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 in Gerontology

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

GERO-2273. Death and Dying in Later Life
GERO-3033. Aging and Spirituality
GERO-3043. Recreation, Leisure and Aging
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 Eastern Contemplative Traditions: Theory, Research, and Practice
GERO-3673. Advanced Studies in Adult Development
GERO-3743. Critical Approaches to Long-Term Care
GERO-4003. Mental Health and Aging
GERO-4033. Independent Study
GERO-4036. Independent Study
GERO-4113. Health Promotion for an Aging Population

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 explores aging from a multidisciplinary perspective. Topics include myths and realities of aging; population aging globally and locally; the intersections of age with gender, ethnicity and class; the physical and psychological aspects of growing older; as well as key concepts in gerontological theory.

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 explores cultural and social-structural determinants of aging through sociological theory. Students critically examine the social construction of "old age" as a social status through perceptions, descriptions, discussions and interactions with others, and how these relations are 'negotiated' by the older people themselves. Other topics include ageism and how various social institutions influence the experience of aging. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023, OR permission from the instructor.

GERO-2273. Death and Dying in Later Life
This course considers aspects of death and dying and bereavement from an interdisciplinary perspective, examining both practical and theoretical issues that arise from the relationship between aging, death and dying. The course also examines the end-of-life care for older adults. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 OR GERO1023, OR permission from the instructor.

GERO-2673. Adult Development and Aging (PSYC 2673)
This course adopts a biopsychosocial perspective to studying aging. Topics include theoretical models of development, research methods used to study adult development, health and prevention, basic cognitive function and the aging process, higher order cognitive functions, personality, mental health issues and treatment. These biopsychological functions are examined for how they impact older adults as they navigate their social worlds. Prerequisites: GERO 1013 OR 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 spirituality and its relationship to the process of aging, specifically the meaning of spirituality, the relevance of spirituality in the lived experience of aging and, practical and ethical issues arising from an explicit acknowledgement of human spirituality in gerontological research and practice. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023 OR permission from the instructor.

GERO-3043. Recreation, Leisure and Aging
This lecture-seminar course explores the meaning of leisure and recreation and the role they play in the lives of older adults. It will 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. GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023, OR permission from the instructor.

GERO-3053. Qualitative Research Methods in Gerontology
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 OR GERO 1023, OR permission from the instructor.

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, Sexuality and Aging (WSGS)
This course explores how gender and sexuality affects the experience of aging. It looks at how gerontology has traditionally addressed gender and sexuality; how the social construction of femininity and masculinity affects how people experience aging; and the aging experiences of older LGBTQ2S+. Prerequisites: GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023 OR permission from instructor.

GERO-3093. Images of Aging in Film (WSGS)
This course explores popular views of the elderly using motion pictures, specifically the impact of stereotypes on older people's expectations for later life. Students should be able to look at films more critically and identify images communicated through the media. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023 OR permission from instructor.

GERO-3103. Special Topics
Topic chosen by the Visiting Chair. No Prerequisites.

GERO-3123. Counseling Older Adults
This course examines evidence-based theoretical models and assessments used when counselling older adults. Emphasis is placed on the counselling techniques and interventions used to assist older adults in meeting unique challenges experienced in the later part of life. This course is relevant for those preparing for a career in social work or counselling. Prerequisites: GERO 1013 AND 1023 OR permission of the instructor. GERO 2673 recommended.

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 (WSGS)
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 1013 OR GERO 1023 OR permission of the instructor.

GERO-3233. Aging and Eastern Contemplative Traditions: Theory, Research, and Practice
There is growing interest in Eastern contemplative traditions in contemporary Canadian society, such as tai-chi, yoga, and mindfulness, that enhance quality of life for older adults. This course examines a range of benefits of these modalities to adults of all ages, exploring how these practices enable new relationships to ageing, health, and success. Students learn basic yoga, mindfulness, and tai chi practices at an introductory level. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023, or permission from the instructor.

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 Long-Term Care
This seminar course draws upon ethnographic and critical gerontological approaches to examine the phenomenon of longterm care (LTC) and other models of care. The course pays particular attention to LTC in the Canadian context, longstanding and emergent issues surrounding long-term care, and older adults' lived experiences in LTC. The course looks at both theoretical and practical implications of LTC and its issues. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 OR GERO 1023, or permission from the instructor.

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 the supervision of a faculty member, which affords the student the opportunity to pursue an indepth study of an area of interest through special reading or research projects. Arrangements may be made by agreement with members of the Gerontology faculty, and approval of the Chair. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 AND GERO 1023.

GERO-4036. Independent Study
A course of independent study, under supervision of a faculty member, which affords the student the opportunity to pursue an indepth study of an area of interest through special reading or research projects. Arrangements may be made by agreement with members of the Gerontology faculty and approval of the Chair. Prerequisite: GERO 1013 AND GERO 1023.

GERO-4113. Health Promotion for an Aging Population
This course will study health promotion as it relates to an aging population. Relevant terms, theories and methods will be examined, in addition to current public policies and how they relate to the health and wellbeing of older adults. A detailed investigation of evidenced based health promotion programs will be conducted. Pre-requisites: GERO1013, 1023, & 3023

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