

011602

**PSY 736**

Spring, 2002

Course title: Psychology of Adult Life and Aging (Ref No. 39564, section 001)

Class meetings: Wednesdays, 1-4 PM, Room 100, Huntington Hall.

Instructor: Professor William J. Hoyer

Office: 458 Huntington Hall

Phone: 443-3663

Email: wjhoyer@mailbox.syr.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-3, Wednesdays, 11-12

Required readings: Course Packet (available at the Copy Center in HH)

Course Objectives and Organization: The field, psychology of adult life and aging, has as its aims the description, explanation, prediction, and optimization of age-related changes in behavior that occur during the adult life-span. The primary objective of this course is to survey a broad albeit selective subset of the literature in the psychology of adult life and aging. Students will learn about research and theory bearing on biomedical, cognitive, and personality, adaptive, and social processes throughout the adult life-span, and about applications of current research and theory to practical matters.

Course Organization and Requirements: The course is a graduate seminar. During class meetings, time will be used for review and discussion of research and theory, and for the discussion of applications of research findings to practical situations. Class time will also be given to presentations of research articles by students, and to discussion of these articles. Students are expected to attend all class meetings, to complete assigned readings prior to class, and to participate in discussion.

Evaluation of course performance is based on three presentations of research articles, four homework assignments based on assigned readings, and two take-home exams (due on February 27 and April 24). The nature of these requirements is described below:

Presentation of research articles: Each student will give three oral presentations. Each of the articles to be presented will be selected by the student based on its relationship to one of the articles on the reading list. It is expected that each presentation will be about 25-30 minutes. A presentation consists of a summary and critique of the rationale, methods, and findings of the article, and a discussion of its bearing on the assigned reading. That is, the article to be selected and presented might report a replication and extension, contradictory evidence, or the work that motivated the assigned reading. One suggestion would be to select the to-be-presented article from the reference list of an assigned article. At the time the article is presented, the presenter

will distribute a hard copy of their summary to each class member, and a photocopy of the article. Presentation dates will correspond to the schedule for course readings. For example, an article related in one way or another to Lang (2001) would be presented on the day that article was read by class members. There is no big hurry for students to decide or settle on the article for presentation. However, students will sign-up for the articles from which their presentations will be drawn on January 23. Article presentations can begin as early as January 30.

Homework and class participation: Students will hand-in homework at four class meetings (to be selected from 9 possible dates). Because homework hand-ins and research presentations (3) must be on different topics there are actually six possible dates for turning in the four homework assignments. For each of the homeworks, the assignment is to identify and elaborate one strength or weakness in one of the assigned readings. It is expected that students will be sensible, concise, focused, creative, wise, critical, and/or skeptical in addressing a shortcoming or flaw or a unique strength observed in one of the assigned readings. Use of additional readings is not expected. The thoughtfulness that goes into these homeworks will set the tone for class discussion. Handed-in homeworks, and their discussion, will serve as a basis for evaluating class participation. The expected length of each homework assignment is 1-3 typed pages. Homeworks must be handed-in on the date of the topic. Class meetings will frequently begin with a discussion of ideas in the homeworks and comments, critique, and questions regarding the assigned readings.

Take-home exams: The two take-home exams are intended to provide an opportunity for students to integrate material bearing on the most important topics and themes covered in the course. Each exam will consist of 3 essays to be selected from 5 or more questions. The questions for exam I will be distributed on January 30 or earlier, and answers are due on February 27 at 2:00 PM, or earlier. For example, one of the questions for the first exam will be as follows: Evaluate the hypothesis that there has been a major increase in “intelligence” during the past 50 years (or so). The questions for exam II will be distributed on March 27 or earlier, and answers are due by April 24 at 2:00 PM, or earlier. One of the questions for the second exam will be as follows: Evaluate the usefulness of self-report measures as complements for selected laboratory measures of cognitive aging. The expected length of each answer is 3-6 pages.

Grading: Each homework assignment is graded as P (pass) or U (unacceptable, re-do). Each presentation and exam question is graded as A ( $\geq 90\%$ ), A- (88-89%), B (80-87%), B- (78-79%), C ( $< 77\%$ ) or unacceptable (0). At the request of a student and at Dr. Hoyer’s discretion, second shots or revised versions of answers to the exam questions will be accepted. Revisions would be in response to feedback and comments provided by Dr. Hoyer, and a strict deadline for turning in the revision would be specified. In such cases, there would be no penalty (i.e., a higher grade would go into determining course grade). Assignments are weighted as follows:

Presentations of research articles (each 100 points)	300 points
Homework (each 25 points) and class participation	100 points
Take-home exams (each essay question 100 points)	600 points

There is a total of 1,000 points to be earned. Course grade is determined as follows:

A = 900 or more points

A- = 880-899 points

B = 800-879 points

B- = 780-799 points

C = less than 780 points

Attendance policy: Students are expected to attend all class meetings, to complete the readings as assigned, and to participate in class discussions. Two unexcused absences will result in a lowered course grade.

Note: Students who may need special consideration because of any sort of disability should contact Dr. Hoyer as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss special arrangements if needed.

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<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
Week 1 (Jan 16)	Introduction and Overview	
Week 2 (HW1) (Jan 23)	Demographics, Disability trends (handouts) Cohort effects (Flynn effect, Raven's data)	
Week 3 (HW2) (Jan 30)	Brain aging (cholinergic hypothesis, homeostatic processes, cell proliferation) (Bartus, Cottman)	
Week 4 (HW3) (Feb 6)	Aging and neuro-cognitive function (Kornack, Langley & Madden, Hoyer)	
Week 5, 6 (Feb 13, 20)	No class meetings	
Week 7 (HW4) (Feb 27)	Intelligence (Beier, Owens, Salthouse (3)) Take-home exam I due	
Week 8 (HW5) (March 6)	Complex cognitive tasks (Arnell, Hartman, Keinan, Rogers)	
Week 9 (March 13)	No class meeting (Spring break)	
Week 10 (HW6) (March 20)	Attention (Rogers, Scialfa)	
Week 11 (HW7) (March 27)	Cognitive expertise, control (Braver, Chun, Massunaga, Ingolfsdottir)	
Week 12 (HW8) (April 3)	Cognitive skills (Maylor, Touron, Woltz)	
Week 13(HW9) (April 10)	Life style, social behavior, health (Calvaresi, Hultsch, Lang)	
Week 14 (April 17)	Applied gero-psychology (NIA report, Czaja)	

Week 15  
(April 24)

Self-report methods (Shiffman, Stone, Pennebaker, Baldwin)  
Take-home exam II due

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Reminders:

January 23, 30: Sign-up for research presentations (each student selects 3 articles to present in class from the course packet).

January 30: Earliest start for class presentations

January 30: Questions for take-home exam I will be distributed.

February 27: Take-home exam I is due.

March 27: Questions for take-home exam II will be distributed.

April 24: Take-home exam II is due.