

SOCIOLOGY 319 – AGING AND SOCIETY

Prerequisites: None / General Education: Area D1

INSTRUCTOR: DR. ELAINE WELLIN

Professor Emeritus / Sociology

DESCRIPTION: In what text author Robert N. Butler calls the *Longevity Revolution*, people are living longer and older adults comprise an increasingly larger proportion of the population. What challenges and opportunities does this demographic change pose for individuals, families, and society? Popular conceptions about elders and about generations across the spectrum are examined critically and results of data-based analyses may not be what you expect. A life span perspective will show that our attitudes and actions today have important impacts on all our futures. Course requirements include lectures, midterm and final examinations, class assignments, and an elder interview project.

This course will describe the origins, challenges, adjustments, and social and individual benefits of advancing longevity and the age of populations. It will question contemporary assumptions about late life, viewing these assumptions from both life span and social constructionist perspectives. Thus, it will acknowledge the conceptions and effects of current demographic shifts on people throughout the life span in U.S. and global populations. It will link students' familial concerns, their own relations to parents and grandparents, to the ways in which, for example, familial care of the frail elderly is influenced by population aging and by political decisions about the just distribution of social resources. In short, from a life-course perspective, we will attempt to demonstrate how generations are shaped by larger social forces, and conversely how actions by individuals and groups shape and reshape social conceptions of aging in contemporary societies. In these ways, the course applies sociological perspectives to convey understandings about how cultural diversity and complexity influence individuals, institutions, and societies. It conveys an understanding of the factors influencing inequality and social justice, especially as related to aging and critical, contemporary lifespan issues.

REQUIRED BOOKS – PARTIAL LISTING ONLY

Two (2) required texts available at North Light Books, 1720 E Cotati Ave, Rohnert Park, (in Wolf Den Plaza / www.northlightbook.net) or online sources.

Robert N. Butler, MD (2008). *The Longevity Revolution: the Benefits and Challenges of Living a Long Life*

J. Kevin Eckert, Carder, Morgan, Frankowski, and Roth (2009). *Inside Assisted Living: The Search for Home.*

SUGGESTED, NON-REQUIRED TEXTS:

Jill Quadagno (2011). *Aging and the Life Course: an introduction to social gerontology* (fifth ed)

Nancy R. Hooyman and H Asuman Kiyak (2011). *Social Gerontology: a multidisciplinary perspective* (ninth edition)

Information is subject to change.