboard
**Course Points and Requirements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 1</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiz 2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Assignments</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Project</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points</strong></td>
<td><strong>400</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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Grades will be broken down using standard cut offs with regard to %

- 93-100 A
- 90-92 A-
- 87-89 B+
- 83-86 B
- 80-82 B-
- 77-79 C+
- 73-76 C
- 70-72 C-

**Quizzes**

There will be 2 tests in this course worth 100 points each. The tests will assess content from the readings, assignments, class activities and the lectures. Tests will include short answer and multiple-choice questions. **Make-up exams will not be possible without an officially documented emergency that physically prevents the student from taking the examination.**

The student is responsible for notifying the instructor prior to the exam if an emergency occurs. Any make up exam will involve an essay format examination.

**Feb 23**          **Quiz #1 (75 points)**

**May 3**            **Quiz #2 (100 points)**

**Participation Assignments**

Students are expected to be in class, and unexcused absences may result in a lower course grade. In addition, a proportion of the grade involves assignments outside of class that will enhance participation in class. We will mingle essays, discussion questions and hands-on activities for the assignments. Please come to class prepared to participate (i.e., do the readings ahead of time).

Participation assignments are worth a total of 125 points. Each assignment is worth 10 points. There are 14 possible assignments, but only 12 will count. Thus, you may miss 2 assignments if you are sick or have an unavoidable conflict. There is an additional 5 point bonus (i.e., to make 125 points) for all students who make at least 11 assignments--110 points. Please save misses for when you are ill or an emergency arises—there are no additional excused misses.

**Activity point assignments are due in class; assignments are not accepted electronically or outside of class. We will share activity assignments** -- other students may read your
assignment and you may be asked to talk about what you prepared. Please prepare your assignments for public consumption.

**Essays.** Most of the activities will involve written essays. Activity point essays should be one to two pages, double-spaced, 1 inch margins. The essays should contain paragraphs with topic statements and you should proof-read for grammar and spelling errors. Do not use “I” statements such as “I believe” or “I liked the readings.” Instead, write about the content of the readings and convey your opinions via the arguments you make.

**Homework/short answer.** Other activities may involve a homework assignment. When you do not have to write an essay, the syllabus stipulates “not an essay.” Otherwise, please assume you should write an essay.

**In class.** Still other activities may take place in class. The in-class activity may require you to know information from the readings assigned for that class -- please come to class prepared.

**Interviewing Project (100 points)**
As part of the course, students will respond to a set of questions and they will interview a middle-aged adult and an older adult. Finally, they will write a 3 to 5-page paper comparing their responses and the responses of the middle-aged and older adult using material from the course.

**Details for the project are provided in a separate handout,** but deadlines are as follows. (Note: If the student is over aged 40, s/he may elect to interview a young adult and an older adult.) The breakdown of points as follows

- Names of interviewees (Feb 7) 5 points
- Typed notes of interview with young adult (Feb 7) 20 points
- Typed notes of interview with middle-aged adult (Mar 1) 20 points
- Typed notes of interview with older adult (Apr 3) 20 points
- Completed paper (Apr. 24) 35 points

All assignments must be turned in in class. No electronic versions accepted. Late assignments will be docked 5 points per day. All assignments must be typed, formatted, etc. Please see the handout concerning the project for details.

**Issues Related to the Course**

**Blackboard.** In this class we will use Blackboard—a Web-based course management system with password-protected access at [http://courses.utexas.edu](http://courses.utexas.edu)—to distribute course materials, to communicate and collaborate online, to post grades, and for readings and assignments. You can find support in using Blackboard at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., so plan accordingly.
Disabilities Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd

University of Texas Honor Code: The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community. Copying other people’s work, whether from students, on the web or from written publications constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Students caught engaging in such activities will be subject to a failing grade on the assignment and possibly a failing grade in the course.

Religious Holidays By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)
If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss, by phone, your concerns about another individual’s behavior. This service is provided through a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal
Readings and Assignments
NOTE: Changes to readings or course assignments will be announced in class.

Tues Jan 17 Overview of Longevity in the 21st Century

Thur Jan 19 Markers of Age in Adulthood


Tues Jan 24 The Changing Landscape of Adulthood in the 21st Century


Assignment #1- Essay: Compare Settersten’s comments regarding the lack of structure in adulthood in the 21st Century to Erik Erikson’s perspective in the middle of the 20th century from last class. What ideas do they share? How do these two scholars differ? Why?

Thur Jan 26 Young adults and Technology


Note: This reading refers to a chapter by Settersten that is published in the same volume. That chapter is not the same reading you did for this course. Do not worry that you do not know Settersten’s chapter---just focus on the material in this chapter.
Tues Jan 31 The Changing Nature of Young Adulthood

Twenge, J. M., Konrath, S., Foster, JD. (2008) Egos inflating over time: A cross temporal meta analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, *Journal of Personality*, 76, 875-900.

NOTE: Parts of this article are highly technical regarding the meta analysis. Do not worry about the technical parts of it, but pay attention to the findings and the implications of those findings.

