

PSCH 4305: Gerontology

[January 13, 2026 – Version 1.0 – Subject to Minor Revision]

I. Essential Course Information

A. The Course Description

This course provides a survey of major issues related to aging across adulthood. Topics include physical and mental health, family dynamics, work and retirement adjustments, and legislation and public policy affecting older adults. Students will examine how biological, psychological, social, and policy factors shape the aging experience and quality of life.

B. Our Meeting Time and Location

This course is a web course (also known as an “online asynchronous” course).

C. Your Instructor

Assistant Professor Chun-Hao Chiu
Email: chunhao.chiu@sulross.edu

Office: Room 104 at 3420 Amy St.
Phone: 830-498-5826

When to contact: Anytime. From your own Sul Ross email account, email me to convey your concerns or to make an appointment. Out of courtesy, provide your name in every email, and state which course you are taking. Virtual hours will be held on Tuesdays from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the course room via Blackboard Collaborate Ultra.

D. Your Course Materials

Required Texts

- *Adult Development and Aging (9th Edition)*, by John C. Cavanaugh. ISBN: 978-0-357-79627-6.
- *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 7th Edition*. ISBN-13: 978-1433832161.

E. The Student Learning Objectives for this Course

The student will be able to:

- Describe major biological, psychological, and social changes associated with aging across adulthood.
- Analyze issues related to aging, including physical and mental health, family dynamics, work and retirement adjustment, and public policy affecting older adults.
- Apply gerontological concepts and research findings to real-world situations involving aging and older adults.

II. Your Assignments

A. Weekly Readings and Homework (30%)

Each week, you are expected to complete the assigned readings, which may consist of a textbook chapter or journal articles. When a textbook chapter is assigned, you must complete the corresponding fill-in-the-blank worksheet. When journal articles are assigned, you must write a paper responding to the articles, using prompts provided on Blackboard. Please refer to the weekly schedule on Blackboard for specific due dates.

B. Online Discussions (10%)

Each week, you will participate in a series of discussions on Blackboard. Please take part in these discussions regularly. Discussions will be available each week from 12:00 p.m. on Monday until 11:59 p.m. on Saturday.

You are expected to contribute at least one substantive post each week. All postings to the discussion boards should be thoughtful and well-written. Thoughtful contributions will receive credit; overly brief or trivial contributions will not. Examples of credited and uncredited contributions are provided in a separate document on Blackboard.

C. Weekly Exams (30%)

Weekly exams will cover material from the assigned textbook chapters and will be held over 11 weeks. Exams will be posted and available at 12:00 p.m. each Monday and must be completed by 11:59 p.m. on Saturday. Every student enrolled in this course is expected to take each exam. However, each student may miss up to two weekly exams without penalty; no explanation is required.

Note: Students who miss more than two weekly exams may be subject to being dropped from the course with an automatic F for non-participation.

Each weekly exam consists of two parts. The first part includes 50 multiple-choice questions, for which you are required to select the correct answer. The second part includes several essay questions, for which you must write accurate and complete responses in your own words.

D. The Film Reflection Paper (15%)

The film reflection paper provides an opportunity to reflect on key psychological concepts and theories related to adult development and aging covered in this course. This semester, you will watch *On Golden Pond* and write a reflection paper connecting the film to these concepts and theories. The paper should be 2–3 pages, double-spaced, in 12-point Times New Roman font. APA format is required; outside sources are optional.

Submit your paper on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. on the due date listed in the syllabus. More detailed instructions for writing the paper will be provided on Blackboard.

E. The Final Exam (15%)

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions covering all material from the semester. It will be administered online on Blackboard.

III. Assignment Calendar, Attendance Policy, and General Assignment Information

A. The Calendar

<u>Week</u>	<u>Assignments and Topics</u>
Week 1 (Jan 14)	Introduction to the Course
Week 2 (Jan 19)	Ch. 1: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 3 (Jan 26)	Ch. 3: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 4 (Feb 2)	Ch. 4: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 5 (Feb 9)	Ch. 5: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 6 (Feb 16)	Ch. 6: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 7 (Feb 23)	Ch. 7: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 8 (Mar 2)	Ch. 10: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
* Week 9 (Mar 9)	*** <i>Spring Break – No Sul Ross Classes March 9-13</i> ***
Week 10 (Mar 16)	Ch. 11: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 11 (Mar 23)	The Life Course Perspective Applied to Families Over Time
Week 12 (Mar 30)	Ch. 12: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 13 (Apr 6)	Retirement Adjustment
Week 14 (Apr 13)	Ch. 13: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 15 (Apr 20)	Ch. 14: Learning Worksheet, Exam, and Discussion
Week 16 (Apr 27)	Film: On Golden Pond
May 1	The Film Reflection Paper Due
Final Week	<u>Final Exam</u>

Notice: The schedule of topics above is subject to change for pedagogical reasons at the discretion of the instructor.

B. The Attendance Policy

Sul Ross State University allows that students may be automatically dropped with an F from courses if they acquire excessive absences, defined as nine hours of absence from a course. (This translates to 3 absences from an evening course, 6 absences from a daytime course, and 3 absences from a summer course). The professor may enforce this policy strictly whenever a pattern of negligent behavior is observed.

