

Course Title: Gerontology PSCH 4305
Instructor: Kathleen Rivers
Office: BAB 108
Virtual Hours: Tuesday 2:00pm – 4:00pm
Appointments: <https://calendly.com/kathleen-rivers-sulross>
Office Phone: 432-837-8019
Email: kathleen.rivers@sulross.edu

Student Learning Outcomes:

Welcome! What comes to mind when you think of aging? Can you relate to any of these famous quotes?

"Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

~Mark Twain "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" ~Satchel Paige

"I still have a full deck; I just shuffle slower now." ~Author Unknown

"The key to successful aging is to pay as little attention to it as possible." ~Judith Regan

Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. ~Henry Ford

This course provides a broad overview of the multidisciplinary field of gerontology with an emphasis on key sociological, biological, and psychological aspects of age, aging, and the aged. A special focus is placed on the great diversity that exists within the older population. Students are encouraged to explore (a) their own attitudes and beliefs about aging; (b) what it means to age successfully; (c) career opportunities within gerontology.

Course Objectives:

Through class chapter readings, activities, and discussions, students will develop an awareness of the variety of influences related to aging and the field of gerontology. During the course, students will learn to analyze and synthesize information as well as how to critically discuss and evaluate topics related to aging.

Books: The course will use Open Educational Resource (OER) and books on the subject for additional information.

Link to course book: <https://nobaproject.com/textbooks/new-textbook-b68b9698-1e04-47a9-9803-92b7c973e8de/modules/aging>

Additional book:

Better with Age: The Psychology of Successful Aging

by Dr. Alan D. Castel

Publisher : Oxford University Press; American First edition (August 29, 2018)

ISBN-10 : 0190279982

ISBN-13 : 978-019027998

This course will assist students to:

1. Describe age-related changes in biological systems, social relationships, social roles (e.g., retirement), cognitive abilities, and health and well-being.
2. Recognize the presence of ageism within our society.
3. Describe the implications of population aging for individuals, families, and society.
4. Distinguish between normal aging and the problems or diseases associated with aging.
5. Explain how gender, ethnicity, history, cohort, and socioeconomic status contribute to the experience of aging.
6. Apply their knowledge of aging to better understand themselves and their family relationships.
7. Demonstrate an ability to compare and contrast different points of view on controversial topics related to aging, such as antiaging research, healthcare, and changing social insurance programs (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare, & Social Security).
8. Consider the implications of their actions for their own individual aging as well as for the aging of society.

Marketable Skills:

- **Speaking Effectively:** Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences.
- **Describing Feelings:** Students will demonstrate empathic or active listening and conversational skills, and/or write clearly about their affective stance, respectfully attuned to the needs of their audiences.
- **Identifying Resources:** Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources.
- **Analyzing:** Students will demonstrate ability to examine the underlying issues of scientific problems, attending to the pertinent details and creating action plans, recognizing ambiguity and complexity as essential components.

Recognizing Course Requirements:

1. Respect for students and lecturer must be maintained at all times when we meet online. Respect is a basic human characteristic that entitles each person to their own right and identity.
2. It also helps to nurture a healthy learning environment.
If you recognize that respecting others may be a problem, please be courteous and alert me or more suitable personnel (e.g. Sul Ross State University psychologists, family members, lecturers, close friends) and or refer to the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the SRSU Student Handbook.

Sensitive Topics:

During the course of this class, you may have strong emotional/psychological reactions to the course material and/or discussions. If you feel that you are having difficulty with the learning environment, please discuss this with me immediately before continuing the course. Counseling and Accessibility Services (<http://www.sulross.edu/section/2408/counseling-accessibility-services>) can provide brief, short-term individual and group counseling or refer you to off-campus providers. You have already paid for these services through your Student Service Fee, whether you use them or not.

Course Behaviors:

- Respect and Disruptions: Watch the VIDEO on NETTIQUETTE - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWMk_Zv7nB8 and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80uRE972uQO>.
- Student Conduct and Discipline section of the SRSU Student Handbook (http://www.sulross.edu/sites/default/files//sites/default/files/users/docs/stulife/student_conduct_discipline.pdf)

SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website.

Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

ADA Statement

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director or Ronnie Harris, LPC, Counselor, at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartze@sulross.edu or ronnie.harris@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

Library Services Statement:

The Sul Ross Library offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

Honoring Academic Integrity: Any instance of academic misconduct such as:

- (1) turning in an identical written assignment for another course without approval
- (2) copying from any source without proper citation.
- (3) crossing the boundary of what is allowed in a group project
- (4) lying in connection with your academic work

- (5) cheating
- (6) plagiarism
- (7) Using AI ChatGPT resources in attempt to cheat on exams, discussion, or writing assignments
- (8) misrepresenting facts and/or collusion are contrary to the purpose of any educational institution and will be dealt with most severely to the extent of the university's disciplinary policy and/or through legal action.

