

Psychology 3120 - Psychology of Aging: Fall, 2012

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Mather, mather@uleth.ca

Office: C888: **Office Hours:** TR, 1505-1620

Class: TR, 1630-1745, W 561

Text: *Adult Development and Aging*, John Cavanaugh and Fredda Blanchard-Fields

There are several aims of the course:

The *first* aim is to allow you to gain information about the changes that occur in behaviour in the adult years. This course builds upon the understanding of the developmental process gained in Psychology 2110 and extends the scope across the lifespan. As the length of the lifespan extends and we emerge from the ageism of the past 50 years, we are paying more attention to the experiences of those over 50, and finding a rich tapestry of Successful Aging.

The *second* aim is to give you the experience of self-directed learning. This will be done by the use of **Inquiry** rather than lecturing. Each week, students in groups will read the chapter to access particular important questions and then answer some of them. Inquiry is an important skill that frees a student from rote learning and the necessity to rely on the professor's opinion as the only important and valid one. The University of Lethbridge's Statement of Philosophy says our "primary aims are to foster the spirit of free inquiry and the critical interpretation of ideas". This course should help you do that - but don't be discouraged if it's difficult at first, it's hard to switch focus.

The *third* aim is to give you experience with working with others. Most of the work experiences of our adult lives take place in a collective context, and employers have begun to say that our graduates should have more experience in working with others. Many students are skeptical of relying on others for their grade, so a weighting system will assist in giving you credit for the amount of work you have contributed.

The *fourth* aim is to give you practice in writing, also to freshen up your APA Format. Since your groups will be doing one short essay a week, I expect to evaluate process and content and will assess a rough draft if you send it to me. Gradually you will accumulate the understanding of the proper format for reference sections, title pages and abstracts.

To give the answers some unity across the semester, each group will collect their papers into a **Portfolio**. But the Portfolios will also take a point of view. Canada is a mosaic of many different

cultures, yet we think little about Cross-Cultural Psychology. To give you practice in thinking from a cultural context (hopefully not your own), each group will choose a cultural/religious context (Aboriginal, Buddhist, Muslim, Roman Catholic are examples) from which to make your answers; the choice will be made on September 11th. Sometimes cultural background will make little difference to your inquiry (eg Physical Changes) and sometimes it will be very important (eg Relationships, Death and Dying). The first Portfolio entry will be a single page, introducing us to the particular psychology and cultural background of the group. This must be written by September 13th, but it will not be collected and evaluated. In the last week of class, December 4th to 6th, Portfolios will be assembled and a several-page conclusion about the lifespan as viewed by your particular group will be added. The whole Portfolio is due December 6th (How much should it be worth)?

I belong to an informal group of professionals concerned with seniors in Lethbridge called the Seniors Forum, and one of the areas that we feel we don't know enough about is the viewpoints of our diverse ethnic groups. Thus a representative of each group will be asked to present on what they found about their particular group to the Forum. We will set up a special meeting of the group (we generally meet in the Culver City Room in City Hall) for this presentation. This is not part of the course and thus is not rewarded by marks (though you can put it on your Resume), it is a courtesy and sharing of information with people who want to know.

Think of your learning as taking place in a weekly cycle, with your focus on one of the text chapters per week.

We will decide on a grading scheme in the first class.

Tuesday: For the first 10 minutes of class, students will write (*Open Book*) about a concept provided by Dr. Mather and based on material covered the previous week. This will give you the opportunity to receive some credit for individual work. Three possible concepts will be e-mailed to the class on Thursday. These are worth x marks each and there will be 11 of them (total xx). The first one will not be marked, only the last 10.

After that, Dr. Mather will give the class some background and discussion of the important ideas in the week's chapter, for about 10 minutes. There will be no time for details-- you will have to get these from the text. Each group's job for the rest of the class is to come up with a question based on the area of aging covered in that particular text chapter. As well, you will be required to justify why this question is an important one, check in Chapter 1 (make the question and justification about one page in length). Note: consideration will be made for originality as I don't want every group to ask the same question (see Thursday). The clarity, answerability and importance of the question as well as the appropriateness of the rationale will be evaluated. There will be 12 in total, with only the last 11 being marked. Each will be worth xx for a total of xx.