In web courses, three hours of absence will be defined as one calendar week of non-participation in a summer or fall course, or four continuous days of non-participation in a summer course, as measured by completion of exams, participation in discussions, and submission of other assignments on Blackboard.

Students who without authorization arrive late or leave class early for any reason without approval may be counted absent for the entire session. Attendance may be taken at any time during a class meeting and more than once during a class meeting. Students who are not present for roll call will be counted absent.

C. General Assignment Information

Assignments must be submitted through Blackboard unless otherwise authorized. Assignments that are emailed without prior authorization will not be considered submitted.

If you have a problem that prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, contact the professor immediately once you determine that you cannot resolve the problem and submit the assignment as instructed. Waiting until after the deadline to contact the professor may result in forfeiture of the grade for the assignment.

Exam dates will not be changed except in exceptional circumstances. Deadlines for other assignments, such as papers and presentations, may in certain circumstances be postponed to a later date, but not advanced to an earlier date. (In other words, students may in some instances be granted additional time to submit assignments.)

If it is not possible to administer a final exam (for example, due to an internet outage, power outage, emergency school closure, or other extraordinary circumstances), final grades for this course will be calculated solely from the assignments submitted prior to the final exam.

● Other than any exceptions described herein, all major assignments in this course *must be completed and submitted to pass this course*, regardless of a student's grades on other assignments. Students who do not submit *all major written assignments* by their deadlines are liable to receive an F as a final grade for this course.

● Do not wait to complete and submit major assignments on their due dates. Due dates are deadlines. They are the final opportunities to submit your work; they are not the ideal opportunities to submit your work. So don't wait until the last possible day to submit something important. The reason is simple: things can go wrong. Emergencies arise. Electrical service can be interrupted. Computer equipment can malfunction. You or someone in your family can suddenly get sick. So fight the temptation to procrastinate. Try to submit a good version of each major assignment a day or two before the deadline. You can go back and upload revisions until the last minute if nothing goes wrong. But don't run the risk of a last-minute disaster.

The times and dates when homework and assignments are due will not be altered to fit a student's schedule. All students will be expected to alter their schedules to fit class responsibilities.

In the interest of more thorough coverage of certain topics, the professor may decide to omit some of the assigned material from coverage on an exam. Each student is responsible for learning about any announced omissions.

IV. Grading

A. The Calculation of Grades

Grades for the course are calculated as follows: A: 90% or above; B: 80%-89%; C: 70%-79%; D: 60%-69%; F: 0%-59%.

B. The Basis of Final Grades

Grades in this course are based on performance alone. Grading is not based on how hard someone has worked to earn a particular grade, or whether someone needs this course to graduate, or on personal & family needs, or on personal conceptions of fairness or justice. All grades, including the final course grade, will be based on a student's academic performance in this course, according to the criteria described in this syllabus.

C. The Reporting of Final Grades

For non-graduating students, final course grades will be posted at noon on the Monday after commencement (and for graduating seniors, at noon on the Thursday before commencement). Final exam week is a hectic time for students and the faculty alike, so please respect the privacy of all your professors during and after this period. Please do not inquire concerning grades between the start of the final exams period and when grades are reported. If the professor needs information from you during this time, he will be the one to initiate contact.

Unsolicited voicemails and emails from any non-graduating student during the final exams period might have to go unanswered. Please understand that any issues of grading that truly must be resolved may still be resolved *after* final grades are reported. Access to assignment grades and other course content will also be available to you on Blackboard until the week after commencement.

V. Upholding Academic Integrity

A. The Honor Code

As members of an academic community, no student should tolerate cheating. According to the traditional academic honor code, it is the responsibility of every student to report obvious cheating or any suspicious behavior that may compromise the integrity of the grading process. The confidentiality and anonymity of students who report such incidents will be respected.

B. Policies on Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty and the penalties pertaining to it are described in the SRSU student handbook. The penalties for serious academic dishonesty are severe: a student who submits a plagiarized paper or cheats on an exam may receive an F for the assignment, and in cases of repeated or flagrant violations, for the entire course.

A plagiarized written assignment may be awarded a zero on academic grounds alone, yet the offending student may face additional disciplinary penalties for academic dishonesty. Plagiarism, as every college student should know, involves taking the work of others and claiming it as your own. It will not be tolerated in this class. If you are unsure about what plagiarism is, find out online at www.plagiarism.org. You and you alone are responsible for understanding and avoiding academic dishonesty in all your assignments.

Students may not print, photograph, copy, or in any other way reproduce material from any exam, and no student may share, receive, or knowingly read such material.

Students may not use books, notes, cell phones or any other informational materials or electronic devices during testing, unless authorized by the professor. While taking an exam, students should not use any electronic device other than the device on which an exam is being taken.

Students may not share books, notes, make phone calls, send texts, or engage in any other form of communication with each other during exams. Nor may students communicate about material included on an exam with a classmate or in the presence of a classmate who has not yet completed that exam.

