Welcome

Hello and welcome to Gerontology 513: Stress, Health and Aging. Many of you are new to this way of learning and so before I get started, I thought I should go over several things.

Please study this syllabus carefully and refer to it during the semester. It contains important information about accessing the Electronic Reserves and Cyber Classrooms, as well as course requirements, logistics and grading. I hope you will find it exciting to learn this way and I look forward to seeing you online!

This fall, the course will be taught in 15 weeks. There will be one cyberclass each week and five email assignments. The site visit and interview will need to be done before week 14. The 15th week is for the preparing and submitting the final exam at the conclusion of the 15th week. I suggest that you contact me as soon as possible if you have problems with the site visit or interview. Grading will include participation in the cyberclasses and depend on the successful completion of the assignments and final paper on time.

Course Description

This course is an interdisciplinary introductory course in geriatrics which examines the processes of normal human aging as well as the common diseases and disorders that affect older adults. Lectures reflect the knowledge and contributions of geriatric experts from the fields of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, dentistry, occupational therapy, physical therapy, psychology, and social work. Particular attention is given to preventive strategies that maximize function to help more individuals achieve a healthy old age. As an introduction to the field, it does not attempt to cover all the possible areas in geriatrics. Instead it will highlight areas of importance and interest to those who will be working with older adults.

The course is divided into four sections: Aging and Health, Health Promotion and Lifestyle, Diseases and Disorders of Aging, and Issues Affecting Health and Function. The first section
examines the concepts and issues of healthy aging including epidemiology and normal physiological
changes. The next section identifies health promoting behaviors (e.g., nutrition, fitness, smoking
cessation) that can prevent chronic illness and disability. The third section presents the major age-
related diseases and disorders with their risk factors, symptoms, and treatment. In the final section I
will consider some of the other issues that affect health including polypharmacy, oral health, and
mental health.

This course is delivered via computer and is entirely web based. The material covered is the same as
what would be taught in a traditional classroom. However, in this web based course you will able to
use the immense resources available on the World Wide Web (WWW) to enhance their learning
experience.

Since this class does not meet in the traditional fashion (but will, in the virtual sense), additional
student responsibilities are required. Every student must have access to a computer with internet
connection and Microsoft WORD. Each of the 12 didactic weeks of the course will be conducted
asynchronously in one week blocks of time. However, you may log-on to the site at any time you
choose during the duration of the week. You will have access to me 7 days a week and 14 hours a
day (7 AM to 9 PM) via e-mail. My email address is eschneid@usc.edu. Each week of this course
consists of the following components:

- Required Readings from the Course Reader/Electronic Reserve
- A Web Lecture
- Self-Quizzes
- Web Navigation Exercises
- Discussion in a Cyber Classroom
- Five Weekly Critical Thinking Exercises
- Access to an outstanding Glossary

At the beginning of each lecture, you are required to read the articles in the Course Reader, which
are also available on Electronic Reserve. As you read through the web lecture there will be
interactive exercises, charts, graphs, or figures that will enlarge when you click on them. If you click
on words that are underlined in the text, they will take you to the glossary. You can click on the
icon for self-quizzes to test your understanding of the material. These activities are designed to
further explain and illustrate the major concepts of the lecture. Additionally, each week we will be
interacting with each other via the Cyber Classroom where our debates and other interactive
discussion will occur. The Weekly Exercise you are required to write at the end of some week's
lesson will be approximately 500 words long and relate to the week's material. During the duration
of this course, you are expected to deliver your assignments to me within the scheduled 6 day
period. The five weekly essays needs to be in MS Word (but not VISTA WORD, please save in an
early version of WORD), saved as your name followed by the week of the assignment (Smith4 or
Jones2) then attach it in an e-mail message to Dr. Schneider. Before you send the completed
assignment be sure to save the file for your own records. These weekly exercises/short essay
assignments will be reviewed, commented on, graded and returned to you by mail.

