

PSYS 423 - Psychology of Adult Life and Aging – Term 20XX
DAYS 0:00-0:00 AM/PM in XXXX KTH -- Section XXX (CRN: XXXXX)

Course Details:

Instructor: Dr. Andy Mienaltowski (Dr. M'ski)

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Office Hours: TBA (see Blackboard site). My office is 1025 KTH if you would like to visit.

Course Description:*Prerequisites:* 21 hours of Foundations & Explorations Courses, or junior status, or permission of instructor.*Course Description:* Psychological processes in adulthood and aging. Emphasis on contemporary theories, methodological issues, and interactions of psychological, biological, social, and environmental factors in adulthood and aging.*General Info about the Course:* For this course, you will be assessed through (a) exams that cover the assigned reading and in class lectures, (c) in class and online engagement activities, and (c) an empirical article analysis. Exam days and due dates are spaced throughout the term to facilitate steady progress. **Successful students are motivated to learn about the aging process.** This course will challenge you to use your skills like a social scientist would to draw conclusions about the work of other scientists.*Colonnade Program:* Fulfills 3 out of 9 hours of course credit from the Connections category of the WKU Colonnade (General Education) Program, specifically in the *Connections-Systems* area. The following are the learning outcomes for the Connections-Systems category of the Colonnade Program as well as the learning objectives that will be introduced in this course to meet these outcomes.

<i>Connections Systems Learning Outcomes</i>	<i>Course Overview and Learning Outcomes</i>
Students will examine systems, whether natural or human, by breaking them down into their component parts or processes and seeing how these parts interact. Courses will consider the evolution and dynamics of a particular system or systems and the application of system-level thinking. Below are the three learning outcomes for Systems courses within the Connection Category of the Colonnade Program:	<p>PSYS 423, Psychology of Adult Life and Aging, is a developmental psychology course that covers human aging. Aging is a process that involves growth in some psychological abilities, maintenance of others, and still decline in others. This course will cover adult development, primarily focusing on how psychological systems evolve throughout the latter half of life. Although society perpetuates stereotypes about how our psychological systems change as we grow older, this course will explore the science that underlies these changes to our psychological systems. Moreover, we will consider how one's individual talents, abilities, and struggles contribute to the processes by which aging impacts our psychological systems. Finally, we will explore the social dynamics of growing older in today's world to better understand the impact that aging psychological systems can have on public policy and the programming of psychological research.</p> <p>The main goals for this course are: (1) to help you become familiar with current psychological theories of aging and how they account for changes in psychological systems, (2) to facilitate your critical analysis of the inter-relations amongst cognitive, emotional, social, and biopsychological systems and their constituent components as they evolve throughout adulthood, and (3) to encourage you to consider how your own psychological systems as well as those of your loved ones, patients, and clients might dynamically evolve as the years pass. The learning outcomes for the course include:</p>
1. Analyze how systems evolve.	(a) Discuss the research methods used by developmental psychologists to measure and characterize the impact that human aging has on the evolution of psychological systems, including their constituent components.

2. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.	(b) Identify the individual components of cognitive, emotional, social, and biopsychological systems, and describe how each is assessed by psychological scientists. (c) Identify the major changes in the above psychological systems that take place throughout adulthood and into old age and that have been substantiated with empirical evidence by psychological scientists.
3. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.	(d) Describe the conditions under which improvements and/or impairments in cognitive, social, emotional, and biopsychological systems noted in the laboratory by psychological scientists might translate into substantial changes in in everyday functioning outside of the laboratory.

Required Textbook:

Cavanaugh, J. C., (2024). *Adult development and aging* (9th ed). Belmont, CA: Cengage.

Recommended Materials:

OWL Purdue website on how to format a paper using APA style:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_style_introduction.html

The APA Publication manual can be a helpful resource. However, OWL Purdue is just as helpful and free. If you have not written in APA style before, try not to worry. There are sample papers on the OWL Purdue page that can be used to serve as a comparison to your own. Just do what they do.

Components of the Course:

This course meets face to face on XXX. Class attendance is important for staying engaged in the course. Overall, your grade in this course will be assessed using: (a) engagement activities, (b) exams, and (c) an extensive empirical article analysis in which you discuss how a psychological system evolves as we age using the data discussed in the article to support your arguments. The reading in this course is important because it reinforces the foundation of the material that will be discussed in class and will be useful to review while preparing for exams. The course readings are linked to the topics that we will discuss during the term and are found in this syllabus in the roadmap for the course (course calendar). Rather than assigning the whole textbook to read, you are only being assigned the most essential chapters.

