**SYLLABUS**

PSYCHOLOGY 614 – Psychology of Aging  
Spring 2012

Instructor: Rebecca S. Morse, Ph.D. (rmorse@gmu.edu)

Class Hours & Location: Tuesdays 7:20pm -10:00pm  
University Hall 1204  
*Please check Patriot Web as Classroom may change

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:30 to 5:30 pm  
Also available by appointment.

Office Location: David King Hall, Basement, 1026

REQUIRED TEXT: Online Articles

**COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS:**

The overall objective of this course is for the student to become familiar with the field of psychology of aging through a biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional framework. Students should gain a basic knowledge of how psychological theory contributes to our understanding of the many facets of elder development.

**TECHNOLOGY:**

*Students will be expected to access and use Blackboard on a regular basis ([https://gmu.blackboard.com](https://gmu.blackboard.com)). Important class information, such as the syllabus and weekly readings will be posted here. To access Blackboard, students should use their George Mason email ID and password.

*In addition, students should check their GMU email account regularly. Be sure to check that new messages can be received and that you are not over the message limit. You also have the option for your GMU account to be forwarded to another email address.

**ATTENDANCE:**

You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss and apply the material. In order to make the most out of your learning experience, it is imperative that you are not only present at each class meeting, but are alert, attentive and ready to learn. Students are required to read (before class) any articles that may be assigned for that week. Class reading assignments will be posted on Blackboard via your syllabus.

**CLASS LEADERS & PARTICIPATION:**

Throughout the semester we will have student-led class discussions. You are always responsible for being prepared to discuss the material, and are expected to actively participate in discussion with your classmates about the material.

Most classes, we will have two students who will be prepared to lead class discussion. What this requires, is that you (on your assigned days), come to class prepared to explain the article(s), and have prepared thought-provoking questions to ask the class.
Leading class discussion and Participation are worth 30 points, and will be based on your level of preparedness, and engagement in discussions, respectively.

THOUGHT PAPERS:

Students will be expected to submit 10 thought papers throughout the semester (roughly one per week, with a couple of weeks for breaks). The thought papers are worth 5 points each, for a total of 50 points. For each thought paper, students will be required to find one outside scientific (peer-reviewed) journal article that relates to that week’s readings. The thought papers should be no more than 1 page, double spaced, 1 inch margins all around, 12 point Times new Roman font, proof read, carefully edited for conciseness and clarity, APA style. To enrich class discussion and to share your accruing knowledge, please be prepared to present your weekly essays (randomly requested, volunteers welcome) as a “mini-presentation” (about 5 minutes) to an open and welcoming class. Thought papers are due by midnight of the Sunday preceding that class (so if class is on Tuesday the 10th, your paper would be due Sunday the 8th).

Please use the following file name format for your essay:

YourGMUemailroot-Essay 1(or 2 or 3…).doc or .docx. For example: rmorse-Essay 4.doc.

At the heading of each paper, please list your outside article only. For the readings, please use this format: Author1 Author2 Author3-YEAR-First Five Words of Title.pdf (or .doc).

For example: Tangney Stuewig Mashek-2007-Whats moral about the self-conscious.pdf (or .doc)

EXAMS:

There will one take-home final exam, based on class discussions and articles. The exam will be worth 20 points. The exam will be posted on Blackboard, and will be open book (article)/open note.

*There will be NO make-up exams or assignments offered for this course. If you anticipate conflict with an exam date, it is the student’s responsibility to provide justification, but scheduling an alternate date is at the discretion of the instructor. Similarly, emergency exceptions are at the discretion of the instructor (in the hospital; car accident = emergency; alarm clock did not ring; bad hair day = not an emergency)

ARTICLES:

Relevant journal articles will be assigned throughout the course. It is expected that students will come to class prepared to discuss the articles and have questions and comments on the topics in the articles. You will be responsible for the material from the articles and discussion for the exam. Articles will be available on blackboard or the information will be given for students to find it through the Library website.
**GRADES:**
Discussion Leaders/Participation: 30 points
Thought Papers: 50 points
Final Take-home Exam: 20 points
**Total Possible Points: 100 points**

**GRADE CALCULATION:**
For simplicity, the points have been assigned such that a student can track their own grade without any confusing arithmetic acrobatics. If you earn 92 points, then 5 extra credit points, you will have a class grade of 97, which according to the below chart, is an A+. I round to the second decimal, so a grade of 91.49 is considered a 92 (A-), and a grade of 96.03 is a 96 (A).

