

# Psychology of Aging Section 01

## PSYC 114

Fall 2023 3 Unit(s) 08/21/2023 to 12/06/2023 Modified 07/31/2023

### Contact Information

Instructor: Erin Woodhead, PhD

Office Location: DMH 316

Telephone: 408-924-5654

Email: Erin.Woodhead@sjsu.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 12-2pm in person in DMH 316. Also available for zoom meetings as needed.

Class Days/Time: T/TH 10:30-11:45

Classroom: DMH 348

Prerequisites: Psyc 001

### Course Description and Requisites

Psychological development of middle-aged and older adults emphasizing normative (typical) development in the context of cognitive, socioemotional, biological, and cultural processes. Course content also includes age-related health problems and their prevention.

Prerequisite: PSYC 001.

Letter Graded

### Classroom Protocols

I expect you to be attentive in class, participate in discussions, and limit other distractions. Please place cell phones on silent during class. If you must make or answer a call, please excuse yourself from class. Please do not browse the web during class. Most importantly, please be respectful of your classmates' opinions. Attendance is expected each week. If you do not attend classes, you will miss discussion that will help you better understand the material that will need to demonstrate knowledge of for your class assignments and projects. If you have to miss a class, please let me know ahead of time. If you have to miss a few classes, please make an appointment with me so that we can discuss your progress in the course and your reasons for not attending class.

### Program Information

**Program learning outcomes (PLOs)** are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the Psychology BA degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the Psychology BA degree are:

1. **Knowledge Base of Psychology.** Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
2. **Research Methods in Psychology.** Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations.
3. **Critical Thinking Skills.** Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes.
4. **Applications of Psychology.** Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues.  
Values in Psychology. Students will value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and recognize their role and responsibility as a member of society.

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

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CLO1: Explain and identify changes in the structure of our population with regards to the changing demographic of older adults in the U.S. and internationally.

CLO2: Explain and identify the biological/physical processes that occur during the aging process.

CLO3: Be able to identify and discuss typical research designs used in the study of aging.

CLO4: Identify lifespan changes in cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, personality, and social relationships, including which components of these domains do not change substantially with age.

CLO5: Identify components of and explain theoretical models (psychological and biological) relevant to aging.

CLO6: Report on the aging process through the perspective of an older adult through completion of interviews and experiential exercises; integrate these experiences with theoretical models presented in class.

CLO7: Identify relevant legislation that pertains to older adults, including issues of nursing home care, Medicare, employment of older adults, and end-of-life care.

## Course Materials

### Psychology of Aging: A Biopsychosocial Perspective

**Author:** Yochim, B. P., & Woodhead, E. L. (Editors)

**Publisher:** Springer

**Edition:** 1

**ISBN:** 9780826137289

**Availability:** SJSU Library

**Price:** Free through the library

## Course Requirements and Assignments

### Class Activities

Each week students will turn in a class activity that is done individually or together during class time (except as noted in the course calendar). Typically the activity is done during class on Thursdays. You will pass the activity if you follow the directions and write in complete sentences in your responses. No bullet point lists unless the instructor specifies that in the instructions.

### Reading Questions

To facilitate critical thinking about the content of our textbook, on most weeks you will complete and upload a set of reading questions. These will be completed online through Canvas and be due Tuesday mornings by 9am each week. For the reading

questions, I will give you five questions and you are to respond to four of the questions of your choice. Reading questions will be graded as passing if you accurately express your understanding of a theory or concept in your own words. Reading questions are to be completed independently. Please write in complete sentences in paragraph form for your responses. No bullet point lists. Each response should be around 1 paragraph.

## Midterm and Final Project

Instead of exams, this course will require a midterm and final project. This will be the same project, with different parts of the project due at mid-semester and at the end of the semester.

Overview of the project:

**Healthy Aging Project:** One of the themes of our course is that people can adopt behaviors now that have a positive influence on their aging process. For this project, you will choose three behaviors that you can engage in now to improve your aging experience and track your engagement in those activities during the semester.