An instructor who determines that a student has been dishonest academically can at a minimum issue no credit for the assignment/exam, and/or pursue more severe penalties, including but not limited to failing the course. Before the penalty is imposed, the student has the right to appeal to the division chairperson or Assistant Provost for the Academic Affairs. Further information about Academic Honesty can be read in the SRSU Student Handbook and procedures for dealing with these acts are outlined in the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy.

For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information.

The Lobo Den Tutoring Center offers FREE tutoring support to help you excel in your courses.

Whether you need assistance in Writing, Math, Science, or other subjects, we're here to help!

Important Information:

- **Drop-in and Scheduled Appointments:** Flexible options to fit your needs.
- **Hours of Operation:** Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- **Workshops:** Attend our regularly hosted academic workshops on STEM topics and professional development, often in collaboration with specialized faculty.
- **Location:** BWML Room 128.
- **Contact Us:** For more information or to book an appointment, email tutoring@sulross.edu or call (432) 837-8726.

Looking for additional support?

- **Tutor.com** offers FREE 24/7 online tutoring in over 200 subjects, including specialized support for ESL and ELL learners with native Spanish-speaking tutors.
- **Access Tutor.com via Blackboard:** Log in to your Blackboard account to get started anytime, anywhere.

Take advantage of these valuable resources to boost your confidence and performance in your classes. We look forward to helping you succeed!

Class Participation:

This course requires discussion. Class attendance IS REQUIRED and will be determined with ONLINE participation. The percentage is considerable so your presence will help your ability to complete all of assignments for this class. Written discussions will not be accepted if texting language is used (for example: using i instead of I, emoji's, etc..).

Active involvement includes writing, participating via an online poll or quiz, engaging in online discussions and taking exams by the deadline date. In order to be successful in this course, you need to check your Sul Ross email daily, and Black Board announcements.

Communicating with the Professor: The best way to contact me is through the VIRTUAL OFFICE on Black Board. GENERAL QUESTIONS will be posted to a discussion board for all. For PERSONAL or PRIVATE ISSUES email me at kathleen.rivers@sulross.edu. I strive to respond as soon as possible. If you do not receive a reply within 24 hours during the workweek, please resend your email.

Assignments:

Discussions: There are 12 discussions at 75 points each. Discussions ensure reflection on the material presented in the course. It is essential that each student responds in a timely manner so that discussions benefit all students in the course.

Quizzes – This is a 10-question review (1 point per question, total 10 points) given to ensure that you have read the chapters, watched any PowerPoints, and understand the most pertinent concepts. Some of these questions will be on the midterm and final exams.

Midterm and Final Exams - Two (2) exams will be given during the course of this term. They may consist of 50 multiples choice, fill in the blank, or essay questions. The dates of the exams are planned for the dates listed below in the class schedule. Please note that there will be no make-up exams unless it is an excused absence with corresponding documentation.

Participation: This is an online course that your timely responses to discussions is your participation in the course. Thus, if you are regularly late or miss discussions it is the same as missing a class. For every discussion there are additional 20 points for a total of 240 points added at the end of the course for participation. Points only apply if the discussion follows format instructions and is submitted on time.

Portfolio Project - The goal of this assignment is for students to complete the course with an individual collection of materials related to this course, which are relevant to them and/or their field. The portfolio will relate the information from class to life beyond this introduction and may encourage you to reflect, experience, and review psychologically in the real world. Obviously, people take away different things from the class and your portfolios will display this. This project must include the Self-Introduction and the Aging Person Presentation. No late portfolios will be accepted unless due to illness and with documented proof.

- Self-Introduction – Write two pages about yourself and your experience in this class. (100 points). Due April 29, 2025. Rubric will be provided.
- Aging Person: Students will develop a PowerPoint on an aging person (200 points). You will include their name, ethnicity, country, age, retirement status, medical history, family members who help them if they have any, social security, Medicare, Medicaid, etc.. . Rubric will be provided. This is not a class presentation but will be submitted to the instructor. An example will be provided. Presentations will be submitted by April 29, 2025, before 11:59pm.

