

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

**HEALTHY AGING  
Gerontology 603  
Spring 2008**

Thursday, 4-6:40PM  
HH216

Instructor: Karen Ross  
Office & Hours: To Be Determined  
858-694-8379

**Course Syllabus**

**A. INTRODUCTION:**

This course is an upper division introduction to the field of health and physical function as it relates to aging, disease risk and susceptibility, and prevention. As such, this course will be divided into two primary components: physiological approaches to aging and disease prevention. It will include current debate on topics of interest to the general population that concern institutionalization, health insurance, and the role of the medical model in how it impacts health care and long-term care.

The class will look at physiological aging and disease prevention from the perspective of the social sciences, the biological sciences, public health, social work, and health care applications. Students will be exposed to many different topics concerned with disease susceptibility and will be encouraged to conduct written and oral papers on specific topics of interest in the field.

**B. COURSE GOALS:**

This course is designed to:

1. Raise awareness about the later stages of the human life cycle and susceptibility to disease.
2. Give students the opportunity to become familiar with biological and public health applications for disease treatment.
3. Explore existing and potential careers in the field of aging that have relevance from the course curriculum.
4. Understand the impact of mental health and aging process.

**C. COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

At the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Summarize key body systems that are crucial to understanding the physical risks associated with aging.
2. Describe what is known in the field of disease prevention.
3. Describe the range of risks associated with declines in health status.
4. Identify key topics of future interest of concern to policy makers at the national, state, and local levels.

**D. TEACHING METHODS:**

Primary teaching methods will include lecture, class discussion, and guest speakers relevant to course objectives.

## **E. CLASS REQUIREMENTS:**

### **1. PARTICIPATION:**

Each student is expected to attend class on a regular basis (no more than 3 absences) and to actively participate in class discussions and activities. Participate in question and discussion. Read all assignments before the session in which the material will be discussed.

### **2. STUDENT RESEARCH PAPER and ORAL PRESENTATION:**

**Select Research Topic-** Each student will pick a research topic focusing on a particular disease, write a term paper and do an in-class presentation. The student will be required to write a term paper (10-12 pages) with bibliographic references) which is preceded by an oral report (approximately 30 minutes) to the class one week prior to turning in the written paper. (See format below)

**Oral Presentation-** Students will present an outline for the class. Hand-outs, overheads are strongly encouraged as part of the presentation.

**Outline for Research Topic-** Please use this framework for your paper and incorporate a) through f) as your paper headings. A term paper that is turned in without these headings will be returned to the student and marked as late which becomes a grade reduction.

#### **a) Introduction**

- What is the disease?
- What is the rationale for selecting it as your topic?
- What is the importance of this disease for aging?

#### **b) Epidemiological Description**

- Discussion of disease and related risk factors with age.
- Epidemiological description (who gets disease, population profiles, communities at risk, gender differences, cohort differences, etc.)

#### **c) Physiological Systems**

- In-depth discussion of physiological systems, physical function, etc.
- What happens and why.

#### **d) Implications for functional activities and ability to live independently**

- Implications for functional activity such as activities of daily living, burden on caregivers, burden on health care system, etc.

#### **e) Prevention**

- Disease prevention elements such as modification of risk factors (i.e., changes in diet, health promotion programs, etc.)

#### **f) Prognosis**

- Prognosis for the future (what happens if there are no changes, with changes in physical function, different systems of care, training programs, hospital care, clinic care, rehab care)

**3. EXAMINATIONS:**

There will be a mid-term and final. The mid-term will be a case vignette involving a family. Students will be asked to assess for high risk situations, possible intervention, and appropriate referrals.

**4. SITE VISIT:**

Students will visit a facility, social service agency, or organization related to aging. Students will interview agency administrator or designee. Format will be given to students for interview.

**F. GRADING:**

The following requirements will constitute the designated proportion of the final course grade:

- |                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Class Participation           | 10% |
| 2. Research Topic                | 40% |
| (Written Paper 30%)              |     |
| (Oral Presentation 10%)          |     |
| 3. Mid-term Examination          | 25% |
| 4. Site Visit                    | 15% |
| 5. Final Vignette –Group Project | 10% |

The following score ranges will be used for grading:

90 – 100 = A

80 – 89 = B

70 – 79 = C

60 – 69 = D

below 59 = F

**G. REQUIRED TEXT:**

Kubler-Ross Life Lessons

Additional Hand-outs provided by students and professor

## **COURSE OUTLINE**