In order to keep up with the course, you should schedule a specific time each week to read the
required articles, "attend" the lecture, participate in the Cyber Classroom, and complete the weekly
exercise. You should also plan to check e-mail at least every other day for messages from professor,
T.A., and fellow classmates. (Note: Readings for each course are available on-line (Electronic
Reserve)

It is important for me to get to know you and your interests. Please arrange a time to talk with me
about the class and your interest in gerontology. If you have any questions about your work, the course requirements, or are having other problems, please e-mail me at eschneid@usc.edu. You can make an appointment and visit my office if you can, or call me at 213-820-7262.

I have established a GERO 513 group on my FACEBOOK site so that students can ÒseeÓ each other and communicate about the course. You can request being Òmy friendÓ and I will add you to the site. This is entirely optional and if you feel that your privacy would be affected by participating in this group, you do not need to join.

What are Cyber Classrooms?

Each student is required to participate meaningfully in on-line discussions which occur in cyber classrooms. These cyber classrooms are a virtual space for us to meet to discuss the readings, lecture and assignments. Please contact Technical Support if you have any problem accessing the cyber classes.

The cyber classrooms are also a perfect place to raise questions you may have. There are 12 cyber classrooms that correspond with a specific week. Remember, you will be involved in one cyberclasse per week. Within each cyber classroom, you will find a set of prompting questions meant to highlight issues I think are important and to stimulate discussion. Depending on when you log-in to the classroom, you may also find a conversation in progress. Feel free to jump in at any level: taking up one of my prompting questions or joining the conversation in progress. I also encourage you to introduce issues that interest you that have not been raised. However, to avoid too many threads, I would like to limit the cyberclasses to three threads per week. So the first students to post their commentary will lead the weekly discussion.

Students are required to participate in the cyber classrooms each week. The cyber classrooms will be structured so that all responses will remain accessible to participants during the entire course (i.e., you will be able to read all of what has been contributed to the point where you log-in). However, you may log-in anytime during the day. Remember, input into the cyber classroom stops at the end of the assigned week.

Note: AgeWorks also has a separate bulletin board for general program comments, technical questions and helpful hints you may want to post. Feel free to post messages to this board anytime. It is located on the AgeWorks Home Page.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, the student will:

- Recognize lifestyle practices that promote health and prevent disease and/or disability.
- Know the physiologic changes associated with normal aging versus chances associated with age-related disease.
- Recognize the risk factors, symptoms, and treatment of common chronic conditions associated with aging.
- Understand other issues that affect health and function including polypharmacy, oral health, and mental health.
- Appreciate the roles of the professionals comprising the interdisciplinary geriatric team in the care of older adults.
Apply knowledge of geriatrics to "real-life" patient studies to prevent disease and promote healthy aging.

**Course Requirements**

**Your grade for the course will be determined as follows:**

- 5 Weekly Exercises: 25%
- Participation in Cyberclass discussions: 10%
- Site Visit: 15%
- Interview Assignment: 15%
- Final Paper: 35%

**Guidelines for the Site Visit**

Each Gero 513 student is expected to visit a Long Term Care Site during the semester. The site should be either a nursing home or an assisted living facility in the city or county where you live. The visit should last about 4 hours and can be done anytime in the first 2/3 of the semester. You can find a nursing home in your yellow pages or go to the following website: [http://www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov)

All you need to do at the website is type in your city, county, state or zip code and it will display nursing homes in your area.

Belmont Village, Sunrise and Aegis are some of the large assisted living communities that are nationwide.

Call the facility and ask to speak with the administrator of the facility and/or the Director of Nursing. Explain the purpose of your visit to the facility. DO NOT BE DECEITFUL OR MISLEAD THEM IN ANY WAY! Explain that the visit is part of a graduate course in gerontology and tell them that you wish to observe what goes on in the facility and to speak with some residents if that is possible. Assure them that you will maintain the privacy of any staff member or resident. Set up a date and time to come to the facility and ask whom you should see on your arrival. Be prompt and dress nicely. If they offer a tour, accept it and use it as a chance to interview residents and staff.

