

**SOCIOLOGY 373**  
**Sociology of Aging**  
**Spring 2009**

Instructor: Michael K. Corman  
Phone: 403-220-6226

Office: SS 902  
Email: [mkcorman@ucalgary.ca](mailto:mkcorman@ucalgary.ca)

Class Time: Tu/Th – 11-1:50pm

Room # ST 130

Office Hours: Tu/Th 10:00-11:00 **or by Appointment**

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Anthony Giddens (1991) describes sociology as “the study of human social life, groups, and societies. It is a dazzling and compelling enterprise, having as its subject matter our own behaviour as social beings. The scope of sociology is extremely wide, ranging from the analysis of passing encounters between individuals in the street up to the investigation of global social processes.”

One major substantive area of sociology is the study of aging. It has been only recently that the majority of individuals can expect to live to an old age. Why is this? How does this impact society (individually and structurally)? The sociological study of aging asks such questions. Because of the “graying” of Canada (and other countries around the world), the sociological study of aging is an ever expanding and important field. In this course, students are introduced to the sociological study of individual and population aging, with a focus on elderly Canadians. Throughout the course, a multitude of intersecting topics are explored, including demographic trends, attitudes and stereotypes about aging, gender and aging, ethnicity and aging, family life, retirement, health and healthcare, death and dying. Furthermore, what I call the social organization of health care and aging is examined towards the latter part of the course.

**COURSE TEXTS**

Chappell, N., Gee, MacDonald., & Stones, M. (2008). “Aging in Contemporary Canada.” Second Edition. Toronto, Canada: Prentice Hall.

Diamond, T. (1992). “Making Gray Gold: Narratives of nursing home care.” Chicago, USA: The University of Chicago Press.

Williams, A. Paul, Raisa Deber, Pat Baranek, and Alina Gildiner. “From Medicare to Home Care: Globalization, State Retrenchment, and the Profitization of Canada’s Health-Care System,” pp. 7 – 30 in Armstrong, Armstrong, and Coburn, eds. *Unhealthy Times*, Oxford University Press, 2001. [Posted on Blackboard]

Additional readings may be assigned as deemed necessary.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**Successful students will be able to demonstrate through exams and other assignments:**

- A working knowledge of the basic components of the major sociological perspectives as they relate to aging.
- A comprehensive knowledge of the cause of population aging and its significance to changing demographic trends.
- The ability to critically assess and discuss the implications of population aging to society at large and individually.
- A critical understanding of how aging in contemporary Canada (and elsewhere) is socially organized.

## **METHOD OF INSTRUCTION**

This course will consist of lectures, audio visual presentations, videos, and group exercises and discussions. Students are required to attend class regularly and to read each assigned reading **BY THE DATE INDICATED** before class. Students are responsible for all lecture material, some of which is not available in the assigned readings. You are unlikely to succeed in this course if you ignore the book and only attend the lectures or if you simply read the text and miss class.

## **AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS OF CLASS LECTURES**

Students are **NOT** permitted to record lectures in any manner without expressed written consent from the instructor.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

Class/Group participation	5%	Ongoing throughout the term
Midterm Exam	25%	See course outline
Book Club	15%	See course outline
Written Assignment	25%	See course outline
Final Exam	30%	Due first week of exam period

## **CLASS/GROUP PARTICIPATION:**

Discussion and the debate of ideas are valuable methods for developing critical thinking skills, as well as communication skills. The **Class/Group participation** component of this course (5%) reflects your active participation in the class dialogue and group activities. Throughout the term, you will meet in small groups to discuss/debate issues relevant to class material (to analyze a situation or answer a key question).

## **BOOK CLUB (15%) Due June 11:**

Students are to write a two to three page (four pages max.) critical review/assessment of Timothy Diamond's book, "Making Gray Gold," in preparation for the book club. The assignment should include a brief summary of the book and some key insights that you gained from reading the text. Some questions you may consider include: how does the book relate to course content? How has the book informed your understanding of aging? What are some limitations of the book? Additionally, the assignment should include critical and/or clarification questions from your reading of the book. Please feel free to refer to page numbers and specific passages.

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT (25%) – Critical Analysis of a Cultural Artifact of Age (Due: June 23)**

This assignment gives students the opportunity to link something found outside of the classroom about aging to course material. Students are required to identify a cultural *textual* artifact about age and provide a critical analysis of it in relation to what you have learned in the course thus far. A detailed description of this assignment is posted on Black Board. Furthermore, the assignment will be discussed in detail in class.

**MIDTERM AND FINAL:**

The midterm will include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The **Midterm** (25%) is scheduled for June 2. The **Final Exam** (30%) will include a combination of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and long answer questions and is scheduled by the Registrar's Office and will occur during the exam period in June. The Final Exam will **ONLY** include the material after the Midterm.

