

# Department of Gerontology

## Double Major (Gerontology and a Second Major Subject)

The Gerontology Major is designed as a Double Majors Programme. Students majoring in gerontology must also satisfy the requirements for a Major in another liberal arts subject.

1. Students who wish to Major in Gerontology are expected to complete their first year before enrolling in the introductory Gerontology courses (GERO 2013 & 2023).
2. Gerontology majors students are required to complete a 3 credit-hour course in research design or statistics. Examples of approved courses include PSYC 2023 or SOCI 2013, 2023. Other courses may be approved at the time of registration.
3. Students who Major in Gerontology are required to have completed 50 hours of volunteer or employment activities in the field of aging prior to undertaking GERO 4013 & 4023. It is normally the responsibility of the student to arrange this activity and to have it approved by the Department Chair. However, students may check with the Chair as to available opportunities to complete this requirement.

## The Major in Gerontology

Gerontology majors are expected to complete 36 credit hours. Beyond those 36 credit hours of gerontology courses, they are also required to take 3 credit hours in research methods.

### *Introductory requirements*

GERO 2013	Introduction to Gerontology
GERO 2023	Multidisciplinary Issues in Aging

### *Required core courses*

GERO/PSYC 2673	Adult Development and Aging
GERO 2113/SOCI 2523	Sociology of Aging
GERO 3023	Aging and Health
GERO 4013	Seminar in Gerontology
GERO 4023	Advanced Seminar in Gerontology

### *Electives*

GERO/PSYC 2643	Adult Psychopathology
GERO/PSYC 2653	Abnormal Child Psychology
GERO/PSYC 3673	Challenges to Adult Development and Aging
GERO/RELG 2273	Death and Dying
GERO 3033	Aging and Spirituality
GERO 3063	Aging and Biography
GERO 3073	Narrative Gerontology
GERO 3083	Gender and Aging
GERO 3093	Images of Aging in Film
GERO 3123	Counselling Older Adults
GERO 3213	Older Adults as Learners
GERO 3223	Late-Life Families

GERO/SCWK 3733	Social Work and Aging
GERO 3103	Special Topics
GERO 4033-6	Independent Study
GERO 4043	Critical Approaches to Nursing Homes

Subject to the approval of the Chair and the University registrar, students may be able to substitute other courses at St. Thomas University or the University of New Brunswick for the electives listed above.

Gerontology is a multidisciplinary field that studies the process of aging across the lifespan. Gerontologists draw on research from a variety of fields that include anthropology, economics, philosophy, physiology, psychology, and sociology, among others. The courses listed below are concerned with issues that concern older persons themselves and range from an examination of health-care needs to the understanding of wisdom. Some courses look at the impact of the way we choose to organize society and define aging socially and how individuals actually experience and understand their own later years. Gerontology uses a variety of theoretical perspectives that shed light on the social, psychological, emotional, and spiritual nature of being human as a background for the investigation of a wide variety of topics.

### **2013. Introduction to Gerontology**

This introductory course is multidisciplinary in nature and considers selected basic information about aging and older persons that derives from biology, psychology, sociology, demography, and the humanities. In addition to relating this information and scientific findings about aging, an attempt will be made to discuss the difficulties involved in establishing “facts” about aging and older persons. 3 credit hours.

### **2023. Multidisciplinary Issues in Aging**

This course will consider the complexity and interrelatedness of various dimensions of adult development and aging, and what this state of affairs suggests for research and practice. Topics of discussion will include selected theories of adult intelligence, personality, and social aging. Further, the multidisciplinary nature of intervention will also be considered in relation to such areas as health care, death and dying, and work and retirement. 3 credit hours.

### **2113. Sociology of Aging (SOCI 2523)**

This course will explore the comparative situation of older women and men in different cultures and different historical periods within western societies. The cultural and social-structural determinants of their changing status will be examined through alternative theoretical perspectives within sociology. The social construction of ‘elderly’ as a status will be explored through how older people are perceived, described, talked about, and interacted with within everyday behaviour, and how these relations may be ‘negotiated’ by the elderly themselves. The political-economy of aging focuses upon disparities of income, and the determinants and effects of poverty on the lives of older people. Prerequisite: GERO 2013 or SOCI 1003. 3 credit hours.

