

# **INTERNATIONAL ISSUES IN AGING**

**San Diego State University  
College of Health and Human Services  
DEPARTMENT OF GERONTOLOGY**

**GERONTOLOGY 522  
Spring 2008  
Hepner Hall 216  
Tuesdays 4 – 6:40 PM**

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## **SYLLABUS**

### **BACKGROUND**

Worldwide global population is aging, and at an unprecedented rate. As a result of the changing population structure, the world is facing new challenges which are being reflected in intense public policy debates on issues such as health care costs, family and social supports and the nature and provision of pension assistance and income security. Worldwide, in the coming years, the growth rate of the older population will be about three times as high as that of the total population, and the growth of the 75-and-over will be accelerating. These rapidly expanding numbers of older persons represent a social phenomenon without historical precedent.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

This course is designed to provide an understanding of the issues surrounding the rapidly growing number and proportion of older people around the world, and to study its socio-economic implications. The course explores the problems and solutions encountered in different sociocultural contexts for dealing with the challenges and opportunities for growing old. Therefore, the course is a comparative study of aging populations in different countries, and an analysis and evaluation of related policies and programs.

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

1. Discuss the demographic transitions, including the causes and determinants of the increase in number and proportion of the older population;
2. Demonstrate an understanding of changing population structures, their implications and consequences on health care, family and social supports, and pensions and income security;
3. Identify major international policies and programs for the elderly, especially the United Nations policies and principles which should guide world nations in addressing the challenges presented by the increase of older persons.
4. Understand how the conditions, policies and aging programs of different countries compare with the U.S. and other selected countries. This will provide a broader view of the world in terms of the human diversity that exists within the U.S. and also across societies.

## **COURSE PROCESS & REQUIREMENTS**

The class is essentially a **seminar** that will rely heavily on students' participation and oral presentations. Students are expected to keep abreast of current national and international issues in aging, through the media and other professional journals and publications. Personal on-going research, through a variety of methods, is essential for successful completion. Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and to share their progress in research.

The course will cover a variety of topics that encompass most aspects of global issues in aging. Students are expected to become aware of the main issues, needs, and service response of programs in an increasingly interdependent world of aging advocates and providers. More specifically, students have to be familiar with the required weekly readings, prepare questions and comments to share with other seminar participants and to actively participate in discussions. Attendance at each class is fully expected.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Each student is expected to attend class on a regular basis and actively participate in class discussions and activities. Reading of assigned texts in advance of class discussion is required. Material posted on blackboard will serve as reminders.

Students are responsible to check blackboard on a weekly basis.

*Attendance* - Attendance will be taken. Poor attendance and limited participation will have a negative impact on the final grade, 10 points will be taken off for every absence (recorded under "attendance/participation"), and perfect attendance will earn 10 additional points.

After three absences the student will automatically be withdrawn from the class and will be assigned an F in their final course grade. In cases of medical or personal emergency the student is required to contact the instructor beforehand and request for leave of absence. The instructor has the right to request documentation.

*Class Participation* - Students are expected to complete all exercises, assignments and tests as identified in the syllabus. For late assignments/ tests there will be a deduction of 10 points from the maximum possible 100 points. Students are responsible for arranging their schedules around classes.

*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.

### **Project & Position Paper**

1. **The In-Class** project requires each student to select a country of his/her choice (<http://www.aarp.org/research/international/map/>). It involves the participation of all students in presenting, discussing and analyzing, session by session, the status, conditions and needs of the elderly of the country they have selected. This is a weekly exercise that should help students understand and compare policies and services for the elderly in various countries of the world,

starting with emerging demographic trends and moving into the socio-economic implications of changing population structures. Policies, ethical issues and major services will be examined. Within the framework of weekly assignment in reading, research and analysis, and after a brief introduction by the instructor, students will present, debate and discuss the topic of the day from the perspective of the country they selected. Drafts of each chapter will be requested as the course progresses. Class attendance is essential for the success of this project.