After class you'll report your question and justifications, by posting on the class-email (psyc3120@uleth.ca) by 9:00 Wednesday morning. That will give groups lots of time to select a question and prepare to make an answer (see Thursday). Dr. Mather will grade and return the questions, usually by Thursday.

Thursday: Groups will come to class and work on the question they have chosen (which they will report at the beginning of class). Material from sources outside the text will be welcome for use and rewarded (in practice, groups use 4-6 references). Each group's answer will be typed, APA format. No title page or abstract will be required initially; later, when you get

used to the format, they will be expected. They will be submitted to Dr. Mather by e-mail before noon Saturday. Evaluation will be based on validity of the answer, information used to back up the conclusions, and creativity and originality of the answer. Rough drafts of answers that are e-mailed to Dr Mather by Friday at 1500, will be evaluated and comments returned. There will be 12 in total, with only the last 11 being marked. (Each will be worth xx for a total of xx).

Students will be placed in groups on September 11th. They will stay in the same group until October 18th and will be reassigned to groups October 23rd. Before the group re-shuffling, students will be asked to evaluate the contribution of each group member, including themselves, on a relative basis from 80% to 120%, averaging 100% (October 18th). In most cases this will make little difference to one's grade – this is meant to find and reward the excellent leader and the poor contributor. Absences on Tuesday will result in a missed individual assignment, which can be made up if Dr. Mather is given the appropriate written justification. Absences from group work should be evaluated within the group - I will ask the class' opinion about this on the first day of class. For week 1 (September 11-13 and Term 1 on September 18) **YOU WILL NOT BE GRADED**. This gives you a week to practice.

On September 6th, the class members will read and review the course outline, note that there are as yet no grades assigned to the different components of the course. We will discuss and choose the weighting (this is valid but must be done in the first class meeting). There are weekly open book terms (10), group questions (11) and answers (11). There's also some weight to be assigned to the Portfolio, particularly the header and summing up.

When classes produce practical work, the marks tend to be high. Thus I expect that the A grade will start at 85%, the B grade at 75 % and the C grade at 65% (this is a third year class, no one should be failing). The top ¼ of the range represents the + and the bottom ¼ the – designations. In the first class meeting, I will ask permission of the class to move the grade boundaries down a little if it makes logical sense to do so (aiming grade boundaries for gaps and taking care of the possibility that I grade harshly and no one 'does very well').

Schedule: See page 4: POST IT

| MONTH | DAY | CHAPTER | ASSIGNMENT |
|--------------|------------|-------------------------|--|
| SEPTEMBER | 6 | No Chapter | Class organization, Grade selection |
| | 11 | 1. Introduction | Culture choice, Group assignment, Question 1 (No Grade) |
| | 13 | 1. Introduction | Culture description, Answer 1 (No Grade) |
| | 18 | 2. Physical | Question 2 (Grading Starts) Term 1 (No Grade) |
| | 20 | 2. Physical | Answer 2 |
| | 25 | 3. Health | Question 3, Term 2 |
| | 27 | 3. Health | Answer 3 |
| OCTOBER | 2 | 4. Mental Health | Question 4, Term 3 |
| | 4 | 4. Mental Health | Answer 4 |
| | 9 | 5. Person-environment | Question 5, Term 4 |
| | 11 | 5. Person-environment | Answer 5 |
| | 16 | 6 & 7. Attention/Memory | Question 6, Term 5 |
| | 18 | 6 & 7. Attention/Memory | Answer 6, Group evaluation A |
| | 23 | 8. Intelligence | Question 7, Group assignment B, Term 6 |
| | 25 | 8. Intelligence | Answer 7 |
| | 30 | 9. Social Cognition | Question 8, Term 7 |
| NOVEMBER | 1 | 9. Social Cognition | Answer 8 |
| | 6 | 10. Personality | Question 9, Term 8 |
| | 8 | 10. Personality | Answer 9 |
| | 13 | 11. Relationships | Question 10, Term 9 |
| | 15 | 11. Relationships | Answer 10 |
| | 20 | 12. Work & Retirement | Question 11, Term 10 |
| | 22 | 12. Work & Retirement | Answer 11 |
| | 27 | 13. Dying & Grieving | Question 12, Term 11 |
| | 29 | 13. Dying & Grieving | Answer 12 |
| DECEMBER | 4 | No Chapter | Group evaluation B, Portfolio work |
| | 6 | No Chapter | Portfolio due IN CLASS |