

T R E N T 

U n i v e r s i t y

Sociology 442H (Winter Term 2008)

Aging and the Life Course

Three-hour seminar weekly. Wednesday 3-6 pm. Room DNA B 105
Limited enrolment of 20

Instructor: Prof. Stephen Katz, Office: Otonabee College 137. 748-1011 X 6020. Email: SKatz@trentu.ca. **Secretary:** Cynthia Budgell, Otonabee College 154, 748-1011 X 1537. Email: Cynthiabudgell@Trentu.ca.

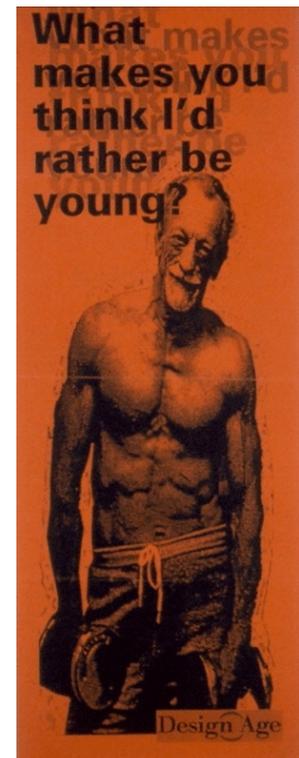
COURSE OVERVIEW



The course explores the field of social gerontology, population aging, retirement and lifestyle, intergenerational relations, caregiving and social support, and looks at critical approaches to aging and ageism in historical, feminist, postmodern, cultural and cross-cultural studies. While the contexts of old age and later life frame our focus on aging and the Life course, the theoretical questions and social issues the course examines also serve to introduce broader macro-social areas such as the sociology of time, the body, gender inequality, consumerism, public health and demographic politics. At the same time we consider the important ways in which the aging process is shaped by the micro-worlds of individual biography, cohort identity, social interaction, popular imagery, and

local environments and everyday spaces. The overall goal of the course's selected readings, assignments, films and seminar discussions is to develop an expansive and critical understanding of the problems and promises created by an aging society in the new millennium.

Weekly seminar discussions and presentations are best when they are dynamic, informed, creative, stimulating and collective. This requires that students read and think about the required material assigned for each week's class and attend seminars fully prepared to participate.



REQUIRED READINGS (Please purchase at the Trent Bookstore)

Stephen Katz (ed.). 2008. *Sociology 442H: Aging and the Life Course Reprint*. Canadian Scholars' Press.

Stephen Katz. 2005. *Cultural Aging: Life Course, Lifestyle and Senior Worlds*. Broadview Press.

RECOMMENDED READINGS: Articles on reserve at the Bata Library. Books in the stacks.

WEBSITES

Resources in Gerontology - www.trinity.edu/~mkearl/geron.html

Andrus Center Gerontology Library - www.usc.edu/isd/locations/science/library

GeroWeb - www.iog.wayne.edu/GeroWeb/html.

Aging: Website Links - www4.twu.edu/hs/hs/hs5063/agelink/htm#pubs

CyberSeniors - www.dibbs.net/explore/cyberseniors.html

Alzheimer Society of Canada - www.alzheimer.ca

Health Canada: Division of Aging and Seniors - www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Age of Reason Resources - www.ageofreason.com

Caregiver Network - www.caregiver.on.ca

Office of the Minister Responsible for Seniors (ON) - www.gov.on.ca/health/seniors

Canadian Association on Gerontology - www.cagacg.ca

COURSE SCHEDULE

JANUARY 9 INTRODUCTORY CLASS. Course syllabus, assignments, readings.

JANUARY 16 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: FROM SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY TO CRITICAL GERONTOLOGY.

Readings: "Theory, Explanation and A Third Generation of Theoretical Development in Social Gerontology" (V. L. Bengtson, E. O. Burgess, and T. M. Parrott, 1997). "Critical Gerontological Theory" (S. Katz, 2005). "Reflections on the Gerontological Handbook" (S. Katz, 2005).

Seminar Questions: How are social theories used in gerontological thinking? How are aging and the life course processes that bridge macro-structural and micro-everyday realms? Is there a need for 'critical gerontology' and if so, what makes should it include?

JANUARY 23 THE AGING POPULATION: GENERATIONAL RELATIONS, RETIREMENT AND DEMOGRAPHIC POLITICS.

Readings: "Population Aging" (Neena Chappell et al. 2003). "The Sociology of Generations: Conflict or Consensus?" (Chris Phillipson, 1998). "Dimensions of Grandparent-Adult Grandchild Relationships: From Family Ties to Intergenerational Friendships" (Candace K. Kemp, 2005).

Recommended: Ellen M. Gee and Gloria M. Gutman, eds. 2000. *The Overselling of Population Aging*. Oxford University Press.