2. The **Analysis Paper** consists of the total knowledge, information and data accumulated on the selected country during the course of this semester. It is a requirement of 18 to 20 pages – 15 to 17 for undergrads (double spaced, 1” margins, 12 pt Times New Roman), not counting cover page, table of contents, bibliography, appendices. Tables, graphs, charts, pictures, etc. belong in the appendix, properly referenced in the text. The appendix will also include a two page summary of at least one interview with an older person from the assigned country. The instructor will provide a suggested format and outline for the paper.
3. This assignment includes an **oral presentation** of the paper to the class, with the aid of a powerpoint (about 15 minutes: professional conference quality) followed by questions from the students. Reading parts of the paper is not allowed, neither should you read everything in every slide. A thorough understanding of the issues is required. Presentation will take place during the last two class sessions. Presentation assignments will be done by raffle.  
**Submission of complete papers is due on or before May 6.**
4. **Mid-Term Exam:** The first part of the course will include basic information that will set the parameters for the research paper. On April 8, there will be a test of the material covered up to that point. It will include both true/ false, multiple choice and brief essay questions.

## **TEACHING METHOD**

The first part of the course will include some lectures and a review of basic writings and materials related to the central issues involved in international aging. Regular access to SDSU Blackboard is required. Required readings and other special assignments will be posted on blackboard a week before every class.

The **seminar** components will require students' preparation for the issues under discussion. Students are to actively participate in class discussion by raising issues, debating points of interest and responding to queries from the seminar leaders or the instructor.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

- Kinsella, K., & Phillips, D.R (2005). Population Reference Bureau vol. 60, No. 1, Global Aging: The Challenge of Success.  
<http://www.prb.org/pdf05/60.1GlobalAging.pdf>
- National Institute on Aging (2007). Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective  
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/81775.pdf>
- Scobie, J., & Graham-Brown, S. Ed. (2002). HelpAge International, State of the World's Older People 2002, London, UK. <http://www.helpage.org/Resources/Policyreports>
- United Nations (2007). World Economic and Social Survey 2007: Development in an Ageing

World. <http://www.un.org/esa/policy/wess/>

Excellent *reference* document: Kinsella, K., & Velkoff, V.A. (2001). U.S. Census Bureau Series P95/01, An Aging World: 2001, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.

<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p95-01-1.pdf>

Students are required to subscribe to CAAR (Current Awareness in Aging Research): it offers, among other things, daily aging e-news from various world countries.

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/cdha/pubs/caar/subscribe.html>

Another weekly newsletter is prepared by Global Action in Aging. To subscribe, go to

<http://www.globalaging.org/quickgo.htm> and click on the arrow below and to the right of the word “subscribe” (at the top of the page).

Here are three web sites with important information in world aging. The monthly/quarterly issues highlight aging programs in different world countries:

<http://www.helpage.org/Resources/Regularpublications/AgeingandDevelopment> to view all the past issues of “Aging & Development”

<http://www.helpage.org/Resources/Regularpublications/Ageways> to read past issues of “Ageways”

<http://www.aarp.org/research/international/> AARP Global Aging Program: Breaking News, Reports, and a Quarterly Newsletter (under Reports, AARP Global Report on Aging, click on “current edition”; then, under archive issues, you can read old ones generally organized by themes).

Additional background material to assist in the preparation of the papers can be found in the library and will be described in class. Blackboard, under Course Information, includes a list of relevant web sites.

## **GRADING**

Class Participation & Discussion	10%
Paper Outline & Demographics	10%
Final Paper	30%
Class Presentation	10%
Test	40%

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

January 22: Introduction. Course Overview

January 29: “Why Population Aging Matters” (National Institute on Aging, 2007)

February 5: Demographics of Global Aging (“Global Aging” pp. 5 – 18)

February 12: Major Aging Issues: Personal & Community

- February 19: Health & Disability  
Life Expectancy & Changing Mortality  
(Chapters 3 & 4 of “Aging World: 2001”)
- February 26: Living Arrangements & Social Support  
(Chapters 7 & 8 of “Aging World: 2001”)
- March 4: The Business World and Aging – Productive Aging  
Work & Retirement  
Pensions & Income Security
- March 11: Family & Intergenerational Relations, Caregiving & LTC Issues  
Due: Paper Outline & Demographics
- March 18: Society & Culture  
Aging Myths and Age Discrimination
- March 25: Community Interaction & Support  
Support Programs and Services
- April 8: Mid-Term
- April 15: Global Migration Issues
- April 22: United Nations Aging Policies
- April 29: Project Presentations
- May 6: Project Presentations

