I. Basic Course Information

A. Course Number and Title: HMNS 220 - Introduction to Gerontology

B. Date of Proposal or Revision: Fall 2007

C. Sponsoring Department: Humanities, Social Sciences & Education

D. Semester Credit Hours: 3 credits

E. Weekly Contact Hours: 3  
   Lecture: 3  
   Laboratory: 0

F. Prerequisites: None

G. Laboratory Fees: N/A

II. Catalog Description

This course will provide an overview of the field of gerontology, focusing on the physiological, psychological, and socioeconomic aspects of aging. Among topics to be covered are health care and costs, Alzheimer’s disease, retirement policies, Social Security, pensions, and intergenerational conflict. Students will become familiar with the community resources available to assist older adults, as well as the role of social work in supporting senior citizens and their families in a variety of settings.

III. Statement of Course Need

Assisting older adults is rapidly becoming a major area for employment in both entry level and more skilled professional positions. This course provides broad exposure to the settings in which older adults receive assistance, including public benefits, housing arrangements and other supportive services. This course serves as a specialized elective option for the Human Service program and is required for the Health Science degree program.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

A. Free elective
   • This course fulfills a specialized elective in the Human Service Degree program.
   • This course is required for students in the Health Sciences program.

B. Course transferability: This course should transfer as a specialized elective into many social science and human service programs, as well as allied health programs.
V. Outline of Course Content

A. Demographics & diversity
B. Public policies
C. Physiological changes in later life
D. Depression, dementia & Alzheimer’s disease
E. Theories of aging
F. Housing options & supportive services
G. Caregivers & care giving
H. Community services & resources

VI. Educational Goals and Learning Outcomes

Educational Goals

Students will:
1. develop an understanding of beliefs & myths that shape assumptions about the needs of older adults and their treatment by others, both public & personal (G.E. 6);
2. use technology to locate community resources appropriate to older adults in diverse circumstances and share information resources with classmates (G.E. 3);
3. develop an understanding of aging within the context of diverse cultures, including the effects of race and gender on personal experiences and resource availability (G.E. 1, 5, 6);
4. become familiar with the major theories that inform our understanding of aging (G.E. 4, 6);
5. become aware of the benefits, services and community resources available to and needed by older adults and their families (G.E. 1, 4, 6);
6. become familiar with the role of social work in assisting older adults in a variety of settings (G.E. 4).

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:
1. define ageism and describe the damaging impact it can have on older adults
2. identify factual information re: the aging population in the U.S., including common physiological changes in later life and demographic characteristics
3. identify the signs, symptoms and distinctions among depression, dementia and Alzheimer’s disease
4. identify the primary provisions of major legislation and government programs designed to serve older adults
5. contrast and compare alternative living arrangements available to older adults
6. identify the major theories applied to the experience of aging
7. conduct a biopsychosocial assessment of an older adult applying theories to personal experience gained through service learning

VII. Modes of Teaching and Learning

The primary formats, modes, and methods for teaching and learning may include:
• lecture/discussion
• small-group exercises
• guest speakers
• independent study
• service learning
• personal interviews
• field visits

VIII. Papers, Examinations, and other Assessment Instruments

Assessment methods used may be:
• oral presentations
• reflection papers
• group participation
• written examinations
• written & verbal analysis of case scenarios
• participation in service learning

IX. Grade Determinants

In order to evaluate achievement of the goals and outcomes listed above, possible grade determinants may include:

• participation in class discussions
• preparation of a biopsychosocial assessment
• midterm and final examinations
• satisfactory participation in service learning

X. Texts and Materials

Samples of specific texts that may be use:


Additional chapters and articles on Reserve in the Library.

XI. Resources

• Library for reserve materials
• Computer access for research of community resources
• Field visits to experience a variety of housing alternatives
• Guest speakers from various disciplines and community services
• Practical experience through service learning