**Midterm Project:** For the midterm project, you will write a paper that summarizes the 3 behaviors you are choosing, how they are relevant to aging, as summarized in our textbook and the broader research literature, and you will devise a system for tracking your engagement in these behaviors. You will track your engagement in the 3 behaviors for about a month in order to collect enough data to report on in the final project paper.

**Final Project:** For the final project, you will provide the tracking data you collected for your three behaviors and write a report on how successful you were in engaging in your healthy aging behaviors during the semester. Part of this will be a reflection paper on how you can improve your aging process through material you learned in class. You should include a basic graph of your tracking data for the purposes of the final project.

The rubrics for these projects are linked on Canvas (click on the specific assignment to find a google doc link with specific instructions and the rubrics).

The final examination will be the final project, which is not cumulative. The final project will count the same as the midterm project.

## Booster Papers (Optional)

You can complete additional papers to qualify for the grade boosters described below. Please note that you need to complete at least one booster paper if you want to get an A- in the class. Getting As on the midterm project and final project will only get you to a B+ grade. The additional paper topics are listed below.

**Older Adult Interview Paper:** Interview an older adult age 65 or older about a topic covered in our course. Check with Dr. Woodhead about appropriate topics. You should ask 7-8 questions, and you should write the paper in narrative form (don't type out or list the questions and answers as a Q&A. Instead, organize them and write in complete sentences). Incorporate one relevant peer-reviewed article and reference to our textbook about why this topic is important to aging. Summarize concepts from the articles in your own words without copying sentences from the original articles or our book.

**Popular Aging Book Paper:** Choose a popular press book about aging and summarize it. Contact Dr. Woodhead if you would like ideas, and to check that the book is appropriate for this paper. Incorporate reference to our textbook regarding why this is an important topic for aging. Make sure to include the book on your reference list too. Summarize concepts from the book and textbook in your own words without copying sentences from the sources.

## ✓ Grading Information

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Instead of a traditional grading rubric, this class uses a grading contract. Please review the below information about grading contracts and how our specific course grading will work.

**How is a grading contract different from a traditional grading scheme?** With a grading contract, students complete a set of core activities and achievements to earn a "baseline" grade in the class, and can raise their grade further by completing other achievements. Grades can also be lowered beyond the baseline grade if students fail to complete the core achievements. In a grading contract, a single low score will not irreversibly lower your course grade.

**Why use grading contracts?** Grading contracts are intended to be more equitable to students by: a) giving students more control over what assignments they choose to put the strongest effort into; b) reducing pressure around assignment deadlines; c) allowing performance in the middle and end of semester to “redeem” low-but-passing scores from earlier in the semester; and, (d) providing pathways for students to earn high course grades (including As) when they excel on other kinds of assignments besides exams.

### Grading Contract Details

#### Core Class Achievements

You will earn a course grade of B- in this class if you pass\* ALL of the following core class achievements.

- Complete 12 out of 13 reading questions assignments
- Complete 12 out of 13 class activity assignments
- Midterm Project (score 70% or higher)
- Final Project (score 70% or higher)

#### Grade Boosters

You will earn an additional half-letter grade (e.g., B- to B) for completing EACH of the achievements below. There are four boosters available. Please note that receiving an A+ grade will be left to the discretion of the instructor based on exceptional work. Therefore, you can complete up to four grade boosters.