Extra Credit Activity – *These points may be received for participating in up to two within the following activities. (5pts/activity; 10pt maximum): Attendance at a public lecture or activity related to psychology, such as drug/alcohol abuse, domestic violence, mental health awareness, a cultural event, an international event or religious activity different then your own, etc. Submit a summary to me via email (kathleen.rivers@sulross.edu) or on Blackboard of your attendance at the activity and what you learned from it.*

Class Schedule:

- Each week there will be PowerPoints or videos that relate to the OER Text. Quizzes will be taken from the material covered.
- Each week discussions will be developed on the chapters read from *Better with Age: The Psychology of Successful Aging*
- Assignments in the form of discussions and or quizzes are due every week on Sunday by 11:59pm.
- Midterm will be online starting Friday March 7, 2025 at 8:00am to Sunday March 9, 2025 at 11:59pm.
- Final Exam will be online starting Friday May 2, 2025 at 8:00am to Sunday May 4, 2025 by 11:59pm.
- Portfolio due April 29, 2025 by 11:59pm.

Additional requirements will on occasion come up during the class. These requirements will be described as we encounter them, given our development as a class and as individuals. Syllabus subject to changes.

Attachment 1: General Guidelines for Written Assignments in Psychology

Follow these specifications, unless you are instructed otherwise:

1. Refer to pp. 61-67 of your *APA Publication Manual (7th Ed.)* to format your paper.
2. Double space everything and use 12-point Times New Roman. That is exactly what you are reading here, and it is very easy to read on a screen or on paper.
3. Use one-inch margins all around on every page.
4. Number all your pages in the upper right-hand corner.
5. Always include a cover page. The cover page should be centered and it should include (listed on separate lines): your paper's title; your name; your program and school (Psychology Program, Sul Ross State University); the name of your course; your professor's name, and the due date for the assignment.
6. Create a title that is original and descriptive, not something bland and uncreative like "Psychology Reflection Paper" or "Journal Assignment 1."
7. Do not include an abstract in your paper. Abstracts are for scientific journals.
8. Include a references page; make sure that all your references should be formatted correctly in APA style (not in MLA style or some other style).
9. Grammar-check and spell-check your paper before submitting it.
10. Keep a back-up of your paper on your own computer.
11. Remember that your cover page and your references page do not count toward the page count of the paper. For example, a five-page reflection paper should have a title page, five *full* pages of text, and a references page. (2023, Dr. Wesley D. Wynn) **Reference** Straub, R.O. (2019). *Health psychology* (6th ed.). Worth Publishers.

Attachment 2: Discussions will fall into 2 categories - Summary/Reflections

A **summary** of something is essentially a retelling of key points. A summary paper should be clear, concise, hierarchical and as comprehensive as possible, given the length limitations of the assignment. Let's examine each of these terms. "Clear" means easy to read and understand. We attain clarity by being specific in what we say, using the simplest language possible to convey the right meaning, and obeying the rules of grammar, usage, and style that we depend on for effective communication. "Concise" means saying as much as possible in as few words as possible. "Hierarchical" in this context means focusing on what's most important and leaving out what is less important. "Comprehensive" means covering all the major elements of something. For example, a comprehensive summary of a book that has twenty chapters will summarize the main aspects of all twenty chapters, not merely ten or fifteen of them. A comprehensive summary of a textbook chapter with seven major topic headings will cover all seven of those major topics, and pull out the main points for each topic, leaving out minor points.

Writing summaries of complex material such as chapters can be a useful aid in learning. complete the main points of a book or the plot of a film.

Reflection papers are, first of all, not summaries. A summary is descriptive, but it doesn't reveal much at all about you, the author, other than how effective you are at writing a summary. A reflection paper is an assignment where you write about your own reflections in response to something you are assigned to watch, listen to, read, or experience. (That something is frequently a film or book, but it could also be a short story, a magazine article, a poem, a musical performance, a YouTube video, or many other things.)

So what are reflections? Reflections are your own thoughts, questions, insights, interpretations, and speculations about the psychological aspects of whatever you have been assigned to watch, listen to, read, or experience. Primarily, your reflections should relate to or connect with specific concepts and theories you have learned in this class (and in other psychology classes). To a lesser extent, you may include insights related to your own personal observations and experiences in your own life. However, the focus in every paragraph of a reflection paper should either be or closely relate to the assigned material, so only discuss things from your own life experience to demonstrate a connection with the assigned material.

One critical thing to remember about reflection papers is that you are not supposed to use them to summarize whatever you have been assigned. Here is an example of summarization in a paper that was supposed to be a reflection paper related to a film:

The film “As Good as It Gets” involves a main character by the name of Melvin Udall, who is first depicted as a smart aleck with a lot of obsessive-compulsive tendencies a bad temper, and a selfish outlook toward others. Melvin is a writer who lives alone. He is next-door neighbors with a craftsman named Simon, who gets robbed and beaten. Melvin hesitantly helps Simon out by watching his dog while Simon recovers in a hospital and he eventually lets Simon move in with him. The other main character is Carol. Carol is a waitress at a coffee shop where Melvin goes for breakfast each day. For Melvin, having breakfast at the coffee shop and having Carol wait on him is an important part of his daily routine. So one day, when Carol takes off work to deal with her sick child, Melvin becomes extremely restless because his routine is disrupted.

