

GEY 4001/DEP 4930 Gerontology – Spring 2025

Course Organization

Course Instructor:

Dr. Susan Bluck obtained her PhD from the School of Social Ecology at the University of California, Irvine, and completed a post-doc at the Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, Germany. Dr. Bluck's research focuses on social cognition across the adult lifespan, particularly how people remember their own life events, especially in late life. She runs an active laboratory investigating lifespan differences in (i) the everyday functions of autobiographical memory, reminiscence, and the life story, and (ii) autobiographical memory abilities and the relation of memory to the self. Dr. Bluck has received several awards for her research and also her mentorship of students. She is a fellow of the Gerontological Society of America and is involved in several international collaborations (in Taiwan, Austria, Trinidad & Switzerland).

Contact: Office in McCarty C, 506. Email: through course email system. You will hear back within 48 hours. Office hours appear on the site and I am also happy to set an appointment to meet in person or via conference. Contact me any time!

Teaching Assistant (TA):

Contact your TA at any time through the course email system. They are here to help and can meet with you by appointment. Feel free to be in touch.

Course Overview:

GEY 4001 provides an in-depth view of the aging process. The course material covers psychological aspects of aging in interaction with biological and sociological processes. A comprehensive textbook is combined with topical mini-lectures. This is augmented with visits to relevant websites, viewing of documentary videos, focused weekly class discussions requiring written responses, and engagement with 'portraits of aging.' The text provides the central theories, research methods, and hot topics in the field of aging. The mini-lectures and other videos introduce you to specific topics in aging research in Psychology and a variety of disciplines.

Course Learning Objectives

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

1. Articulate how the field of gerontology is studied in Psychology but is also multidisciplinary.
2. Describe the implications of biopsychosocial changes experienced as people age.
3. Detail the heterogeneity of the older adult population so as to combat ageism.
4. Fluently exchange ideas with others interested in research and practice in gerontology.

Required Textbook:

Introduction to Aging: A Positive, Interdisciplinary Approach, 2nd Edition, Sugar (2019).
Paperback or digital version. Use coupon code STUDYGC at www.springerpub.com for discount.

Course Organization

The site contains everything you will need to complete this course including weekly learning modules, details for completion of the term project (under 'assignments tab'), access to the quizzes (under 'quizzes tab'), and a course email system for communicating with the instructor, TA, and other students. Begin by reviewing course objectives and then reviewing the learning module for that week. Week 1 provides introductory reading and assignments. Starting with Week 2, each module will contain: 1) recorded lectures and/or films, 2) assigned reading of one or more chapters from your required textbook 3) discussion forum, 4) an interactive *portrait of aging*, 5) 'hit songs' from 1951 – 1965 to be rated. Seven weeks will also include a quiz.

Class participation

You will need to **review mini-lectures and/or videos**, and **complete the assigned text reading** (1-2 chapters). When you have mastered the substantive material for the week, you will be best able to participate actively in the discussion forums and engage in the portraits of aging segments. Discussions often require reading or viewing additional materials provided at the site or going to designated websites to review material.

Participating in the discussion involves you writing at minimum two paragraphs for your own post to the board in response to the given discussion questions for that week. You are also required to provide comprehensive responses to at least two other students' posts each week. See Tips sheet for writing a comprehensive post at the end of this syllabus. You are unlikely to have taken previous classes in which you had to write this much and do so on a consistent weekly basis. Make sure to stay on top of the material and write a clear, informative post each week. You should spend at least 40 minutes reading any additional materials required for posting and for preparing your post, and then responding to other students' posts. You are responsible for the Discussion material. The course instructor and teaching assistant will participate in the weekly discussion forums and are available to answer any questions you have about the course material via the course e-mail system.

Engaging with the weekly portraits of aging is also part of the course. These portraits of aging introduce you to 14 different centenarians (people who are at least 100 years old). Answering the required questions will help you identify the many different trajectories of aging. All older people have lived different lives, have different values and ideas. Understanding this diversity helps us to combat the ageist tendency of thinking of 'old people' as one homogeneous group.

Listening in by clicking on the weekly 'hit song' links. You will find links to songs that are hits from when current older persons in our society (i.e., currently 65 – 80 years old) were teens!. Hopefully listening to the music of a different generation will encourage understanding that they were once young...just as you will one day be old. Listen and enjoy. Rate the song of the week when you are through listening.

Course Attendance

This class is completely online. In that sense, course attendance is not taken nor does attendance count toward your grade. You will learn most and do well in this course if you keep up regularly with course readings, lectures, discussions and other activities. Time management and weekly engagement are key to online learning. You 'attend' this course by completing all the course requirement as shown below. UF's attendance policy is at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Course Requirements & Evaluation: Total points = 400

Discussion Forums (all weeks)

90 Points

To increase interaction with others, students are required to post an Introduction in Week 1, including uploading a picture. Respond to at least two other students' Introductions. You also should complete the Facts on Aging Questionnaire and do the Aging Implicit Associations Test (IAT) found on the Week 1 page. All aspects must be completed or no points are awarded (**6 points**).