Seminar Questions: What is the debate over 'generational equity' and why is it happening now? What is the demographic picture of Canada and how have demographic projections taken on political importance? Why and how have older people been constructed as a 'population'? What is the relation between the 'crisis' in healthcare and the aging population?

JANUARY 30 MOVING IN TIME: COHORT AGING IN STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE.

Readings: "Imagining the Life Span" (Katz, 2005). "Culture, Cohort, and Cosmetic Surgery" (Marcene Goodman, 1996). "Whose Life Course Is It Anyway? Diversity and 'Linked Lives' in Global Perspective" (Dale Dannefer, 2003).

Recommended: "Building a Culture of Retirement: Class, Politics and Pensions in Post-World War II Ontario" (James Struthers, 1997).

Seminar Questions: How are life course transitions experienced in individual ways? What roles do history and culture play in the making of specific life course regimes? How does the concept of 'cohort' contribute to our understanding of social aging?

FEBRUARY 6 GENDER, AGING AND FEMINIST GERONTOLOGY.

Readings: "Feminism, Ageism, and Age Relations" (Toni Calasanti & Kathleen F. Slevin, 2002). "The Gendered Life Course" (Neena Chappell et al., 2003). "Charcot's Older Women" (Katz, 2005).

Recommended: "Constructing Later Life/Constructing the Body: Some Thoughts from Feminist Theory" (Sarah Harper, 1997). "The Aged Body and The Discourse of Senescence" (Stephen Katz, 1996, *Disciplining Old Age: The Formation of Gerontological Knowledge*). Kathleen Woodward (ed.), 1999, *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations*.

Seminar Questions: How do gender and age intersect structurally and in the lives of women? What are the distinguishing features of a 'gendered Life course'? What have been the contributions of feminist theory to aging studies?

FEBRUARY 13 CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES AND THE DIVERSITY OF AGING.

Readings: "Deconstructing the Change: Female Maturation in Japan and North America" (Margaret Lock, 1998). "Complaint Discourse, Aging and Caregiving Amongst the Ju/'hoansi of Botswana" (Harriet G. Rosenberg, 1997). **Film:** 'Number our Days.'

Recommended: Jay Sokolovsky, editor. 1997. *The Cultural Context of Aging: Worldwide Perspectives*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey. Lawrence Cohen. 1998. *No Aging In India: Alzheimer's, the Bad Family, and Other Modern Things*. University of California Press.

Seminar Questions: What is the value of cross-cultural analysis in gerontology, and in understanding caregiving and intergenerational relations? How is experiencing the biological body a question of local interpretation, meaning and practice?

FEBRUARY 20 RESIDENTIAL READING WEEK (no classes).

FEBRUARY 27 AGING AND COMMUNITY CARE: BETWEEN PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL WORLDS.

Readings: “Identifying Needs Among ‘At Risk’ Older People: Does Anyone Here Speak Health Promotion?” (Cherry Russell, Brenda Hill, and Meg Basser, 1996). “The Spatial and Temporal Ordering of Care” (Julia Twigg, 2000). “‘You Need Them to Know Your Ways’: Service Users’ Views About Valued Dimensions of Home Care” (Aronson, 2003).

Recommended: Robin Bunton, Sarah Nettleton & Roger Burrows, eds. 1995. *The Sociology of Health Promotion: Critical Analysis of Consumption, Lifestyle and Risk*. London: Routledge. Sharon M. Keigher. 1999. “The Limits of Consumer Directed Care as Public Policy in an Aging Society.” *Canadian Journal on Aging*, Vol. 18 (2): 182-210.

Seminar Questions: How is health promotion both an ‘empowering’ program and a discriminatory one? What is the relationship between new healthcare programs (health promotion, community care, etc.) and the market rationalities of neo-liberal governments? How are personal worlds and homes affected by community and homecare programs?

MARCH 5 THE SOCIOLOGY OF CAREGIVING: ETHICS, RISKS, BURDENS, REWARDS.

Readings: “Older People as Carers as Well as Recipients of Care” (Clare Wenger, Gordon Grant, and Mike Nolan, 1996). “The Allocation of Responsibility for Later Life” (Kemp and Denton, 2003). “Busy Bodies” (S. Katz, 2005). **Film:** Labour of Love.

Recommended: “Gender Roles: Employment and Informal Care” (Anne Martin Matthews and Lori D. Campbell, 1995).

Seminar Questions: How is caregiving a dense interactional process affecting both caregivers and those in their care? Where does caregiving intersect formal and informal sectors? How is caregiving a cross-cultural problem?

MARCH 12 THE ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE MOVEMENT AND THE GERONTOLOGY OF DEMENTIA.

Readings: “Towards The Reconstruction of An Organic Mental Disorder” (Tom Kitwood, 1993). “Ethnographic Reflections on Selfhood, Embodiment and Alzheimer’s Disease” (P. Kontos, 2004).

