

Psychology 377 – Fall 2009  
Topics in Developmental Psychology: Aging and Cognition

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Sarah Johnson	<b>When:</b>	T/R 1:10-2:20pm
<b>Phone:</b>	610-625-7013	<b>Where:</b>	PPHAC 301
<b>Office:</b>	224 PPHAC	<b>Office hours:</b>	T & W 2:30-4:30pm
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:skjohnson@moravian.edu">skjohnson@moravian.edu</a>		R 10-11:30am
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://blackboard.moravian.edu/">http://blackboard.moravian.edu/</a>		or by appt.
	Pwd: aging		

**Course Description:** This course will explore changes in cognitive processes in older adulthood, focusing on both healthy aging and certain geriatric disorders (e.g., Alzheimer's). Myths, as well as actual positive and negative changes with age and the personal and social repercussions of such changes, will be discussed. In addition, some discussion of cognitive development in children will also be incorporated. Topics of primary focus will be memory, executive function, and changes in the brain.

**Readings:** Readings in the form of book chapters and articles will be provided in one of three ways: in class, via the blackboard website, or available on reserve at Reeves (e.g., Myths book).

**Specific Course Objectives:**

1. Discuss important psychological theories and findings about aging and how it affects cognition—focusing in particular on how myths about aging relate to reality.
2. Think critically about how social, cultural, and emotional factors contribute to age-related cognitive declines (or lack thereof).
3. Communicate to others the gist of a piece of research and how it fits into the larger picture of age-related changes in cognition.
4. Use psychological theories of cognition and aging/development by learning about basic research and thinking about it in an applied way, specifically in terms of helping people deal with declines or deficiencies via training, rehabilitation, or other intervention.
5. Collaborate on a class project that involves applying our knowledge from the course to a community-based setting.

**Course Evaluation:**

**Attendance:** Each student can have up to 3 allowed absences. Except where arranged with me (on a case-by-case basis), for each absence beyond the 3 allowed ones, **your final course grade will be reduced by 3%** (this does not automatically guarantee you will drop in letter grade, e.g., from B → B-, but it is likely). A legitimate reason for being late can happen to anyone now and then, but repeated lateness is disrespectful to me and to your classmates. Come see me if you have a legitimate reason for repeated lateness or absence.

**Class Participation/Journal:** You will be given a grade (see scale below) based on your participation in class discussions and on questions/reactions in response to the readings made in a *class journal*. Some of these reflections will be written during class in response to prompts given by the professor (or other students), and some will be comments, questions, ideas, etc. made in response to the assigned readings. I will collect the class journals at semi-random intervals throughout the term, in an unannounced fashion, so you should bring these journals to every class session.

- A:** Contributes to class discussion by asking questions or making comments, in particular providing insightful and thought-provoking ideas that go beyond simple methodological questions. Contributions can include either bringing up points or responding to other's points, but without overly dominating the discussion. Insightful written questions/comments are formed in conjunction with the reading. Ideas go beyond what is read to show an incorporation of your own ideas or a synthesis of information across sources.
- B:** Consistently attentive and engaged but only occasionally contributing spontaneously to class discussions. Questions/comments that consistently reflect an accurate understanding of the material (e.g., reiterating an authors' point in your own words) but don't go beyond the reading to add something of your own or integrate ideas across sources.
- C:** No spontaneous contribution to class discussion, or contribution with evidence of poor preparation. Lateness beyond 15 min = automatic start grade of C. Written questions/comments are made but reflect poor preparation (e.g., a question that could be answered with minimal effort by the student him- or herself).
- D:** Shows up but doesn't participate except when directly asked a question. Disengaged from class. No written questions/comments apart from what is directly prompted in class.
- F:** Highly disruptive (e.g., table-dancing) or inconsiderate (e.g., snoring loudly during the entire class, initiating fist-fights) behavior in class discussions. No written comments/questions.