**COURSE POLICIES**

**\*\*\*IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT SOCIOLOGY 373 E-MAIL PROTOCOL\*\*\***

*BEFORE e-mailing the instructor: Check the textbook, this syllabus &/or the university regulations for the answers to your questions. Keep your messages short and concise, and DO NOT ask me to explain assignment requirements over e-mail... I do that in class... so be there! If you have questions specific to your assignment, please make an appointment or see me during office hours. If you do e-mail...*

ALWAYS put SOCIOLOGY 373 in the SUBJECT line

*Otherwise, your e-mail could be deleted as spam or directed to a junk mail file.*

- 
- My office hours are posted on my door and listed on the course outline. **I am also happy to meet with you at other times depending on availability.** I check my email daily, so this is the best way to schedule an appointment or to get quick answers to your questions or concerns.
  - Any student with special needs to be accommodated (e.g., learning disabilities, hearing, sight or physical impairment) should discuss their situation with me.
  - Students missing the midterm may only schedule a deferred exam once they have presented valid documentation.
  - If you are aware of events that may preclude you from attending classes or completing assignments, you *must* let me know as soon as reasonably possible.
    - It is not acceptable to tell me the night before.
  - **All assignments are due at the beginning of class as per the date indicated.** Students missing deadlines for assignments may only submit their work once they have presented valid documentation. Late penalties may be applied (up to 10% per day. Students will have 10 days to turn in their assignment, after which time the assignment will no longer be accepted and the student will receive a zero).

## TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE *(Subject to change)*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Class Work</b>	<b>Readings</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b>			
May 14	- Intro to class - Intro to Sociology of Aging and Population Aging		Chappell et al. – Introduction + Ch. 2
<b>WEEK 2</b>			
May 19	- Attitudes and Myths about aging  - Social Theory and Knowledge building in Gerontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movie – “A new look at aging: Myths of aging”</li> </ul>	Chappell et al., Ch. 1 (Excluding bottom of page 6 to top of page 11)  Chappell et al., Ch. 3 (Excluding bottom of page 59 to 61)
May 21	- Social Theory and Knowledge building in Gerontology continued		Chapter 4
<b>WEEK 3</b>			
May 26	- The Gendered Life Course		Chappell et al., Ch. 5
May 28	- Age and Ethnicity		Chappell et al., Ch. 6
<b>WEEK 4</b>			
June 2	Exam – Beginning of class	<b>Exam</b>	
June 4	- Health and Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movie – “Don’t take my sunshine away”</li> </ul>	Chappell et a., Ch. 7, 8, 9
<b>WEEK 5</b>			
June 9	- Families, Social Support, and Caregiving  - Aging with Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movie – “The Ties that Bind”</li> </ul>	Chappell et al., Ch. 11 + 12
June 11	- Families, Social Support, and Caregiving continued  - Health Care System Policy	Book Club Assignment Due	Chappell et al., Ch. 15
<b>WEEK 6</b>			
June 16	- Social Organization of Health Care and Aging Continued		Diamond
June 18	- Health Care System Policy  - Work and retirement, and Pension and Economic Security for Older Canadians		Diamond + Williams et al., (2001) – posted on blackboard  Chappell et al., Ch. 13 + 14
<b>WEEK 7</b>			
June 23	- End of life issues	Written Assignment Due	Chappell et al., Ch. 16
June 25	- Review		
<b>Exam Period</b>			
	- <b>Final Exam</b>	Scheduled by the registrar’s office between June 27-30 2009	

## **Mandatory Notices:**

***Safewalk:*** The University of Calgary provides a “safe walk” service to any location on Campus, including the LRT, parking lots, bus zones, and campus housing. For Campus Security/Safewalk call 220-5333. Campus Security can also be contacted from any of the “Help” phones located around Campus.

***Exam Policies:*** You must provide advance notice to the instructor if you are unable to take an exam. All requests for deferral of an examination due to health reasons must be accompanied by written documentation as outlined in the University Calendar and should be obtained while the student has the physical or emotional problem rather than after recovery. Deferred exams may be allowed in the following circumstances: illness, domestic affliction or religious conviction. If you have missed an exam for a legitimate reason, you will be able to write a “make up” exam as close to the original exam as possible. The date and location will be at the convenience of the Sociology Department. Travel arrangements and misreading of the syllabus are not valid reasons for requesting a deferred exam. Deferred exams will not be granted if it is determined that just cause is not shown by the student.

***Ethics Research:*** Students are advised that any research with human subjects - including any interviewing (even with friends and family), opinion polling, or unobtrusive observation - must have the approval of the Departmental Ethics Committee. In completing course requirements, students must not undertake any human subjects research without discussing their plans with the instructor, to determine if ethics approval is required.

***Academic Misconduct:*** Cheating is regarded as a serious academic offense. Students are advised to consult the University Calendar, which presents a Statement of Intellectual Honesty and definitions and penalties associated with cheating, plagiarism, and other academic misconduct.

***FOIP:*** The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) legislation disallows the practice of having students retrieve assignments from a public place, e.g., outside instructor’s office, the department office etc. Term assignments must be returned to students individually, during class or during the instructors office hours; if a student is unable to pick up their assignment from the instructor, they may provide the instructor with a stamped, self-addressed envelope to be used for the return of the assignment.

**Grading System:** Grades are entered as raw scores into the grading system. Your final letter grade is computed based on the weighted sum of your raw scores. The University of Calgary calendar provides the following grade description:

Excellent, superior performance: A+ = 95%-100%, A = 85-94%, A- = 80-84%

Good, above average performance: B+ = 77-79%, B = 73-76%, B- = 70-72%

Satisfactory, basic understanding: C+ = 67-69%, C = 63-66%, C- = 60-62%

Minimal pass, marginal performance: D+ = 55-59%, D = 50-54%

Unsatisfactory performance: F = 0-49%

### Academic Accommodation

Students with a disability, who require academic accommodation, need to register with the Disability Resource Centre (MC 295, telephone 220-8237). Academic accommodation letters need to be provided to course instructors no later than fourteen (14) days after the first day of class. **It is a student's responsibility to register with the Disability Resource Centre and to request academic accommodation if, required.**