Talk with staff about the challenges of working in a long term care facility. Ask them why they chose to work there. Ask about the training they needed to work there and about ongoing educational programs. Find out the average turnover of staff and how they attract staff to come and work there. Discuss the criteria for resident entry and the mix of patients, i.e. how many have Alzheimer disease. Do they have a specialized Alzheimer unit? What are the special challenges of this unit?

Talk with a few residents if possible. Find out why they chose the facility. Ask them about their challenges.

Upon completion of your visit, email to me a 1000 word essay summarizing your visit to the long term care facility. Describe the facility, staff and residents you met. Do not use their names; you may designate them as Mr. K or Nurse M. You can also discuss the following: Did the facility meet your expectations? Would you wish to work in a long term care facility? When you are older, would...
you choose to live in a long term care facility?

**Guidelines for the Interview Assignment**

Interview someone aged 65 or older. IF you do not know someone in this age range, go to a local senior center that can be identified in your phone books. Tell them the purpose of the interview. DO NOT BE DECEITFUL OR MISLEAD THEM IN ANY WAY! Identify yourself as a USC graduate student and inform them that this interview will the basis for a paper you will be submitting to a graduate class, GERO 513. Assure them that there names will be kept confidential and that you will identify them in the paper as Ms. T or Mr. Y. You should also assure them that any identifying information such as their jobs, family information and other facts would be quoted without identifying information. For example if they worked for a specific company as CEO, you would indicate that they were CEO of Company X.

Ask them about their life history, what are they proud of about their lives. Ask about how they feel about their aging, how aging has affected their day-to-day activities. What are the good things about aging and what are the challenges? Find out their medical history, what diseases and disorders they have and how these conditions have affected their lives. What kind of doctor(s) do they see and for what conditions. How is their interaction with their physicians? What medicines do they take and do they have problems taking them. How is their dental health and their relationship with their dentist. Have they been depressed and if so, what are they doing to treat their depression? Have they experienced age discrimination? Are they treated more respectfully?

Upon completion of the interview, summarize the information you have obtained in a 1000 word essay.

**Final Paper Guidelines**

The final paper is due as indicated in the outline 1 week after the last class. It should be 2000 to 2500 words in length. You should pick a topic covered in the course. Here are a few examples of topics (you can use these, but I hope that you will be original and pick some interesting aspects of the material that we have covered).

1. Controlling behavioral problems in Alzheimer patients.
3. Diagnosing depression in older persons.
4. Demographic changes and future health care costs.
5. How to get antioxidant protection through better nutrition.

Introduce the subject you are going to discuss, use 5 to 10 references to buttress your arguments. You can obtain the appropriate references by using OVID, a search engine at the USC Library E-resources site. You should discuss biological, medical, psychological and social aspects of a specific geriatric issue. Finish the final paper with conclusions you have reached from your review of the literature on the subject. Do not use newspaper articles or web sites for your references. The exception would be an authoritative web site such as the National Institute on Aging, Alzheimer Association or National Cancer Society websites. However, most of the references must be from peer reviewed journal articles.

**Weekly Exercises, Assignments, Final Exam**

USC is committed to the general principles of academic honesty that include and incorporate the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be
submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. By taking this course, students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. All submitted work for this course may be subject to an originality review as performed by Turnitin technologies (http://www.turnitin.com) to find textual similarities with other Internet content or previously submitted student work. Students of this course retain the copyright of their own original work, and Turnitin is not permitted to use student-submitted work for any other purpose than (a) performing an originality review of the work, and (b) including that work in the database against which it checks other student-submitted work.

All material must be your own. Direct quotes posted from material on the web or references, and simple summaries from articles are not acceptable in assignments or in e-mail comments. Any material that is not your own will receive zero points and cannot be redone. Regular participation is essential to this course and you are expected to participate in the cyber classroom discussions each week. If, for some very good reason, you must miss a week, please notify Dr. Schneider and he will try to accommodate your needs. However, this should be reserved for emergencies.