

# GMS 6483 | Theories of Aging

## Course Syllabus

### Instructor Information

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Stephanie Wohlgemuth, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Physiology and Aging

**Email:** steffiw@ufl.edu

**Telephone:** 352-273-5734

**Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom

**Preferred Method of Communication:** Email

### Office Location

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On Zoom. Link available on the course website, or upon request.

### Course Details

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**Course Format:** Online

**Credit Hours:** 3 (Students are expected to engage in approximately 9 hours of coursework per week for this 3-credit course)

### Course Description

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Aging is a multidimensional process shaped by biological mechanisms, psychological adaptation and social structures. Through readings, discussions, and applied activities, you will examine the strengths and limitations of prominent aging theories and evaluate how each can guide decision-making in clinical, community, and policy settings.

The course follows a structured sequence beginning with biological theories and mechanisms of aging, moving into psychological models that explain individual development and adaptation in later life, and concluding with sociological perspectives that highlight the role of social structures, modernization and inequality. Throughout the semester, students will apply theory to real-world issues in clinical care, community health, public policy and aging innovation through discussions and project-based assignments that encourage integration, critical thinking, and practical application.

By synthesizing multiple viewpoints, learners will deepen their understanding of aging and strengthen their ability to collaborate effectively within interprofessional teams. The course culminates in a final integrative project that brings together biological, psychological and social theories that inform real-world issues in aging.

## Required Materials

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There are no items required or recommended for this course.

## Learning Resources

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Learning resources in this course may include the following:

1. Articles will be provided through the course website and are coordinated with lecture materials to support key concepts and serve as primary course readings.
2. Recorded lectures, presentations, or other multimedia content may be provided to reinforce course topics and enhance understanding.
3. Weekly discussions may be available to address questions related to lectures and course materials. Discussion prompts are designed to encourage critical thinking and engagement with course concepts.

## Course Goals

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This course is designed to help students: (1) integrate biological, psychological and sociological theories of aging within a geroscience-informed framework; (2) evaluate how theoretical models inform precision aging, health equity and population-level interventions; (3) recognize how theoretical models shape interprofessional approaches to geriatric care; (4) apply interdisciplinary theory to real-world policy, clinical and technology contexts; (5) strengthen their ability to synthesize diverse perspectives into their own professional practice.

## Expectations and Student Learning Outcomes

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Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Compare and contrast major theories of aging across biological, psychological, and social perspectives
- Explain the foundational concepts, assumptions, and evidence underlying each theory
- Evaluate the usefulness and applicability of aging theories in real world practice and interprofessional care
- Integrate multiple theoretical perspectives to analyze complex issues in aging

## Course Outline and Assignments

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The course is divided into 15 modules. Each module consists of specific reading assignments, videos, and other internet resources. For each module students will: (1) review the learning objectives and corresponding lecture notes; (2) read and complete the assignments as given; (3) participate in weekly discussion boards as assigned. Examples of course assignments include:

## Reading Assignments:

- Each module includes carefully selected readings from textbooks, peer-reviewed articles, and other online resources that provide in-depth information about the module topic.
- Students are expected to read (and/or view) all assigned materials before completing the activities for that module. These readings will form the foundation for assignments and discussions.

## Writing Assignments:

- Short essays or case studies: Students will respond to questions or real-world scenarios, demonstrating their ability to apply course concepts to practical situations.
- In certain modules, students may be asked to create a “lecture” or narrated power point presentation that addresses a certain question or problem.

## Discussion Boards:

- Students are required to participate in online discussion forums. Each forum will feature a discussion prompt based on the module's topic.
- Participation involves posting thoughtful responses to the prompt, referencing course materials, and engaging in meaningful dialogue with peers.
- Peer Interaction: Students should reply to their peers’ posts, offering constructive feedback or asking questions to deepen the conversation.
- Discussion board posts should demonstrate critical thinking and an understanding of the module's content, encouraging collaborative learning.

## Projects:

Projects will require students to apply the knowledge gained from preceding modules to a comprehensive analysis. Each project is a bit different; however, the idea is to create content so that the student may use the intermediate projects to help construct the larger final project.

## Methods of Evaluation

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Each student’s final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Module Projects: 50%
- Discussions: 25%
- Final project: 25%

**Total: 100%**

## Grading Scale

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Letter grade and percentage

Letter	Percentage Value
A	93-100%
A-	90-92%
B+	87 -89%
B	83-86%
B-	80-82%
C+	77-79%
C	73-76%
C-	70-72%
D+	67-69%
D	63-66%
D-	59-62%
E	59% and below

***A grade of incomplete (I) may be given if a student fails to complete the course as scheduled for unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control.***

## Late Work Policy

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All assignments/projects must be submitted via the deadline provided on the course website. Unless you have an approved excused absence, a 10% deduction will be applied for each week an assignment is late.