Recommended: “Bringing the Social Back In: A Critique of the Biomedicalization of Dementia” (Karen A. Lyman, [1989]1994), Anne K. Vittoria. 1998. “Preserving Selves: Identity Work and Dementia.” *Research on Aging*. Vol. 20(1): 91-137.

Seminar Questions: How did Alzheimer's Disease (AD) become a social (disease) movement? How can we understand the connection between the human experience of AD and its medicalization, social and institutional contexts? What would be a ‘person-centered’ approach to caring for people with AD and dementia in old age?

MARCH 19 SPACES OF AGE, PLACES OF RESIDENCE.

Readings: “Design of Institutions: Cognitive Functioning and Social Interactions of the Aged Resident” (Brendan Gail Rule, Doris L. Milke & Allen R. Dobbs, 1994). “The Lobby as an Arena in the Confrontation between Acceptance and Denial of Old Age” (Tova Gamliel, 2000). “Spaces of Age, Snowbirds, and the Gerontology of Mobility” (Katz, 2005). **Film:** *The Way Home*.

Recommended: “Encrusted Elders: Arizona and the Political Spirit of Postmodern Aging” (Robert Kastenbaum, 1993). Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein. 1999. “The Nursing Home as a Discursive Anchor for the Ageing Body.” *Ageing and Society*. Vol. 19(5): 519-538.

Seminar Questions: How is aging spatialized? What issues arise in specialized built environments and institutions? How do informal spaces shape older residents’ meanings about aging identities?

MARCH 26 THE POSTMODERN LIFE COURSE? CONSUMERISM AND ‘POSITIVE’ AGING.

Readings: “Growing Older Without Aging?” (Katz, 2005). “Forever Functional” (Marshall and Katz, 2005). “Exemplars of Retirement” (Katz and Laliberte-Rudman, 2005). **Film:** *Never Say Die*.

Recommended: “The Busy Ethic: Moral Continuity Between Work and Retirement” (David J. Ekerdt, 1994). Christopher Gilleard and Paul Higgs, 2000, *Cultures of Ageing: Self, Citizen and The Body*.

Seminar Questions: How is senior citizenry becoming a commercial category? What ethical demands are there for older persons to be active, mobile, autonomous, self-sufficient and healthy? What might be the costs of such ethics for ‘dependent’ elders who require public support?

APRIL 2 THE AGELESS FUTURE? Images of Aging Projects.

Seminar Questions: Is it desirable to grow older without aging? How have biotechnologies affected the boundaries between life and death?

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS

(Late submission of assignments is not permitted and subject to grade penalties at the discretion of the instructor).

I. Class Participation and Presentations (10%): (1) Attendance, preparation, informed participation in class discussions and topics. (2) A seminar presentation based on a week's readings, summarizing main points and questions related to the week's topic. Written submissions are not required for the presentation, but students are encouraged to accompany their presentations with examples, documents, cases or materials from their own experiences, observations and interests.

II. Age/Image Project (30%). Due Date: Wednesday, April 2, submitted in class. Students might also be asked to present a summary or some aspect of their age/image project in the last class perhaps in a conference-type context.

What does age look like? This project requires you creatively to review some aspect of our culture's representation of the aging process, old age, later life, intergenerational relations (older and younger) or life course models. Books, stories, movies, health campaigns, popular literatures (e.g., financial, leisure, marketing), "grey" activist documents, print media, cyberspace, film, social/public spaces, fashion, music, sports, urban plans, government policies, poetry, fairy tales, or any combination of these, are possible sources of cultural representations. You might even create a "palette" or poster of images (i.e., from different sources) which together represent a certain theme or problem. You may also look at images and representations of aging in non-human contexts (e.g., built or natural environments, pets and animals, etc.).

If you are interested in TV shows and advertisements, there is an obvious absence of aging because they favour younger bodies, actors, behaviours, etc. But keep in mind that this project is about actual images of aging, not their absence. While your creativity is encouraged, the review should also make explicit the image or images of aging being selected; their cultural, historical, discursive or artistic context or background, and your analysis of them (whether critical or supportive). Where possible, please include copies of your images, documents, videos and other representations.

Secondary sources are not necessary to include, but good examples to consult are: *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life* (Mike Featherstone and Andrew Wernick, 1995); *Figuring Age: Women, Bodies, Generations* (Kathleen Woodward, 1999); *Ageing & Popular Culture* (Andrew Blaikie, 1999); *The Stages of Age: Performing Age in Contemporary American Culture* (Basting, Anne Davis, 1998); *Aging Bodies: Images & Everyday Experiences* (Christopher A. Faircloth, 2003).

III. Essay Assignments

OPTION A: Two reading review exercises @ 30% each.

