

Department of Gerontology

Major in Gerontology

In order to complete a Major in Gerontology, students must complete a minimum of 39 credit hours of gerontology courses. These include the following introductory requirements (6 credit hours):

GERO-1013. Introduction to Gerontology I

GERO-1023. Introduction to Gerontology II

In addition, students must complete the following core courses (18 credit hours):

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

GERO-3053. Qualitative Research Methods

Finally, students are required to complete 15 credit hours of the following electives:

GERO-2273. Death and Dying

GERO-3033. Aging and Spirituality

GERO-3043. Recreation, Leisure and Aging

GERO-3063. Aging and Biography

GERO-3073. Narrative Gerontology

GERO-3093. Images of Aging in Film

GERO-3103. Special Topics

GERO-3123. Counselling Older Adults

GERO-3213. Older Adults as Learners

GERO-3223. Family Ties and Aging

GERO-3233. Aging and Tai Chi: Theory, Research, and Practice

GERO-3673. Advanced Studies in Adult Development

GERO-3743. Critical Approaches to Nursing Homes

GERO-4003. Mental Health and Aging

GERO-4033. Independent Study

GERO-4036. Independent Study

Minor in Gerontology

Students wishing to pursue a Minor in Gerontology must complete 18 credit hours, composed of any courses which they have the required prerequisites.

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.

GERO-1013. Introduction to Gerontology I

This course introduces the subject of population aging from a multidisciplinary perspective. Topics to be discussed include: the status of aging in Canada and the world, ethnicity, social change, gerontological theory and the physical and psychological aspects of growing older

GERO-1023. Introduction to Gerontology II

This course examines the various factors that impact growing older in Canadian society. Topics to be discussed include: health care, pensions, housing, transportation, family life, social support and death and dying.

GERO-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 1013 or SOCI 1003.

GERO-2273. Death and Dying

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.

GERO-2643. Adult Psychopathology

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.

GERO-2673. Adult Development and Aging (PSYC 2673)

The course provides an introduction to psychological aspects of aging faced by young, middle-aged, and older adults as they adapt to life events. Topics of study include: theories on personality and its development across the lifespan; the impact of aging on intelligence, memory, creativity, and learning; changes with age in social roles and relationships; and the development of meaning and spirituality in mid -and later life. Prerequisites: GERO 1013, GERO 1023 or PSYC 1023.

GERO 3023. Aging and Health

Various aspects of aging and health are addressed in this course. Topics considered include: theories of biological aging; normal vs. pathological physical changes that accompany the aging process; various chronic conditions that affect quality of life in later life; the implications of physical aging for medication use and nutritional status among older adults; and the impact of an aging population on the provision of acute care, long-term care, and home care for older adults. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 and GERO 1023.

GERO 3033. Aging and Spirituality

This lecture seminar course examines the phenomenon of spirituality and its relationship to the process of aging. There are two main themes explored in the course. First, we attempt to understand the meaning of spirituality itself by discussing a range of spiritual and religious traditions. And second, we consider the practical and ethical issues that arise from an explicit acknowledgement of human spirituality in research and practice in gerontology.

GERO-3043. Recreation, Leisure and Aging

This lecture-seminar course will explore the meaning of leisure and the role it plays in the lives of older adults. It is designed to familiarize students with the process of aging as related to leisure, recreation, and lifestyle. The theoretical aspects of aging and their implications for leisure will be the primary focus, while the practical aspects of recreation program development, delivery, and facilitation for both community-based and institutional-based older persons will also be examined. Prerequisite: GERO 1013.

GERO-3053. Qualitative Research Methods (HMRT) (RELG)

This course will introduce students to qualitative research methods used in social science, with an emphasis on gerontology. It will address theoretical foundations of qualitative analysis, ethical considerations involving older adults, and provide hands-on experience in developing a research question, and collecting and analyzing data using basic qualitative techniques in gerontology. It will also prepare students in writing a qualitative research proposal. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 + 1023 or permission of the instructor.

GERO-3063. Aging and Biography

This lecture-seminar course explores theoretical, methodological, and intervention issues centering 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.