- Receive an A (90% or higher) on the midterm project and/or final project (2 boosts available)
- Complete an additional paper with a passing score (2 boosts available total, see Canvas for paper details)

#### Grade Sinkers

You will lose half a letter grade for each instance where your course performance does not meet expected minimum standards. These are:

- Score < 70% on either the midterm project or final project (including a 0 for failing to turn in a paper; each project < 70% lowers course grade by half a letter)
- Completing fewer than 12 out of 13 reading questions (one half grade decrease, regardless of how many fewer than 12 completed, e.g., 11 vs. 4)
- Completing fewer than 12 out of 13 class activities (one half grade decrease, regardless of how many fewer than 12 completed, e.g., 11 vs. 4)

#### \*A note on what’s considered “passing” in this class

- For the midterm and final project, a passing score is 70% or higher.
- For ungraded (complete/incomplete) assignments, you must follow instructions specified in the assignment to pass. Each assignment’s description lays out what is required to pass.
- Assignments must be completed on time to be considered passing, unless a student arranges an extension previously approved by the instructor.
- For all assignments and papers, a passing paper has very few words copied directly from the original material. This means that you use your own words to describe concepts and that you don’t plagiarize entire sentences from the original work. One full sentence copied and pasted from the original work is enough to qualify for plagiarism. See Canvas for more grading information on the papers (linked in each assignment’s description)

## University Policies

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Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

## Course Schedule

**Weekly Due Dates: All reading question assignments are due via Canvas by Tuesdays at 9am. Class activities are turned in at the end of the class period, typically on Thursdays.**

When	Topic	Notes
Week 1: Aug 22 and 24	Introduction; Syllabus Review; Course Orientation	Reading: Review course syllabus  Assignments: Obtain textbook, get acquainted with Canvas page
Week 2; Aug 29 and 31	Introduction to the Psychology of Aging	Reading: Chapter 1  Assignments: Reading Questions 1, Class Activity 1
Week 3; Sept 5 and 7	Biological Theories of Aging	Reading: Chapter 2  Assignments: Reading Questions 2, Class Activity 2
Week 4; Sept 12 and 14	The Aging Body and Age-Related Health Conditions; Prevention	Reading: Chapter 3  Assignments: Reading Questions 3, Class Activity 3
Week 5; Sept 19 and 21	Cognition and Aging	Reading: Chapter 7  Assignments: Reading Questions 4, Class Activity 4
Week 6; Sept 26 and 28	Neurocognitive Disorders in Late Life	Reading: Chapter 9  Assignments: Reading Questions 5, Class Activity 5
Week 7; Oct 3 and 5	Personality and Emotional Development	Reading: Chapter 5  Assignments: Reading Questions 6, Class Activity 6
Week 8; Oct 10 and 12	Mental Health and Aging	Reading: Chapter 6  Assignments: Reading questions 7, Class Activity 7  <b>Midterm project due Oct 12 by 11:59pm via Canvas upload.</b>
Week 9; Oct 17 and 19	Relationships, Families, and Aging: Changes in Roles with Aging	Reading: Ch 10  Assignments: Reading Questions 8, Class Activity 8
Week 10; Oct 24 and 26	Death and the Dying Process, Bereavement, and Widowhood	Reading: Chapter 12  Assignments: Reading Questions 9, Class Activity 9
Week 11; Oct 31 and Nov 2	Cultural Differences in Aging Experiences of Ethnic and Sexual Minority Older Adults	Reading: Chapter 13  Assignments: Reading Questions 10, Class Activity 10
Week 12; Nov 7 and 9	Work and Retirement	Reading: Chapter 11  Assignments: Reading Questions 11, Class Activity 11
Week 13; Nov 14 and 16	Aging and Ethics/Legal Issues	Reading: Chapter 14  Assignments: Reading Questions 12, Class Activity 12
Week 14: Nov 21	Current Topics in Aging Research	<b>Readings TBA.</b>  <b>No class on Thursday 11/23</b>

When	Topic	Notes
Week 15; Nov 28 and 30	Cognitive Reserve and Cognitive Interventions	<p>Readings: Chapter 8</p> <p>Assignments: Reading Questions 13, Class Activity 13</p>
Week 16; Dec 5	Course Wrap-Up/Catch-Up Day	<p>Last day of class. SJSU classes end Wed Dec 6.</p> <p><b>Final project paper due Tuesday Dec 5 by 11:59pm via Canvas upload.</b></p> <p><b>All booster papers due by Wed Dec 13 at 12:00pm (noon)</b></p>