A. Exams (400 points):

We will have 4 exams throughout the term. Each exam is worth 100 points and will include multiple choice, true or false, and brief essay responses. Exam questions are drawn from the course learning objectives. All four exams will count toward your grade. Each exam should take one hour to complete and will be administered in class, with the final exam occurring during final exam week. After each exam, you are able to review your graded exam during Dr. Mienaltowski's office hours. He will review items that were particularly challenging to the class during a class meeting after the exam. For each exam, you are allowed to have one 8.5 x 11 inch sheet of notes to refer to while answering your questions. This must be turned in on the exam day. More guidance on this note page will be provided before the first exam. You should use the learning objectives that are shared with you to populate this notes sheet.

If you miss one of the first three exams, you are welcome to take that exam and the final exam during the final exam period. Please notify Dr. Mienaltowski by X at 5PM if you plan on making up a missed exam during final exam week. You are limited to making up one exam.

To prepare for exams, please attend class, take notes, read the textbook, and be sure that you are very familiar with the content discussed in the course learning objectives posted to Blackboard for each unit. Exam questions are based on the learning objectives that I share with you and are not generated by the publisher of the textbook.

B. Empirical and Applied Engagement Activities (180 points):

Each unit includes an authentic activity that asks you to apply what you have learned. Some will be administered in class and some will be administered via Blackboard. These activities are important to each unit because they will likely be amongst the most memorable experiences you have from the course. They focus on examining your individual understanding of the material and applying it beyond the lecture and textbook. The activities include

items that facilitate your growth in integrating findings, fact checking, and considering how the aging process may impact you personally.

C. Extensive Empirical Article Analysis (70 total points) – Colonnade Program Assessment Artifact

Assignment Overview: You will analyze an empirical article related to the psychology of aging. Your essay should demonstrate an understanding of a psychological construct discussed in class, connect it to age-related changes, and critically evaluate a research study that explores this relationship. You will also propose a follow-up study to extend or apply the findings. Your response should be well-organized, clearly written, and supported by both the empirical article and concepts from class discussions.

Assignment Instructions:

Section 1 – Setting up your focus (at least two paragraphs)

Begin your essay by introducing a psychological construct that has been discussed in class (e.g., memory, personality, relationships, or personal striving/goals). Define this construct and explain how it is typically measured in psychological research. This introduction should provide the foundation for understanding how the construct changes over time.

Then discuss how changes in aging impact the psychological construct you introduced. Draw from at least two of the following four areas: biopsychology, socioemotional experiences, cognitive functions, and mental health systems. Explain how specific changes in these areas influence the construct and use concepts from class to support your discussion.

Section 2 – Analysis of Empirical Article (at least three paragraphs)

Introduce an empirical article that examines the relationship between the psychological construct and at least one of the four aging-related areas. Summarize the authors' motivations for conducting the study and describe their hypotheses based on prior research findings. This section should demonstrate an understanding of why the study was conducted and what the researchers expected to find.

Next, describe the research methods used in the study. Clearly explain how the study was conducted, including information about the participants, the research design, and the measures or tasks used to assess the psychological construct. Discuss how the research methods were designed to test the study's hypotheses and ensure that you clearly connect these methods to the construct you introduced at the beginning of your essay.

Then, summarize the study's key findings and explain whether the results supported the authors' hypotheses. Discuss what these findings suggest about the psychological construct and how they contribute to our understanding of how aging influences this aspect of human behavior or experience.

Section 3 – Critically Extend or Apply Findings from Empirical Article (at least one paragraph)

Finally, conclude your essay by proposing a follow-up study or intervention that could build on the empirical article you analyzed. This study could extend the findings by examining another aspect of aging, focusing on a different psychological mechanism, or applying the knowledge gained in a way that benefits older adults. Explain why this follow-up study would be valuable and how it could further our understanding of aging and psychology. Your proposed work should clearly describe what you would manipulate and/or measure to evaluate the meaningfulness of your study or intervention.

Your essay should be in APA style, 1200-1500 words in length (5-6 double spaced pages), well-organized, clearly written, and address all of the aforementioned points. Be sure to properly cite both the empirical article and any relevant class materials.

Use of AI when writing in this class

Some people have begun to use AI to complete some writing tasks. If you use AI, it is critical to use it responsibly. Remember that AI is almost always inaccurate in offering true empirical outcomes. AI is often a language processing model that uses what it is fed to create coherent statements. **AI models have not been fed input on content from this course and will thus fail to accurately represent material in the course, especially the outcomes of empirical studies.** Remember that, like a spell checker, AI can provide some useful input to you on your writing. It can be used to help you edit the clarity of your writing. However, it is a poor fact checker and, in my experience, has never (not once) accurately represented research findings from the material discussed in this class. **You are prohibited from using AI to generate your written work in this course.** Doing

this is worse than cheating because it will also yield incorrect responses with fabricated sources. Do not use AI to check the formatting of your references. Rather Dr. M'ski will share other tools that you can use to assist with your application of APA style.

Attendance Policy

This course meets in person. Your attendance is necessary in order to actively be engaged in the course. Course activities and exams are administered in class. If absent from class on a day that we have an activity, this activity cannot be made up. You can miss two of these activities without any impact on your grade. Choosing to miss more days could impact your course grade.