That description is okay, but it’s rather boring if you’ve already seen the movie. And honestly, if you wanted a summary of any film, you could find a much better one on the Internet. Although summaries can be very useful in the proper context, such as when you are trying to organize the essential points of a complex textbook chapter, they do not work in a reflection paper.

Once again, in contrast to summarizations of material, reflections are your own personal thoughts, questions, insights, interpretations, and speculations that relate to various psychological aspects of whatever you have been assigned (film, video, book, article, poem, et cetera). There are a million ways to write about your reflections, but here is one good example referring to the same film as above:

Melvin was the character I’d hoped he would be, artistically speaking. He puts up a mental wall blocking out the people around him. I believe he was thinking that his emotions were a vulnerability that might expose weaknesses within him. I’ve seen that before in other people. Growing up, I was always told by an uncle to be careful with whom I share personal information because it can back-fire. Perhaps because of that strategy of dealing with people, my uncle’s judgment of character has not been the best because he’s always at arms-length with everyone he comes across, trying not to “let them in.” So that similarity between my uncle and Melvin caught

my attention. Also, there is a stereotype that all artists must be a little crazy. Like Melvin, my uncle is an artist. And he’s a little crazy himself.

Isn’t that more interesting? It shows that the author here has seriously thought about what he saw in the film. He is analyzing one of the film’s characters and he makes a perceptive comparison with a person from real life. The author’s reflections here are psychologically sophisticated, original, and unique to his own thoughts and experiences.

So this is what you should aim for in a reflection paper. It might involve more effort than simply writing a summary, but it makes you think. And it is an effective way to learn more deeply about the ideas you are studying.

Once again, an essential point to understand about reflection papers is that whatever you write in a reflection paper should *connect in clear and significant ways* with whatever work you are reflecting on—the book, chapter, article, film, podcast, et cetera. Unless what you are writing is both psychological in focus and closely related to the work you were assigned to reflect on, then instead of writing a reflection paper, all you might be doing is writing a **journal**.

A few students submit reflection papers in which they only briefly mention the work they were assigned to reflect on, and then never say anything else about that work. Often these papers are interesting, and even quite touching, because the authors tell important stories about their lives. But unless such stories are closely intertwined with discussion of aspects of the book, film, etc. that has been assigned, such papers are only journals instead of reflection papers. Journals have their purposes; unfortunately, as journals, they do not meet the expectations of reflection papers.

Attachment 4: General Assessment Rubrics for Assignments in Psychology

Assessment rubrics are helpful to plan and evaluate professional writing and oral presentations. Students should refer to these rubrics at appropriate times during the development of their oral and written assignments.

RUBRIC FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS					
DIMENSION OF ANALYSIS	Fail 0	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Top 4
Topic and Focus follow the instructions provided for the assignment.					
Structure is logical in its organization & fully developed, with a distinct introduction & conclusion.					
Audio-Visual Aids are effectively utilized and appropriate for professional presentations.					
Verbal Communication is clear, fluent, well-paced, properly intoned, and not over-reliant on notes or slides.					
Non-verbal Communication clarifies and enhances the message with appropriate eye contact, gestures, and posture.					
Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation meet levels expected for formal professional presentations.					
Documentation fully conforms to accepted professional standards.					

RUBRIC FOR PROFESSIONAL WRITING					
DIMENSION OF ANALYSIS	Fail 0	Poor 1	Average 2	Good 3	Top 4
Psychological Analysis of the subject matter is relevant, accurate, and thoroughly utilizes assigned sources.					
Clarity of Expression is appropriate for professional-level communication.					
Grammar, Spelling, & Punctuation meet levels expected for formal professional writing.					
Documentation <u>fully conforms to accepted professional standards.</u>					

Attachment 5: *Psychology of Successful Aging* Assignment

We will read through this book in six weeks, according to the schedule below. Each week, you will write at least two full pages of reflections covering the assigned segments for the week. Carefully read and follow all the guidelines and instructions in syllabus attachments 1 through 4 for these and all written assignments for this course.

At the end of the seven weeks, you will have written at least fourteen pages of reflections over *In Order to Live*. You will then have a week to assemble the work you wrote over the prior seven weeks and submit a completed paper of ten full pages.

For the overall assignment, 30% of the grade will come from merely submitting the seven two-page weekly papers on time and in good general order. The remaining 70% will come from your completed paper that will cover the entire book.