**Grade Breakdown:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Breakdown</th>
<th>A+ 100 – 97</th>
<th>B+ 89 – 87</th>
<th>C+ 79 – 77</th>
<th>D 69 - 60</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A 96 – 93</td>
<td>B 86 – 83</td>
<td>C 76 – 73</td>
<td>F 59 and below</td>
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<tr>
<td>A- 92 – 90</td>
<td>B- 82 – 80</td>
<td>C- 72 - 70</td>
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**HONOR CODE:**
All provisions of the GMU Honor Code will be followed in this class. Information regarding the Honor Code and what constitutes academic dishonesty can be found in the 2009-2010 University Catalog or online at the following website: [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/).

**DISABILITY HELP:**
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last day to drop with no tuition penalty</th>
<th>Tues Jan 31</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last day to add classes— all individualized section forms due</td>
<td>Tues Jan 31</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last day to drop with a 33% tuition penalty</td>
<td>Tues Feb 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day to drop with a 67% tuition penalty</td>
<td>Fri Feb 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last day to drop</td>
<td>Fri Feb 24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Schedule of classes *Topics subject to change as needed to ensure that the majority of students are comfortable with material covered prior to moving to the next topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/24/12</td>
<td>Introduction.</td>
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| 01/31/12 | Cognitive Aging        | 1. *Salthouse*: What and when of cognitive aging 2004  
2. *Li*: Connecting the many levels and facets of cognitive aging 2002   |
| 02/07/12 |                        | 1. *Jacoby & Rhodes*: False remembering in the aged 2006  
2. *Burke & Shafto*: Aging and language production 2004  
3. *Madden*: Aging and visual attention 2007    |
| 02/14/12 |                        | 1. *Kramer & Willis*: Enhancing the cognitive vitality of older adults 2002  
| 02/21/12 | Cognition in Context   | 1. Marriottt and Wenk: Neurobiological consequences of long-term estrogen therapy 2004  
2. Wingfield, Tun and McCoy: Hearing loss in older adulthood. What it is and how it interacts with cognitive performance 2005 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 02/28/12   |                                | 1. **Fisk and Rogers:** Psychology and aging: enhancing the lives of an aging population *2002*  
|            |                                | 2. **Park and Gutchess:** The cognitive neuroscience of aging and culture *2006*  |
| 03/06/12   | Emotion & Cognition            | 1. **Blanchard-Fields:** Everyday problem solving and emotion: an adult developmental perspective *2007*  
|            |                                | 2. **Carstensen and Mikels:** At the intersection of emotion and cognition. Aging and the positive effect *2005*  |
| 03/13/12   | No Class. Spring Break!        | Mon Mar 12 - Sun Mar 18                                                   |
| 03/20/12   |                                | 1. **Labouvie-Vief:** Dynamic integration: affect, cognition, and the self in adulthood *2003*  
|            |                                | 2. **Isaacowitz:** Motivated Gaze. The view from the gazer *2006*  |
| 03/27/12   | Psychosocial Factors of Aging  | 1. **Lawton:** Emotion in later life *2001*  
|            |                                | 2. **Mroczek:** Age and emotion in adulthood *2001*  |
| 04/03/12   |                                | 1. **Lucas:** Adaptation and the set-point model of subjective well-being: does happiness change after major life events?*2007*  
<p>|            |                                | 2. <strong>Robins and Trzesniewski:</strong> Self-esteem development across the lifespan <em>2005</em>  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 04/10/12   |                                               | 1. **Lachman:** Perceived control over aging-related declines: adaptive beliefs and behaviors **2006**  
2. **Wrosch, Schulz and Heckhausen:** Health stresses and depressive symptomatology in the elderly: a control-process approach **2004** |
| 04/17/12   | Physical Health                               | 1. **Gatz:** Genetics, dementia and the elderly **2007**  
2. **Newland and Rasmussen:** Behavior in adulthood and during aging is affected by contaminant exposure in utero **2003**  
3. **Gottfredson and Deary:** Intelligence predicts health and longevity, but why? **2004** |
| 04/24/12   |                                               | 1. **Almeida:** Resilience and vulnerability to daily stressors assessed via diary methods **2005**  
2. **Vitaliano, Young and Zhang:** Is caregiving a risk factor for illness? **2004** |
| 05/01/12   | At the end of it all.                         | No Readings/Thought Papers                                              |
| Tues. 5/15 | **Assigned Exam Period:** 7:30 pm – 10:15 pm | **Final Exam**                                                           |

*Syllabus subject to change*