Students who have a documented medical excuse for extended absence or incapacitation from schoolwork should share this documentation with Dr. Mienaltowski. In such cases (also for family deaths, court dates, and military deployments), extensions can be granted on work and alternative activities may be offered. Athletes should share their travel schedule with Dr. Mienaltowski if conflicts arise. Other on-campus activities (e.g., fraternity, sorority, or honor society meetings) do not apply here. Employment is not an excuse to miss class. Please make arrangements with your employer to ensure that you are able to attend class.

As noted above in the exam section, if you miss one of the first three exams, you are welcome to take that exam and the final exam during the final exam period. Please notify Dr. Mienaltowski by X at 5PM if you plan on making up a missed exam during final exam week. You are limited to making up one exam.

Students with Disabilities: *(Image: wku.edu)*

In compliance with University policy, students with disabilities who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Student Accessibility Resource Center located in Downing Student Union, Room 1074. The SARC can be reached by phone number at 270-745-5004 [270-745-3030 TTY] or via email at sarc.connect@wku.edu. Please do not request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a faculty notification letter (FNL) from The Student Accessibility Resource Center. Accommodation requests are reviewed for appropriateness for the course.

Course Grading Breakdown:

Based on your assignments, you can earn up to 650 points.

Extensive Empirical Article Analysis	70 points
Class Engagement	180 points
<u>Exams</u>	<u>400 points</u>
Total	650 points

Grading Scheme: (no rounding)

585-650 pts =	A	(4.0)
520-584 pts =	B	(3.0)
455-519 pts =	C	(2.0)
390-454 pts =	D	(1.0)
< 390 points =	F	(0.0)

Your overall grade in the course will be based on the number of points that you earn. It is up to you to obtain the grade that you want.

Academic Integrity:

All students are assumed to have read the Academic Offenses section of the Student Handbook. Academic offenses are taken extremely seriously and are referred to the Office of Student Life for further action. Specific violations include academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism.

What is plagiarism? – “To represent ideas or interpretations from another source as one’s own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of students must be their own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used. To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism.” – Source WKU Faculty Handbook, 27th edition (2022).

Search engines (e.g., Google) and other software (i.e., Blackboard SafeAssign) will be used to monitor student writing for plagiarism. If you have any concerns about whether or not your writing seems like plagiarism, please contact me. Please do not plagiarize from your textbook or journal articles. It is very easy to examine your writing for this. If there is any suspicion of plagiarism, a grade of ZERO points is automatically awarded to the student for

the assignment. Similarly, cheating will result in an automatic score of ZERO points on the assignment. If academic integrity is violated more than once in the course by a student, a grade of F will be awarded.

Self-Plagiarism. Please note that you are to generate unique content for this course's writing assignments. You are not to use papers that you have submitted for other classes. The writing assignments for this course have specific instructions, so, although your past work may inform what you know about a topic, your past work will not address the specific questions posed in this course. **Use of work from another class to meet this class's objectives is called self-plagiarism and is not allowed in this course.**

Plagiarism is relatively rare in this course as students who complete it are genuinely motivated to learn about the aging process. In all honesty, it just is not worth cheating or plagiarizing in college. Time management is at the heart of most cases of plagiarism that Dr. Mienaltowski has observed. If you are running into problems meeting deadlines, please avoid the temptation to cheat or plagiarize. Please reach out to me immediately about your concerns. Your success is important, and, although there is a limited time frame in which to work, the student and instructor can explore options together.

Use of AI in this course. As mentioned above, AI is a tool that can assist students in their writing. However, it does not provide accurate information based on empirical studies. If you use AI, do not use it to write your responses or papers. Rather, use it responsibly to do what it has been created for, which is to assist in the polishing and improvement of coherent arguments using the language that you feed it. Use of AI to generate responses for this course will lead to inaccurate information because AI fabricates outcomes and sources. It literally makes up findings to present as fact. This can look fantastic on the surface and read as a quite natural form of writing. However, when you realize the product isn't based on reality, you will have to start over. Making up evidence as fact is a form of academic dishonesty and can lead to a zero on any aspect of your work that requires that you actively analyze empirical findings.

Important information:

The university wants you to be aware that important information relevant to all of your courses can be found at this link: <https://www.wku.edu/syllabusinfo/index.php>

Title IX/Discrimination & Harassment:

Western Kentucky University (WKU) is committed to supporting faculty, staff and students by upholding WKU's [Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation](#) (#0.070) and [Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) (#0.2040). Under these policies, discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct based on sex/gender are prohibited. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to the Executive Director, Office of Institutional Equity/Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir, 270-745-6867 or Title IX Investigators, Michael Crowe, 270-745-5429 or Joshua Hayes, 270-745-5121. Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a faculty member, WKU faculty are "Responsible Employees" of the University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator. If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's [Counseling and Testing Center](#) at 270-745-3159.