

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
- GERO-1023. Multidisciplinary Issues in Aging

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 (Also accepted as fulfillment of this requirement are PSYC 2013, 2023, and SOCI 2013, 2023)

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-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

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.

GERO-1023. 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.

GERO-2113. Sociology of Aging (SOC1 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 SOC1 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)

The course provides an introduction to psychological aspects of aging faced by middle and older aged persons as they adapt to life events. Topics of study include: demographical studies, theories and models of aging, psychological assessment of older persons, personality in adulthood, changes in vision and audition, memory processing, learning, and intellectual functioning. Prerequisite: GERO 1013/ PSYC 1023.

GERO-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 1013 + 1023.

GERO-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.

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) (SOC1) (RELG) (PSYC)

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 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 caregivers to older adults.

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. 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 1013 + 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 grandpar-

ents 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-3673. Challenges to Adult Development and Aging

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: GERO/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 inter-disciplinary 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 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 1013, 1023 and 4013.

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.