**Discussion leader:** You will be responsible for leading the discussion of the assigned reading on one day. Your responsibilities for that day will include organizing a list of questions and key themes for the class to discuss. You can start off with a brief overview of the readings for no more than 10 minutes, and then you will proceed to engage the class in active discussion. You will bring in a handout to help guide the class through the ideas/questions you have prepared. It is your responsibility to keep the class discussion going for the length of the period; however, other students are, as always, responsible for being active participants—each student's participation on those days will factor particularly heavily into their class participation grades.

**Article presentations:** You will be responsible for presenting one article to the class in detail. The presentation will involve summarizing a primary source, tying the findings into the larger themes of the class, and organizing a class discussion (similar to being a discussion leader) around a theme or themes from your source.

**Group grant project:** As a class we will be writing a proposal for a Community Grant (a program offered via the Leadership Center). Each person will write an individual version of the grant and we will collaborate in class to merge the different versions into a final grant proposal. This project will entail some individual thought work (e.g., about background readings) and leg-work (e.g., tracking down a sponsoring institution) outside of class, but a lot of the collaborative thought work (and some writing) will be accomplished in class. Each student's grade will be based in part on their own individual effort and in part on the finished group project.

**Aging in the Public Eye report:** You will be responsible for an in-class presentation on how aging is seen by people in our society as indexed by a popular source (a book or film). Your presentation (~20 min) should tap into main themes regarding aging as discussed in class, with ties to specific class readings, but no outside literature research is required. The dates for these reports will be scheduled individually.

**Intervention paper:** This will be the main research paper (~10-12 pages) for the class, summarizing an intervention plan for a particular condition (involving abnormal or normal aging) with respect to possible deficits or developmental characteristics. There will be a background section describing the cognitive features of this condition, followed by a rehabilitation/enrichment/training plan designed to avoid declines or enhance the development of a cognitive skill. At least 10 primary sources are required for this paper.

**Late Policy:** Late papers will be accepted for up to four days after the due date and, unless otherwise noted, will result in a reduction of *1 letter grade* (i.e., 10%) *for every calendar day late* beginning *sharply* at 5pm on the day the assignment is due. After the four-day period, the paper will not be accepted and a grade of 0 will be applied. Exceptions to this policy will only be made under truly extenuating circumstances (determined by me on a case-by-case basis), and NO exceptions will be made for technical difficulties. In addition, I will only accept work turned in by email if you have arranged with me to do so for that particular assignment.

Note that it is within my purview as instructor to use qualitative judgments in determining grades for presentations, papers, participation, or other aspects of the course.

**Overall grades-starting break-down:**

Class participation/Journal	20%
Article presentation	15%
Discussion leader	15%
Group grant project	20% (fixed)
Aging in the Public Eye Report	10%
<u>Intervention paper</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

**Student grade weighting:** Any aspect of the course except for the group project can be shifted by 10% up or down (e.g., 10-30% for the final paper), with the final sum = 100%. You will indicate your weighting choices on a separate form.

**Plagiarism and cheating:**

Any work that you turn in for this class must be entirely your own work. Any sources used must be properly documented. For more information on plagiarism and cheating, refer to the Student Handbook and the following website regarding academic responsibility at Moravian College: <http://www.moravian.edu/studentLife/handbook/academic2.htm>. As this site clearly explains, the consequences for cheating or plagiarism can range from failing the assignment to

receiving an F for the final course grade to expulsion, depending on the severity of the case and prior history of offenses. Although I am not generally opposed to your discussing assignments with fellow students from the class, all of the work you submit to me must be entirely your own, and in some cases I may ask you not to collaborate with fellow students. I will spend class time discussing ways to avoid plagiarizing and how to quote appropriately, but apart from this it is your responsibility to come see me if you have any questions about your use of sources or when/in what way it is okay to collaborate with other students in the class.

**Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides for some accommodations to be made for students with certain disabilities. If you have such a disability and are willing to disclose it, you may take advantage of such accommodations. In order to do so, you are required to meet with Mrs. Laurie Roth in the Office of Learning Services (for learning disabilities and/or ADD/ADHD) or Dr. Ronald Kline in the Counseling Center (for all other disabilities). Accommodations cannot be offered until I have received authorization from one of these centers based on documentation of your disability. You should also consider taking advantage of the Learning Services Office if you are having difficulty academically in this (or any other) class. The office is located at 1307 Main St. (phone: 610-861-1510).

**Class Schedule:** I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule with advance notice (changes will be announced in class and listed on Blackboard).

<b>Dates:</b>	<b>Class proceedings:</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments:</b>
<b>1.</b> Sept 1, 3	T: Introduction – Co-write course schedule R: Why be interested in older adults?	R: Chs. 1-2 Myths
<b>2.</b> Sept 8, 10	T: General theories (of age-related cognitive decline); R: Memory (basic types)	T: Ch. 1 Primer R: Ch. 5 Primer*
<b>3.</b> Sept 15, 17	T: Cognitive Neuropsychology of Aging R: Autobiographical memory	T: Ch. 6 Primer* R: Ch. 4 Myths; Ch. 8 Primer*
<b>4.</b> Sept 22, 24	T: Memory cont'd R: <i>Student article presentation</i>	T: Rahhal et al. (2002); Liu & Park (2004)
<b>5.</b> Sept 29, Oct 1	T: Executive function R: <i>Student article presentation</i>	T: Ch. 3 EF*
<b>6.</b> Oct 6, 8	Cognition, Aging, & Everyday life R: <i>Student article presentation</i>	Ch. 12 Primer*

<b>Dates:</b>	<b>Class proceedings:</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments:</b>
<b>7.</b> Oct 13, 15	T: <b>No class [Fall break]</b> Aging & Everyday Decision Making	R: Denburg et al. (2007)
<b>8.</b> Oct 20, 22	Use It or Lose It? Rehabilitation	T: Ch. 5 Myths; Salthouse (2006) R: Ch. 6 Myths; Jennings & Jacoby (2003)
<b>9.</b> Oct 27, 29	Developmental trajectory Children & Theory of Mind	T: Ch. 2 EF* R: Carlson et al. (2004)
<b>10.</b> Nov 3, 5	Autism R: <i>Student article presentation</i>	T: Article TBA
<b>11.</b> Nov 10, 12	T: <i>Student article presentation</i> R: Unhealthy aging: Alzheimer's	R: Bäckman et al. (2005); <b><i>Intervention paper draft due</i></b>
<b>12.</b> Nov 17, 19	T: <i>Student article presentation</i> R: <b>Guest Lecture: Dr. Cecilia Fox</b> <b>[Prof. Johnson will be away]</b>	R: Reading TBD
<b>13.</b> Nov 24, 26	T: Social/Emotional Factors in Aging R: <b>No Class [Thanksgiving]</b>	T: Levy (2003); Ch. 7 Myths
<b>14.</b> Dec 1, 3	T: Enrichment – start grant project R: Topic open – class choice	T: King & Suzman/Hertzog et al. (2009); R: Reading TBD
<b>15.</b> Dec 8	Group grant project	
<b>Finals Wk</b>	Meet during final period to finalize grant project	<b><i>Intervention paper due</i></b> (10+ refs)

\* = Discussion leader days

Primer = Cognitive Aging: A Primer (Eds. Park & Schwarz, 2000); available on reserve at Reeves

Myths = The Nine Myths of Aging: Maximizing the Quality of Later Life (Powell, 1998); available on reserve at Reeves

EF = Executive Functions and the Frontal Lobes: A Lifespan Perspective (Eds. Anderson et al., 2008); to be provided by Prof. Johnson

All other names refer to articles, pdfs posted on Blackboard unless otherwise noted