### **2273. Death and Dying (RELG 2273)**

This course explores a wide range of topics in the area of death and dying. As a fundamental issue for human beings, these phenomena require investigation from a variety of perspectives. The course considers aspects of death and dying that are religious, philosophical, psychological, and sociological in nature. Further, the course is concerned with both practical and

theoretical issues that arise from the relationship between aging, and death and dying. 3 credit hours.

### **2643. Adult Psychopathology (PSYC 2643)**

This course examines issues in the diagnosis and treatment of the most common psychological disorders in adulthood. Students are introduced to the history of psychopathology, from primitive to modern times, which traces the development of biological, psychodynamic, behavioural, cognitive, and sociocultural models of abnormality. Possible topics include: anxiety disorders, mood disorders, schizophrenia, and personality disorders. 3 credit hours.

### **2653. Psychopathology Over the Lifespan**

This course focuses on psychopathology typically diagnosed in child, adolescent, and elderly populations. Following a consideration of available treatments for abnormal behaviour, the course examines the diagnosis and treatment of a broad range of psychological disorders over the lifespan. Possible topics include: eating disorders, mental retardation, pervasive development disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, learning disorders, and the dementias. 3 credit hours.

### **2673. Adult Development and Aging (PSYC 2673)**

The course provides an introduction to psychological aspects of aging faced by middle and old-aged persons as they adapt to life events. Topics of study include: demographical studies, theories and models of aging, psychological assessment of elderly persons, personality in adulthood, changes in vision and audition, memory processing, learning, and intellectual functioning. Prerequisite: GERO 2013/PSYC 1013. 3 credit hours.

### **3023. Aging and Health**

Various aspects of aging and health will be addressed in this course. Important topics to be considered are: normal vs. pathological changes with age, principles of survival and the preservation of quality of life, and antecedents to physical, mental, social and spiritual health. The course will also analyze current conceptions of health and health care in an aging population, including ethical implications of these approaches. Prerequisite: GERO 2013 + 2023. 3 credit hours.

### **3033. Aging and Spirituality**

This lecture-seminar course examines the process of aging and human development from a spiritual perspective. This objective is carried out by means of an exploration of: (a) an emerging theoretical and empirical literature which focuses on spiritual aspects of aging and which originates in diverse traditions, (b) the practical and ethical issues that arise from an explicit acknowledgement of human spirituality in research and practice in gerontology, and (c) the importance of considering one's personal images and stereotypes of both aging and spirituality. In this regard, the course includes an experiential, dialogical dimension. 3 credit hours.

### **3063. Aging and Biography**

This lecture-seminar course explores theoretical, methodological, and intervention issues centring on the use of life stories or biographical materials in gerontology. The course considers selected research from the humanities and social sciences that deals with the significance of biography for understanding human aging. In addition, students engage in an autobiographical exercise which provides a personal dimension to the course. 3 credit hours.

### **3073. Narrative Gerontology**

This seminar-style course considers the theoretical and practical implications for gerontology of the narrative root metaphor, or life as story. Against the background of the narrative turn in the human sciences generally, and of specific practices in geriatric care like life review and reminiscence, the course will use basic story elements such as plot, character, point of view, genre, and style to explore the dynamics of continuity and change in the course of autobiographical aging.

Through assignments and classroom activities, students will be encouraged to apply such elements to understanding their own development and to their involvement in the storytelling-storylistening exchange that is part of their work as care givers to seniors. 3 credit hours.

### **3083. Gender and Aging**

This course examines issues involving how one's gender affects one's experience of aging. It looks at how the field of gerontology has traditionally dealt with the concept of gender as well as the feminization of old age, and how this has affected both women's and men's experiences of aging. 3 credit hours.

### **3093. Images of Aging in Film**

This course explores popular views of the elderly using motion pictures. It looks at the impact of stereotypes on older people's expectations for later life. As a result of this course, students should be able to look at films more critically and identify images communicated through the media. 3 credit hours.

