

# Women and Aging

WST6935 (61CS)

(Spring 2020)

Mondays 6-8<sup>th</sup> periods

108 Ustler Hall

**Instructor: Constance Shehan**

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**Course Description**

This is an interdisciplinary social science-based seminar focusing on the lived experiences of women over age 55. It takes a feminist, intersectional approach, which means that we will consider the influence of race and ethnicity, social class, gender identity, and sexual orientation on embodiment and health, psychological well-being, social roles and relationships, and the economic situation of older women. General principles of the life course will guide our examination of the contemporary population of older women in the US. Because the period of “old age” is extensive, we will also consider the variation by age within this population of women.

**Primary Texts**

***Women and Aging: An Intersectional, International, Power Perspective***, edited by Varda Muhlbauer, Joan C. Chrisler, and Florence L. Denmark, Springer, 2014.

***Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging*** (Third Edition), by Margaret Cruikshank, Rowman and Littlefield, 2013.

***No Stopping Us Now: The Adventures of Older Women in American History***, by Gail Collins, Little, Brown, and Company, 2019.

Additional reading will be assigned in relation to class discussions and individual projects.

**Course Requirements**

- 1) ***Regular attendance***: a student-centered seminar cannot function successfully without the consistent attendance of all members. Every student is expected to attend every class session. (15 percent of grade)
- 2) ***Active participation and engagement in class discussion with evident preparation***. (15 percent of grade)

3) **Class presentations:** responsibility for highlighting the primary issue(s) of the week by preparing a multi-media-based overview of the assigned reading(s) and introduction of a related issue with a list of suggested readings. (30 percent of grade)

4. **Final project:** you may design a final project that most effectively meets their stage in their graduate work and/or their anticipated career path. (For instance, those of you who are preparing for qualifying exams may focus on developing an annotated bibliography. Those who are anticipating a career in social services may focus on an internship activity. A detailed review of literature in a student's primary areas of interest is also acceptable.) (40 percent of grade)

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

By enrolling in this course, you are indicating your consent to the University of Florida Honor Code:

*"We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. 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."*

Violation of the Honor Code will not be tolerated and can result in immediate failure and additional disciplinary action. If you do not know what behaviors are considered a violation, it is your responsibility to find out. Visit the following website for more information:  
<http://www/dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>)

## **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students who require in-class accommodations must first register with the Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>). The Disability Resource Center will provide documentation for you to submit to your instructors. Please send this documentation to me no later than the second week of class. For more information, contact the Disability Resource Center. by phone at 392-8565. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to make your experience in the course more effective and rewarding.

## **STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF COURSES**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive evaluation forms from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>."

## Topic Outline and Reading

### I. Introduction: An Intersectional Life Course Perspective on Aging

Intersectionality and the study of aging

#### READ:

Introduction to *Women and Aging* (pp. 1-8)

Introduction to *Learning to Be Old* (pp. 1-8)

“Fear of an Aging Population” (pp. 25-34 in *Learning to Be Old*)

Class, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, and Gender” (pp. 115-136 in *Learning to Be Old*)

### II. Gender and Aging: Why Focus on Women and Aging?

#### READ:

“Countercultural Gerontology” (pp. 161-184 in *Learning to Be Old*)

“A Feminist’s View of Gerontology and Women’s Aging” (pp 185-208 in *Learning to Be Old*)

### III. The History of Aging Women in American History

**READ:** Gail Collins (2019). *No Stopping Us Now: The Adventures of Older Women in American History*

### IV. Embodiment and Well-Being

#### READ:

“Older Women, Power, and the Body” (pp. 9-30 in *Women and Aging*);

“Sickness and Other Social Roles of Old People” (pp.35-52 in *Learning to Be Old*)

“Overmedicating Old Americans” (pp. 53-68)

“Healthy Physical Aging” (pp. 69-92 in *Learning to Be Old*)

“The Politics of Healthy Aging” (pp. 93-114 in *Learning to Be Old*)

“Ageism and Body Esteem: Associations with Psychological Well-Being among Late Middle-Aged African American and European American Women,” Natalie J. Sabik, *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*, Volume 70, Issue 2, March 2015, pp. 189-199.

“Subjective Wellbeing, Health, and Ageing,” Andrew Steptoe et al, *The Lancet*, Volume 385, Issue 9968, 14-20 February 2015, pp. 640-648.

### V. Social and Cultural Aspects of Aging for Women

#### A. Roles and relationships

**READ:**

“The Impact of Multiple Roles on the Well-being of Older Women: Strain or Enrichment?” ( pp. 51-70 in *Women and Aging*)

**B. Aging women and sexuality**

**READ:**

“Sexuality and Older Women: Desirability and Desire” (pp. 89-116 in *Women and Aging*)

“Lesbians over 60: Never Every Day” (pp. 117-146 in *Women and Aging*)

**VI. Media Representations of Aging Women**

**READ:**

“Cultural Myths and Aging” (pp.9-24 in *Learning to Be Old*);

“Ageism” (pp. 137-160 in *Learning to Be Old*)

**VII. Economic Aspects of Aging for Women**

**READ:**

“Older Women, Economic Power Consumerism” (pp. 31-50 in *Women and Aging*)

“Older Women, Leadership, and Encore Careers” (pp. 71-88 in *Women and Aging*)

**VIII: Conclusion**

**READ:**

“The Paradoxes of Aging” (pp. 209-212 in *Learning to Be Old*)