## Course Schedule

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Schedule	Module
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Studying Aging from an Interprofessional Geriatric Perspective</b> Introduces the value of interprofessional collaboration in geriatric care and establishes how diverse disciplinary perspectives contribute to understanding aging.
<b>Biological Perspective</b>	
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Theoretical Perspectives on Aging: What is aging</b> Introduces core debates about what aging is, discusses the need of theories to explain it, and introduces how biological, psychological, and sociological perspectives offer distinct yet complementary ways of understanding age-related change.
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Longevity</b>

	Explores human and animal models of exceptional longevity, super agers and resilience models, examining why some organisms live longer and whether extended lifespan comes with biological or evolutionary costs.
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Mechanisms of Aging</b> Explores cellular and molecular mechanisms of aging, such as oxidative stress, inflammation, telomere dynamics, and metabolic pathways.
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Interventions</b> Reviews current and emerging interventions aimed at modifying biological aging processes, including dietary and behavioral approaches.
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Project 1</b> Students synthesize biological theories and evidence to examine the distinction between healthspan and lifespan and their relevance for the care of older adults.
<b>Psychological Perspective</b>	
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>The Individual Aging Adult</b> Examines the individuality of aging in the context of frailty, emphasizing how individual differences shape aging trajectories and influence treatment planning.
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Classical Psychological Theories: Disengagement, Conflict, and Activity</b> Analyzes foundational psychological theories of aging, evaluating their assumptions, critiques, and relevance to contemporary practice.
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Modern Psychological Perspectives: Gerotranscendence and Beyond</b> Explores contemporary theories emphasizing meaning-making, identity, and psychological growth in later life.
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Project 2</b> Students synthesize hallmarks of psychological states in a selected aging population, applying their knowledge of classical and modern psychological theories to explain patterns and consider potential interventions that support or improve psychological well-being.
<b>Sociological Perspective</b>	
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Social Stratification and Aging</b>

	Examines the role of older adults in society and how social stratification shapes aging experiences and outcomes.
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Modernization and Social Change</b> Explores how modernization, demographic shifts, and global trends influence the social roles and status of older adults.
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Project 3</b> Students synthesize sociological theories by applying them to contemporary issues affecting older adults and communities, with emphasis on how social structures, modernization and inequities shape health and well-being.
<b>Integration and Application</b>	
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Integrating the Perspectives</b> Students bring together biological, psychological and social theories to develop an integrated, interprofessional understanding of aging and its implications for practice.
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Final Project</b>

## University Policies and Resources

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Information about grading policies, support for students with disabilities, course evaluations, the Honor Code, and other course policies and campus resources can be found on the [Syllabus Policies page](#).

## Attendance Policy

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Requirements for class attendance and make-up work for this course are consistent with UF policies and can be found on the [Attendance Policies page](#).

## Academic Integrity

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UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [See the UF Conduct Code website for more information](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

## Accessibility and Accommodations

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Students requesting accommodations for disabilities must first register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC). The DRC will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

Accommodations are not retroactive. Therefore, students should contact the DRC as early as possible in the semester to ensure timely support. For more information, please visit the [UF Disability Resource Center website](#).

## Technology Requirements

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To successfully participate in this course, students are expected to have regular access to a reliable internet connection and a computer capable of accessing the University of Florida's learning management system (Canvas).

Students should be able to:

- Access course materials, including readings, recorded lectures, and multimedia content
- Submit assignments through Canvas
- Participate in online discussions and course activities

Students are responsible for ensuring their technology meets the minimum requirements for Canvas. For technical assistance, please contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or visit the [UF Computing Help Desk website](#).

## Copyright Information

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Please review the policy for the use of copyrighted materials on the [UF Smathers Library Copyright Guide](#).

## Technology in the Classroom

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For this graduate level course, GMS6483 Theories of Aging, it is imperative that all work submitted is your own. The use of AI tools, including but not limited to, generative language models, code generation tools, and automated essay writer, is strictly prohibited for all assignments. Any work found to have been produced with the aid of such AI tools will result in a zero for that assignment. This policy is in place to ensure the integrity of your learning experience and to respect the academic standards of this course. If you have any questions about this policy or need assistance with your work, please do not hesitate to reach out to your instructor.

## Course Evaluation

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Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals
3. The central Portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## Student Support Services

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As a student in a distant learning course or program, you have access to the same student support services that on campus students have. For course content questions contact your instructor. For related to your course please contact the UF computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357. For Help Desk hours visit the [UF Computing Help Desk website](#).