READING REVIEW EXERCISE I (30%):

DUE DATE: Wednesday, Feb. 6 [essay marked/returned Feb. 13] or Wednesday, February 27 [essay marked/returned March 12]. **Suggested Size:** 1000 - 2000 words.

* Submitted in class.

The course required readings from January 16 to February 13 focus on the theoretical features of social gerontology and the ways in which the aging process and the Life course have been studied and problematized. With reference to at least five of our readings (you may use more or recommended readings as well) from this part of the course, address **one** of the following questions:

1. Give at least two reasons why 'critical gerontology' is critical.
2. Discuss at least two ways in which feminist, and/or historical, and/or cross-cultural studies are valuable to our understanding of aging?
3. Define at least two ways in which the Life course is socially constructed.

READING REVIEW EXERCISE 2 (30%)

DUE DATE: No later than Wednesday, April 9, submitted to the Sociology Office, Otonabee College 154, by 12 noon, OR sent by that date to: Stephen Katz, 26 Marowynne Drive, Toronto, Ontario, M2J 2A4. **Suggested Size:** 1000 - 2000 words.

The course required readings from February 28 to March 28 focus on specific social issues related to aging and the Life course: health, Alzheimer's Disease, caregiving, leisure and consumerism, and social spaces (both real and virtual). With reference to at least five of our readings (you may use more or recommended readings as well) from this part of the course, address **one** of the following questions:

1. Discuss at least two issues associated with the care of older persons.
2. How are identities in aging shaped by cultural, economic and/or technological values and priorities in at least two ways?

OPTION B (60%): DUE DATE: No later than Wednesday, April 9 (same submission details as above for review exercise II). Suggested Size: 2500 - 4000 words.

A larger research essay that uses some of the theoretical and thematic ideas from the course to investigate a specific topic related to aging and the Life course. Topics cannot be the same as your age/image review topics, but there are a wide range of choices from which to make a selection, such as theoretical, applied, issue-oriented, historical, cross-cultural, popular or political topics, amongst others. The paper should show evidence of independent reading and research, appropriate use and reference to course readings and theoretical ideas, and an analytical or critical approach (not merely descriptive) to the topic. Part of your grade will be awarded to your topic development. To aid you in the formulation of a focussed topic and organized essay it is advisable that you submit an essay outline (not a listing of possible essay topics) no later than two weeks prior to the due date (in order to receive feedback on it). The outline should, if possible, also include some preliminary bibliography.

* If you plan to include field research based on interviews with people, or gathering information that involves residencies, then please obtain a sociology research permission form beforehand (see S. Katz about this).

Summary of Evaluations:

Class Participation and Presentations: 10%

Age/Image Review project 30%

Two short essays (30% each), or one longer essay-project (60%).

Trent University's Grading Scheme and Policy on Plagiarism are printed in the University Calendar.

Access to Instruction: It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Seminar Presentations Evaluation Scheme

1. The Ideal - Highly Satisfactory Presentation (15 - 25 minutes)

* 3 - 5 minutes: Provides an overview of the content of the seminar article(s) assigned for the week. Commentary on what the strengths and/or problems of the authors' argument and main points.

* 3 - 5 minutes: Discusses the key themes of the article(s), how they relate to each other, whether they make similar points or whether they make contradictory points.

* 3 - 5 minutes: Discusses how the themes in the article(s) relate to other themes that have presented in class, and what value the article(s) have for the course's topic(s) of the week.

* 5 - 10 minutes: Raises discussion questions and involves the class in a participatory exercise that is aimed at making people think about the points raised. Provides something that contributes to the discussion from outside the article(s) such as a personal experience/story or examples of materials (internet, magazines, ads, overheads, diagrams, other papers or documents, etc.).

* Demonstrates that thought, organization and critical reflection went into the presentation.

2. The Adequate - Satisfactory Presentation

* Only 2-3 points from the Ideal - Highly Satisfactory Presentation are Covered thoroughly or adequately

* Presentation is either too lengthy or too brief.

* Presentation provides an insufficient overview of the article(s) (i.e., simply re-states what has been said, overuse of quotations from the article(s), and/or fails to cover the articles equally, and/or lacks in critical or analytical effort).

* Draws only on the instructor's thinking or discussion questions from the syllabus to stimulate discussion.

* Presents no other materials or examples, or whose materials and examples are unrelated to the course topic or article(s) presentation.

3. The Mediocre - Poor Presentation

* Only 0 - 2 points from the Ideal - Highly Satisfactory Presentation are Covered thoroughly or adequately.

* In addition to any/all the characteristics listed with the Adequate - Satisfactory Presentation, the presentation offers no discussion questions, class participatory involvement or outside materials or examples.

* Presentation demonstrates a quick, unreflective, partial and/or minimal reading of the article(s), with little attempt to related arguments and points in the article(s) to each other, to the week's topic or the course in general.