Continue to participate in discussion forums, in small groups, through the entire course. Points are awarded based on both quality and frequency of posts across the course. In terms of quality, a random sub-set of your weekly posts will be graded (so it is a very good idea to perform well on posts across the semester as you do not know which ones will be chosen for grading). Write two paragraphs at least. You are graded on your own posts and responses to others. For frequency, you must complete the requirement of posting once and responding to at least two other posts for all assigned weeks to earn full points.

Grade for the Discussion Forum is given at the end of the semester based on post quality (**60 points**) and frequency of discussion forum activity (**24 points**).

Materials can be viewed and discussion forums completed any time during the week but **must be completed by Thursday evening** (11:59 pm) of the week in which they are due. You must then respond to AT LEAST two other students' posts in your group **by Sunday evening** (11:59 pm). See the end of this syllabus for tips on how to create a good post. Contact the TA or Instructor if you have questions/concerns about what is required. Watch for and read the Instructor's Discussion Forum summary posted by email at the close of each week.

Quizzes

140 points

You will need to install Lockdown Browser on your computer to access the quizzes. The course has seven quizzes each worth 20 points using True/False or Multiple Choice question formats. These quizzes allow you to demonstrate what you have learned from the lectures and text

readings. Each quiz is open Friday at 7:00 am through Sunday at 11:59 pm in the specified week. You will be allowed 40 minutes per quiz to ensure that this is not a 'stress-test.' No make ups are available except by UF Policy (see below).

Quiz 1 Due: Week 3

Students are required to complete a 20 question quiz online.

Quiz 2 Due: Week 5

Students are required to complete a 20 question quiz online.

Quiz 3 Due: Week 7

Students are required to complete a 20 question quiz online.

Quiz 4 Due: Week 9

Students are required to complete a 20 question quiz online.

Quiz 5 Due: Week 10

Students are required to complete a 10 question quiz online.

Quiz 6 Due: Week 12

Students are required to complete a 20 question quiz online.

Quiz 7 Due: Week 15

Students are required to complete a 20 question quiz online.

Portraits of Aging (Weeks 2 - 15)

42 Points

Read and review the portrait of aging, learning about the life of a centenarian. Answer the question of the week for that portrait by Sunday evening at 11:59 at latest. Three points are assigned for correctly answering each week's question, with 0 for no response or incorrect responses. These portraits help you identify the many different trajectories of aging. All older people have lived different lives, have different values and ideas. Understanding this diversity allows us to combat the ageist tendency of mistakenly thinking of 'old people' as one homogeneous group.

Music of the Older Generation: Hit Songs, 1951 – 1965 (Weeks 2 – 15)

14 Points

You will find a link to a hit song from the time that current older persons in our society (i.e., 65 – 80 years old) were in their teen years. Listening to the music enjoyed by the older generation, in their teens, may help you to more fully appreciate that they were once young...just as you will one day be old. Listen, then receive one point each week when you rate your favorite song.

Term Project: Aging in America Due FRIDAY of Week 14 **100 Points**

The 10-page term project is fully described on the site under the 'Assignments' tab. It is due by 11:59 pm EST as an attached Word document through the 'Assignments' system. Please put your last name and first initial in the filename of the document AND include your name inside the file. Many of you will not have completed this length paper for any of your courses before so remember to start early!

Syllabus quiz **14 points**

See the Getting Started page on the site. Complete the quiz showing that you have read and understand key points of the syllabus.

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Course Grading Scale

90% - 100%	A
87% - 89.99%	A-
84% - 86.99%	B+
80% - 83.99%	B
77% - 79.99%	B-
74% - 76.99%	C+
70% - 73.99%	C
67% - 69.99%	C-
64% - 66.99%	D+
60% - 63.99%	D
0% - 59.99%	E

For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Academic Integrity:

Please review the University's honor code at the following website:
<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

Make-up Quizzes or Other Work Policy/Accommodation Policy: Assignments must be completed at scheduled times as per syllabus. No late assignments will be accepted, except per UF guidelines, <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx> Contact the instructor in advance of deadlines to request any deviations from course schedule. Students requesting accommodation, register with the Dean of Students' office, 202 Peabody Hall, 392-1261. The DSO will provide documentation to the student who must provide to instructor.

Stressed out?