GERO-3073. Narrative Gerontology

This seminar style course considers the theoretical and practical implications for gerontology of the metaphor of life as story. Against the background of the narrative turn across the human sciences and of specific practices in geriatric care like life review and reminiscence, the course explores the narrative complexity of autobiographical memory in particular and of identity development in general. Through readings, assignments, and classroom activities, students are encouraged to consider the narrative dynamics of their own identity development and to appreciate the complexity of the storytelling-story listening exchanges that are pivotal to providing narrative care with older adults. Limited enrolment. Prerequisites: GERO 1013 and GERO 1023.

GERO-3083. Gender and Aging (GEND)

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.

GERO-3093. Images of Aging in Film (GEND)

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. Prerequisite: GERO 1013.

GERO-3103. Special Topics

Topic chosen by the Visiting Chair. No Prerequisites.

GERO-3123. Counseling Older Adults

This course considers several important aspects of counseling, broadly defined, as they impact on work with older adults. Topics include: an overview of counseling theories and strategies; the range of emotional, developmental, spiritual, and interpersonal issues for which older adults might seek or need counseling (e.g., substance abuse, elder abuse, bereavement, depression); the benefits of alternative therapeutic modalities (music therapy, pet therapy, etc.); and the value of reminiscence and life - or narrative care - in working with older adults. This course is most relevant to those preparing to work professionally in the field of aging. Limited enrolment. Prerequisites: GERO 1013 and GERO 1023.

GERO-3213. Older Adults as Learners

This course will draw on concepts and readings from adult education, the philosophy of education, and psychosocial, 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.

GERO-3223. Family Ties and Aging (GEND)

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, all of which affect family structures and relationships.

GERO-3233. Aging and Tai Chi: Theory, Research, and Practice

Tai Chi is a mind-body-spirit intervention that contributes to the maximization of quality of life for both frail and well adults. This course explores the philosophy and principles that form the basis of the art of Tai Chi. The course will also review research that demonstrates a range of health benefits of Tai Chi to adults of all ages, physical and psychological. Participants in the course will learn basic Tai Chi movements, and be introduced to guidelines for designing a program based on Tai Chi, for implementation in a variety of settings. The course will be of interest to students contemplating a career in gerontology, recreation, social work, education, or fine arts. The course is introductory and does not assume any experience on the part of the students.

GERO-3263. Understanding Dementia

As the proportion of older people increases, so will the prevalence of dementia-related neurocognitive disorders in this population. This course will examine the various types of Dementia, how they are assessed and the evidence based practices used to enhance the lives of individuals with this disorder. Pre-requisites: GERO 1013, GERO 2673

GERO-3673. Advanced Studies in Adult Development

This course is an in-depth study of the markers and challenges that occur during middle to late adulthood. Topics of study include: 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: GERO 2673 or PSYC 2673

GERO-3743. 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. Prerequisite: GERO 1013.

GERO-3973. Introduction to Narrative

Framed around three key approaches to narrative this course will provide students with the basis on which to develop their understanding of narrative and their skills in narrative analysis. The three approaches are: the narrative study of lives; the narrative analysis of texts; and, the analysis of narrative dynamics. Through these approaches students will be introduced to the work of key narrative thinkers. The course, in content and delivery, reflects the interdisciplinary nature of narrative.

GERO-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. Prerequisites: GERO 1013, GERO 1023 and GERO 2673.

GERO-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 1013 + 1023.

GERO 4023. Advanced Seminar in Gerontology

This course is intended for students in the final semester of the programme. It consists of a multidisciplinary lecture - seminar format. Selected topics in aging research and intervention are discussed, including those that highlight the positive potential of the aging experience, e.g., the potential for creativity, wisdom, and continued personal growth. The purpose of this course is to ensure that students have a comprehensive background in the field of aging. Prerequisites: GERO 1013, GERO 1023 and an additional 18 credit hours of courses.

GERO-4033. 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 1013 + 1023.

GERO-4036. 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 1013 + 1023.

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