Assignment #2- Essay: Compare the perspectives in the Lefkowitz chapter with information from the film Digital Nation that you watched in class

Thurs Feb 2 Parent/Child Ties in Young Adulthood


Tues Feb 7 Midlife- Menopause and Midlife Crises


Please read about menopause at the NIH website:

Brochure from NIH regarding hormones and menopause on Blackboard

Write up of interview with a young adult & names of other interviewees due

Assignment # 3: In class exercise

Thurs Feb 9 Biology of Aging


Assignment #4 –Essay: The Arrison article from the Wall Street Journal proposes a number of ways that human life expectancy might be increased dramatically. Use the Miller et al. chapter to evaluate which claims in the Arrison paper are most accurate and which most unlikely to happen. Be sure to use evidence from Miller to back up your arguments.
Tues Feb 14 Health and Diseases


Assignment #5 Short Answer (not an essay): Answer the following questions for two different diseases; a) one chronic disease and b) one acute disease.

Please choose diseases from the list below or email the instructor to cover a different disease. You may turn in your response in the form of a list, but please type each question next to each response. Be sure to include a reference list with your write up of each disease.

Acute Diseases: Measles, Polio, Tuberculosis, Bronchitis, Influenza, Appendicitis, Cholera

Chronic Diseases: Arthritis, Heart Disease, Diabetes, Macular Degeneration, Prostate Cancer, Breast Cancer, Alzheimer’s Disease, HIV/AIDS

Questions:
How pervasive is the disease in the US?
How pervasive is the disease in other places in the world? At other times in history?
What age group is most likely to get this disease?
What is the course of the disease? That is, what are the symptoms, how does the disease progress, and how debilitating is it?

You can do this research on line at Center for Disease Control National Institutes of Health (Also try National Institute on Aging).
(Note: Do not rely solely on the foundation websites—foundations sometimes exaggerate the scope of the disease).

Feb 16 Personal Relationships Across the Lifespan


Assignment 6: In class exercise

Tues Feb 21 Family Ties


Thur Feb 23 Quiz #1
**Tues Feb 28 Emotional Well-being**


Note: Please do not be concerned with the analyses. Pay attention to the key findings.

**Thur Mar 1 Cognitive Changes**


**Write up of interview #2: Interview with a middle-aged adult due**

**Tues Mar 6 Dementia**


**Assignment 7 Essay:** In this essay, you are the ‘teacher.’ Identify key issues regarding dementia and its symptoms and causes for someone who does not know about dementia.

**Thur Mar 8 Dementia continued…**


**Assignment 8: In class exercise**

**Tues Mar 13 and Thurs Mar 15 SPRING BREAK**

**Tues Mar 20 Retirement**


**Assignment 9: Not an essay: Estimate your retirement needs under different situations.**  
Turn in a list of whether you will make your goals using different types of information below and the reading by Munnell, Golub-Sass, & Webb.

Assume that your annual income will be $50,000  
If the website gives a choice, assume you will use a “balanced” approach to saving. (But you should ask a financial advisor to get official advice on the best way to save in the real world)  
You may also give yourself a spouse who makes $50,000.

Now, try varying the following factors
- Your age when you start saving - compare age 22, age 30, and age 44
- The amount you save - compare 5%, 7%, or 10% per year
- Try one extra factor - What happens if you wait until age 70 to retire? What if you retire at age 60? What if you have $20,000 savings to start with?

Try typing “Retirement calculator” into Google OR use CNN or AARP’s websites:

http://cgi.money.cnn.com/tools/retirementplanner/retirementplanner.jsp

http://www.aarp.org/work/retirement-planning/retirement_calculator/

**Definitions for the readings:**
*Defined benefit pension* = a traditional pension where an employer pays the retiree a certain amount every month. These pensions are based on the number of years someone worked. Such pensions are becoming uncommon in the 21st century.
*Voluntary or contribution pensions* = These are retirement plans where the individual contributes to his or her own retirement account (such as IRA’s or 401k) and the employer might provide some matching funds. These are increasingly common.

**Thurs Mar 22 Austin Groups for the Elderly**

**Assignment 10:** Come to class with a question for the guest lecturers from AGE. Visit their website to prepare your question. http://ageofaustin.org/

**Tues Mar 27 Medicare, Medicaid, and Policies**

Assignment 11 Essay: Consider Binstock’s arguments regarding policies for older adults. Describe the policies of the 20th century and how and why Binstock thinks those policies might change in the 21st century.

Tues Mar 29 TO BE ANNOUNCED


Tues Apr 3 Long Term Care Settings


Write up of Interview 3 with older adult due

Thur Apr 5 Creativity


Tues Apr 10 Class devoted to work on your final paper

Thur Apr 12 Aging Stereotypes


Assignment 12: Find an example of a stereotype about age and prepare a 1 to 2 minute presentation – Prepare to present that example and explain what attitudes it conveys based on the readings.

Go to a bookstore or drug store with a card display. Analyze the birthday cards. Look at some of the magazines—note the advertisements. Watch the evening news and analyze the advertisements during the news.

Tuesday April 17 The Oldest Old and Centenarians


Time Magazine (2010) Living to 100.

**Assignment 13: (Activity)** Go to the website livingto100.com Complete the survey. You will get a life expectancy age. Please then click on the link and print out the “feedback” page.

**Thur Apr 19 Death and Dying #1**


**Tues Apr 24 Special Activity**

Meet in the Winship Building diagonally across from the stadium at the box office.

**Thurs Apr 26 Death and Dying 2**


**Class project/Final Paper due**

**Tues May 1 Grief**


**Assignment 14: In class activity**

**Thur May 3 Quiz #2**