UF's **Counseling & Wellness Center** (go.ufl.edu/cwc), **Student Health Care Center** (go.ufl.edu/shcc), and **U Matter We Care** (go.ufl.edu/umwc) are ready to help you find and maintain a healthy balance in body, mind, and spirit.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Syllabus Quiz: Review the *Start Here* page of the site and take the Syllabus Quiz.

Discussion Forum: Please post your introduction to the Discussion Forum including your reactions to doing the two exercises below. Also upload your picture as part of introducing yourself. As per description under 'Weekly Discussion Forums' above, note that each week you should provide your own post and respond to at least two other student's posts.

Exercises:

(1) *Facts on Aging Questionnaire*: Complete this questionnaire. This is not a regular class quiz but an exercise to help you check to what extent you explicitly hold false ideas about older people. Just like racism or sexism, ageism is an issue to be addressed in our society. Check out your score, and then read the correct answers, to some common facts about aging.

(2) *Test your Implicit Views on Aging*: Go to <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/> Sign in as a guest to the site and click on Take a Test. You will see a page offering a lot of different tests. Click on the Age IAT. Follow instructions to take the test and see your results and their interpretation. In contrast to the Facts on Aging Questionnaire, this test assesses your non-conscious, or implicit, views on aging.

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 15: Careers in Aging

Week 2: Health and Development

Lectures

- Health Status of the Elderly
- *Maturing and Aging*: View this Annenberg Learner Lecture at: <http://www.learner.org/series/discoveringpsychology/18/e18expand.html>
- Nutritional Risks in Aging

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 9: Social Networks of Older Adults

Discussion Forum: Post to the forum and respond to at least two other student's posts.

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.
Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 3: Cognition and Personality

Lectures and Interviews

- When Does Cognitive Aging Matter?
- Language and Aging Interview

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 4: Mental Health, Cognitive Abilities, and Aging

Discussion Forum

Quiz #1: Open Friday through Sunday

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 4: Demography and Very Late Life

Lectures and Videos

- Demography of Aging
- *How to Live to 101*. BBC Documentary Film
- International Perspectives on Aging

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 1: The Longevity Dividend

Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 5: Biology and Everyday Activities

Lectures

- Hearing Loss
- The Older Driver
- Nutrition and Aging

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 2: Physical Changes and the Aging Process.

Discussion Forum

Quiz # 2: Open Friday through Sunday

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 6: Mental Health and Disorders

Lectures

- Clinical Disorders
- Depression and Aging
- Watch the video on Mild Cognitive Impairment Research at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jS7uH50t9Bk>

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 3: Health and Wellness for Older Adults.

Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 7: Family and Social Support

Lectures

- Aging in Family Context
- Alzheimer's Disease: a Son's Perspective on his Mother
- The 'Sandwiched Generation' Interview

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 14: Elder Abuse and Neglect.

Discussion Forum

Quiz #3: Open Friday through Sunday

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 8: Love and Sex

Lectures

- http://www.ted.com/talks/esther_perel_the_secret_to_desire_in_a_long_term_relationship View this TED Talk on Love and Desire.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wROImhRXrXE> View this AARP interview on sex and

aging.

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 5: Sexuality and Aging.

Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 9: Spaces and Places

Lectures

- Designing Spaces for Older Adults
- Aging in the Right Place

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 8: Age-Friendly Communities, Living Arrangements, and Housing Options.

Discussion Forum

Quiz #4: Open Friday through Sunday

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 10: Leisure and Productivity

Lectures and Video

- Women in Florida: Leisure and Retirement
- Creativity and Aging
- Wisdom and Aging Interview

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 7: Economics, Work, and Retirement.

Discussion Forum

Quiz #5: Open Friday through Sunday

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 11: Healthcare and Caregiving

Lectures and Interviews

- Medical Issues in Aging
- “Caring” in Health Care
- Care Center Therapeutic Recreation Interview

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 11: Medical Conditions, Assisted Living, and Long-Term Care.
- Sugar Text Chapter 12: Medicare, Medicaid, and Medications.

Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 12: Economics and Social Issues

Lecture and Video

- Economics of Aging: Social Security
- PBS Open Mind Series, Part 1 & 2: *A society with many more seniors than youngsters.* With Drs. Rowe and Fried (Columbia University). View at:
<http://video.pbs.org/video/1613331703> and <http://video.pbs.org/video/1650820871>

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 10: Older Adults Giving and Receiving Support.

Discussion Forum

Quiz #6: Open Friday through Sunday

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 13: Politics and Resilience

Lecture and Video

- Politics of Aging Interview
- The Elders videos: The concept for The Elders organization started with entrepreneur Richard Branson and musician Peter Gabriel. The idea was simple: In today’s ‘global village’ a small, dedicated group of elders could use their collective experience to help tackle the most pressing problems facing the world today. Branson and Gabriel took their idea to form a group of ‘global elders’ to Nelson Mandela who supported it, launching the group in 2007. Visit <http://theelders.org> View: <http://theelders.org/article/kofi-annan-jimmy-carter-mary-robinson-speaking-truth-power> and [Want to change the world? Take up the issue of climate change](#)

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 13: Older Women and Older Minority Group Members.

Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 14: Aging in America Term Project

- Due: Friday of Week 14 by 11:59 pm. *Good idea to start this earlier in the term and complete final version of your term project for hand-in this week.*

Understanding Aging in America: The focus of this project is to familiarize you with important social, governmental, and research institutions and agencies that contribute to the 'face of aging' in America.

- [American Association of Retired Persons](#)
- [US Aging](#)
- [American Society on Aging](#)
- [National Institute on Aging](#)
- [Elders Action Network](#)

For *each* site above, write 2 double-spaced pages in response to the following questions. Note that you should not solely cut and paste from the site but use your own language to answer the questions. If you do, in some cases, quote from the site, make sure to use quotation marks and to cite the website as the source of that material. Although you are answering the same questions (so this may seem redundant), you should provide new answers, as relevant, for each of the five different sites.

1. Describe the overall goal of this site? What is the mission of this organization? (5 points)
2. Who would be the primary users of this site, and why? (e.g., does this site provide information for older adults, caregivers of older adults, professionals in aging, researchers interested in aging?) (5 pts)
3. Provide a clear critique the site in terms of overall text, layout, navigation, and content. Indicate whether this site would be easy for an older adult to navigate and why. (5 pts)

4. Describe something *specific* that you learned from this site that would be useful to you if you pursue a career in aging, or in which you are interacting with older adults. Make sure you give something specific and be clear about how you would use that information. (5 pts)

Please submit your completed 10-page project in a single Word document (double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font, 1 inch margins). The name of your file must be your last name and first initial (e.g., SmithJ.doc). Remember to also put your name inside the Word doc file.

No Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating.

Week 15: The End and the Future

Lecture and Video

- The Hospice Approach to Death and Dying
- The Future of Aging in America: *Don't Grow Old*. View this BBC Documentary Film at: <https://topdocumentaryfilms.com/dont-grow-old/>

Assigned Reading

- Sugar Text Chapter 6: Death, Dying, and Bereavement.

Quiz #7: Open Friday through Sunday

No Discussion Forum

Portraits of Aging: Read the portrait and respond to the question.

Listen to hit songs! Then provide a rating

Tips for Lively, Interesting Posts to the Discussion Forum

There are several elements to creating a great discussion post. You will want to discuss the week's questions with a knowledge of facts and information from the assigned source materials. Feel free to also refer to class materials from lectures and text for that week. Make sure that the material you include is accurate and not based on your own stereotypes about what older people think or do. Remember that some weeks there are multiple questions, so be sure you have addressed all the question(s) in your post.

Once you know you have the facts, expand your discussion by asking yourself, "What else do I know about this topic that I might share with the group?" You could share prior knowledge based on information learned in other weeks or even in other classes, include greater implications in terms of relationship of this topic to societal issues, or refer to websites the class could visit for further reading.

Another way to expand your discussion is to ask yourself, "How does this topic/question apply to me or to real-world situations?" How might this topic be relevant for families, communities, America, or internationally? Think about questions that might serve to analyze or evaluate the topic from a different perspective.

Here are some more specific elements to think about when creating your discussion post:

Analysis of Discussion Topic

Be sure that what you have included is accurate, based on the assigned materials.

Ask yourself, "How might this topic/question(s) apply to me or other real world situations?"

What about this topic might be relevant for families, the greater community/society as a whole/globally?

Try to analyze or evaluate the topic/question(s) from a different perspective or consider how the issues raised might apply differently to different people.

Consider how all older people are both similar and different to avoid 'one size fits all' conclusions about the aging population.

Contribution to Discussion

Expand on the discussion topic or question(s).

Ask yourself, "What else do I know about this topic that I might share with the group?"

Share prior knowledge based on related personal experience or information learned earlier in this class or in other classes.

Discuss the topic's greater implications in terms of its relationship to American society today or the global aging population.

Include information from outside sources, such as web sites or books you've read.

Connecting to Assigned Readings

Include details from the assigned primary source materials specified by the question(s).

Include details from the assigned secondary source materials specified in the syllabus and course materials.

Include well-reasoned arguments to support connections you are making between the discussion topic and the week's other assigned materials.

Provide examples from the week's other assigned materials to support connections between these and the discussion topic/question(s).

Mechanics

Be sure you have addressed all the questions for the post. Some weeks include multiple questions.

Spell check before posting. Also re-read your post to edit for clarity and grammar.

Make sure the post is in line with the required length.