In a testing classroom or lab, students should not sit next to other students who are taking the same test unless no other seats are available. Students should not talk while exams are being administered. During Blackboard exams, students should not open, view, or interact with any website other than the Blackboard website.

• The consequence of violating any of these directives can be severe. Doing so may result in the forfeiture of an assignment grade and other penalties, up to and including dismissal from the course with a grade of F.

C. Generative AI Use Statement

In this course, students are not permitted to submit any words or content generated by AI systems (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing Chat, Claude, etc.) as their own work for assignments, exams, or projects. Such use of AI will be considered academic misconduct.

Students may use generative AI tools for brainstorming, idea generation, organizing questions, summarizing material, editing text, or other study support during the preparation stage of their work. However, all submitted assignments must be fully written and produced by the student.

Students are expected to evaluate whether information provided by AI is accurate and appropriate. The purpose of this policy is to support the development of students' skills in critical thinking, writing, and independent study. If students are uncertain whether a particular use of AI is acceptable, they should ask for clarification in advance.

VI. Courtesy and Good Conduct in Class

Out of courtesy to others, always remember to follow the conventional classroom rules, such as: do not distract others from learning; always show up to class on time; do not leave class early. (If you must leave early or show up late in special circumstances, please notify the professor ahead of time.) And absolutely do not get up to get food, take calls, or for other trivial reasons. Breaks are always provided, so wait until a break.

Students in VMR classes (that is, classes which meet online using applications such as Teams, Zoom, Lifesize, et cetera) must be able to log in with a working camera and a working microphone on their device. The camera must be turned on and the student must appear in the frame at almost all times, with few exceptions. Anyone whose camera is turned off or whose face is not in frame may be removed from VMR class meetings and not allowed back in for the remainder of the meeting. Visual and auditory disruptions and distractions must be kept to a minimum for the benefit of everyone. For this reason, no eating or drinking on camera is allowed except during breaks. No one may be logged into VMR class meetings from an automobile, whether stationary or in transit, whether driving or as a passenger. This is a matter of public safety.

Sul Ross has a policy on appropriate attire. The policy refers to “the responsibility to dress in a manner which will not detract from the academic atmosphere of the library, classrooms, and other facilities.” Even when logging into a class from home, students should always present themselves in a socially appropriate and dignified manner. Any student whose attire or behavior detracts from the academic atmosphere to an extent that it becomes seriously or repeatedly distracting or disruptive will be notified by the professor and expected to resolve the problem.

VII. Ensuring Accessibility for Everyone

A. Special Accommodations

Our institution complies with state and federal laws concerning people with disabilities. If a student needs accessibility services, it is the student’s responsibility to initiate a request. This may be done by contacting Mary Schwartze Grisham or Ronnie Harris at SRSU’s office of Counseling and Accessibility Services. The phone number there is 432-837-8203 and the email address is counseling@sulross.edu.

Our school is contracting with an organization called TimelyCare. This organization provides counseling services. For more information, visit <https://timelycare.com/srsu/> Sul Ross also offers counseling directly at the Alpine campus in Ferguson Hall Room 112, and through telehealth zoom sessions for RGC and remote students.

B. Distance Education

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university’s academic support services, library resources, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should submit online assignments through Blackboard or SRSU email, which require secure login information to verify students’ identities and to protect students’ information. [If the course requires students to take proctored exams or to purchase additional software or equipment, those requirements are described herein above.] The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. 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 enrolled in online courses must maintain appropriate

equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

C. Purchasing Course Materials

By law, this university is required to inform you of the following in accordance with Section 51.9705 of the Texas Education Code: "A student of this institution is not under any obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer." In fact, bargains on textbooks are often found on the websites of many Internet booksellers. Major online vendors typically accept major credit cards, checks, and money orders.

It is the student's responsibility to acquire course materials in time for their use in class. Many weeks before the start of each semester, textbooks are made available for browsing and purchase at the website for the Sul Ross Bookstore (www.sulross.edu/bookstore). It is important that students have their course materials by the start of each semester. This is especially important for the summer semester, when classes proceed more rapidly than in the fall or spring.

D. Required Student Responsibilities Statement

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

VIII. Our Psychology Program's Learning Objectives and Skills

A. Student Learning Objectives for the Psychology Program

This course is an element of the Sul Ross psychology program. It is expected that the graduating student in this program will demonstrate the capacity to:

1. Recognize the central concepts in the department's main areas of focus: abnormal psychology; social & personality psychology, and developmental psychology.
2. Recognize and apply basic psychological research methods.
3. Communicate effectively in written assignments and oral presentations concerning psychological subject matter.

B. Marketable Skills for the Psychology Program

1. Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences (speaking effectively).
2. 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 (describing feelings).
3. Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources (identifying resources).

4. Students will demonstrate the 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 (analyzing).

IX. Syllabus Updates and Substantive Changes

This syllabus was constructed to be as accurate and clear as possible. However, there is always a chance that errors or ambiguities might require the publication of updates after the semester begins. It is also possible that unforeseen circumstances might necessitate substantive changes to this syllabus. If substantive changes are made, they will be implemented in the interest of fairness for all students and in a way to minimize any inconvenience or difficulty for everyone.