

Department of Gerontology  
College of Health and Human Services  
San Diego State University

## **THE AGING NETWORK**

Gerontology 402  
Spring, 2008  
Wednesdays, 4 – 6:40 PM  
Hepner Hall 216

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### **INTRODUCTION:**

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the programs that form a network of support for the elderly and that assist them in living independently and purposefully. While learning about the appropriateness of every available service for different persons and situations, the emphasis will always be on offering options and opportunities for self-direction.

The core function of the course will be to explore the inner workings of the most common programs: regulations governing the delivery of services, relevant issues, gaps and barriers, as well as model projects and results from aging research. The practical applications will help students enhance their skills in applying concepts to real life situations. By combining both theory and practice, the course will allow students to better understand the issues and problems related to the continuum of care and prepare them to offer their services in any of the programs that form the aging network.

### **COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**

The goal of the course is to enable students to understand the network of services and programs available to motivate and support older persons as participants in their community and to acquire skills in determining current needs for services, as well as understanding reasons for use and non-use of services. Students will:

- 1) Learn the basics of every social service program that constitutes the “aging network” (funding, policies, service delivery, requirements, challenges, program support, etc.).
- 2) Understand the social and psychological dynamics of help-seeking behavior: why people benefit from, do not access, or refuse to accept services.
- 3) Gain greater knowledge of current services, best practice models, gaps in services, unmet needs, and appropriate as well as inappropriate delivery of services.
- 4) Have an opportunity to explore in-depth two different topics of concern in the aging network by means of case studies, learning activities and writing a research paper.

The course has relevance for social workers, health professionals and anyone concerned about or serving the aged. To assist in bringing to reality the concepts learned, the course will include guest speakers representing the network of services and some related videos.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CLASS:**

### **A. Participation**

*Attendance* - Each student is expected to attend class with no more than 3 absences, and to actively participate in class discussions and activities. After three absences the student will be withdrawn from the class and will be assigned an F in their final course grade (half time attendance counts as half time absence). For every absence, there will be a deduction of 10 points from the grade under "participation." In cases of medical or personal emergency the student is required to present documentation. Perfect attendance will get an additional 10 points.

*Class Participation* - Students are expected to complete all exercises, assignments and tests by the dates identified in the syllabus. Note that for late assignments there will be a deduction of 10 points from the maximum possible 100 points assigned to that task, and after 2 weeks, the point deduction will be 20. If you miss the final exam, your final grade will be determined from the other exams and other assigned tasks and class participation. There will be no retro-grading after the final session/final exam. THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP FINAL EXAMS. Job related excuses and other conflicting schedules are not acceptable. Students are responsible for arranging their schedules around classes.

Students are expected to a) interact with lecturers through the use of appropriate questions or discussion; and b) read all assignments before the session in which the material will be discussed. I realize that some students are more vocal than others; however, efforts to participate in class will be recognized and rewarded.

It is the student's responsibility to access the "blackboard" site for this course at least on a weekly basis. Additional readings might be posted there. Blackboard will also include advanced copies of the powerpoints presented in class. Note that the powerpoints will not be complete so that students have to be in class and take notes.

*Incompletes* - University policy on "incomplete" is restricted to situations where a student is doing passing work in a course, but is unable to complete course requirements due to significant, documented circumstances beyond the student's control. If, during the semester, students experience serious work, family, or medical problems that might affect their ability to complete the course requirements, students are required to contact the instructor as soon as possible. There are strict guidelines and you are responsible for understanding the requirements.

### **B. Case Study & Learning Activities: Due March 5**

Each student will choose a chapter of the textbook and complete all the activities listed at the end. A typed (double spaced) 6+ page narrative report will be submitted. The questions from the textbook should be included in the paper. Papers will be graded based on completeness and in-depth review of issues and the answers to the questions. Creativity will also be rewarded and evaluated: for "learning /special activities" one should show resourcefulness and not have to rely on guidance from the professor.

### C. Research Paper. Due May 7

**Topic Selection:** Each student will select a topic (service or issue) relevant to the aging network. The themes should be specific rather than general (ex. “home equity conversions” or “shared housing” rather than *housing programs*; “challenges to recruit older volunteers” rather than *senior volunteer programs*).

In addition to “direct services,” other components of the aging network could be investigated as they relate to improving the network of services for older persons. Examples of additional areas to research could be: role of state and federal agencies; national and advocacy organizations; role of religious organizations; role of the business community; business and marketing issues in the delivery of social services; integration of services, partnerships; internet aging service organizations.

**Requirements for the research paper:** Each paper will be between 7 – 9 pages (times new roman, or similar, 12 point font; 1 inch margins, double spaced) not counting cover, table of contents, references and appendices. Tables, graphs, pictures, supplementary documentation, etc. go in the appendix. You need a minimum of 5 scholarly sources (research based books and journal articles) –no quotes from the textbook!- in addition to any web-based information that you find, and daily publications and magazines, etc.

The paper cannot include a repetition of what the service is, as explained in textbooks. Using library research, census data, the internet, other textbooks, etc. the paper should: a) highlight current needs, problems; b) current services and its availability; c) make recommendations for improving services; d) identify gaps in service delivery systems; e) identify barriers and access issues; f) address funding issues; and g) offer recommendations for the future.

The paper should be divided into logically connected sections with headings for each one (include a Table of Contents that includes the sections -like a mini-outline). Spelling, grammar, syntax, references and bibliography will also be evaluated. Creativity of thought process and understanding of the issues is what should be reflected in the paper (comparing articles and authors, and staying away from personal and unsubstantiated opinions). A mere description of the service and a compilation of quotes doesn't do it.

### D. Tests

There will be two tests. A mid-term (March 19) and a final (May 14). Both will include a combination of multiple choice and short answer format dealing with the issues from the readings, lectures and class presentations and discussions (this includes guest speakers and videos).

**E. Grading** - The standard university grading scale will be used. (A = 95 to 100; A- 90 to 94.99; B+ 86.66 to 89.99 and so forth)

Proportions of the final grade.

Case Study/ Activities	20%
Research paper	25%
Test #1	25%
Test #2	25%
Class Participation	5%

**G. REQUIRED TEXT:**

Community Resources for Older Adults by Robbyn R. Wacker and Karen A. Roberto, Pine Forge Press, 2007.

**CLASS DESCRIPTION  
COURSE OUTLINE**

- Jan. 23: Course Overview. Introduction
- Jan. 30: Chapter 1 & 2: New Era Demographics. Legislative Foundations
- Feb. 6: Chapters 3 & 4: Patterns of Services & Information & Referral
- Feb. 13: Chapter 5: Volunteer and Intergenerational Programs
- Feb. 20: Chapters 6 & 7: Senior Centers and Educational Programs
- Feb. 27: Chapters 8 & 9: Employment and Income Programs
- March 5: Chapter 10: Nutrition and Meals Programs  
(Case Study/ Activities Paper Due)
- March 12: Chapter 11: Health Care & Wellness
- March 19: Mid-Term Test
- March 26: Chapter 12: Mental Health Services
- April 9: Chapter 13: Legal Services
- April 16: Chapter 14 & 15: Transportation and Housing
- April 23: Chapters 16 & 17: Case Management & Home Care.
- April 30: Chapter 18: Respite Care & Caregiving
- May 7: Chapter 19: Long-term Care Services. (Paper Due)
- May 14: Final Exam