### **3103. Special Topics**

The course consists of an intermediate to advanced treatment of a particular area of research or practice in the field of aging. The course content varies depending on the availability of faculty resources and the interests of students. 3 credit hours.

### **3123. Counselling Older Adults**

This course considers several important aspects of counselling as they impact specifically on work with older adults. Topics include an overview of counselling and a review of counselling theories. These theories are then applied to contemporary issues in aging such as: changing adult lifestyles and societal expectations, stress factors in modern society, and living longer and healthier. This course involves extensive student participation and is most relevant to educators and professionals in the field of aging. Limited enrolment. Prerequisite: GERO 2013 + 2023. 3 credit hours.

### **3213. Older Adults as Learners**

This course will draw on concepts and readings from adult education, the philosophy of education, and psycho-social, narrative, and educational gerontology. The course will consider how the content and processes of learning may change with advancing age in relation to physical health, sensory functions, reaction time, memory, motivation, and intelligence. Throughout the course, students will reflect on their life as a learner, experience a range of strategies for working with older learners, and learn to critique various formal organizations and informal contexts in which older adults learn. 3 credit hours.

### **3223. Late-Life Families**

This course examines a variety of issues regarding aging and the family. It considers historical and demographic trends as well as theoretical frameworks in family gerontology. The course covers a number of relationships including those of couples, siblings, and grandparents and grandchildren. It also looks at late-life transitions such as retirement, widowhood, and divorce, that affect family structures and relationships. 3 credit hours.

### **3673. Challenges to Adult Development and Aging (PSYC 3673)**

The course investigates both normal and abnormal influences that pose challenges to the individual and social functioning of middle-aged and older adults. Topics of study include such relatively common events and transitions as menopause, retirement, relocation, loss of spouse, caring for an ailing parent or spouse, as well as pathological changes such as depression, substance abuse, terminal illness, and dementia. Emphasis is placed on changes in response to these influences and on the individual's coping strategies. Prerequisite: PSYC/GERO 2673. 3 credit hours.

**3733. Social Work and Aging (SCWK 3733)**

An examination of present services to the elderly population in New Brunswick and elsewhere, and identification of unmet needs. The course also provides an analysis of knowledge and principles developed in the field of gerontological practice. 3 credit hours.

**4003. Mental Health and Aging**

This course explores the range of factors affecting mental health in the elderly, from age-related organic brain disease, depression, and the other functional psychiatric disorders, to failure of adjustment induced by psychological, social, and environmental factors. Issues covered include the recognition of mental-health problems, their prevalence and dynamics; the cost to individual older people, their families, the health and community-care systems, and society; and the adequacy of current provisions and interventions. 3 credit hours.

**4013. Seminar in Gerontology**

This seminar course consists of an in-depth analysis of a specific problem or issue in the field of aging. Students have their chosen topic area approved and supervised by the course instructor. The purpose of this course is to integrate a student's theoretical and practical understanding of a specific area by way of a combination of a major paper, presentations, and/or other research. Prerequisites: GERO 2013 + 2023 and 50 hours of work and/or volunteer experience with older persons. 3 credit hours.

**4023. Advanced Seminar in Gerontology**

This course is intended for students in the final semester of the programme. It will consist of a multidisciplinary lecture-seminar format. Selected topics in aging research and intervention will be discussed. The purpose of this course is to ensure that students have a comprehensive background in the field of aging, including an understanding of ethics. Prerequisites: GERO 2013, 2023, and 4013. 3 credit hours.

**4033-6. Independent Study**

A course of independent study, under supervision of the Chair in Gerontology, which affords the student the opportunity to pursue an in-depth study of an area of interest through special reading or research projects. Arrangements may be made by agreement with members of the staff, and approval of the Chair. Prerequisite: GERO 2013 + 2023. 6 or 3 credit hours depending upon the project.

**4043. Critical Approaches to Nursing Homes**

This seminar course will examine the phenomenon of nursing homes from an ethnographic and critical point of view and will include both sociological and anthropological perspectives. 3 credit hours.

NOTE: Not all courses listed are offered each year. Please consult with the Department Chair for more information about current and planned course offerings.