

Psychology 376 – Fall 2012  
Topics in Developmental Psychology: Aging and Cognition

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Sarah Johnson	<b>When:</b>	M/W 10:20-11:30am
<b>Phone:</b>	610-625-7013	<b>Where:</b>	PPHAC 338
<b>Office:</b>	224 PPHAC	<b>Office hours:</b>	T & R 1-3pm and by appt.
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:skjohnson@moravian.edu">skjohnson@moravian.edu</a>		
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://blackboard.moravian.edu/">http://blackboard.moravian.edu/</a>		
	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. We will explore cognitive development in children to some extent, and contrast these changes with cognitive changes in older adults. Topics of primary focus will be memory, executive function, and changes in the brain.

**Readings:** Readings (book chapters and articles) will be provided in one of three ways: in class, via the blackboard website, or available on reserve at Reeves. See book list at end of syllabus.

**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. **Use your experiences** interacting with older adults (see Service Learning component discussed below) **to reinforce your understanding** of these concepts.
2. **Think critically** about how social, cultural, and emotional factors contribute to age-related cognitive declines (or lack thereof).
3. **Guide others** through their understanding of theories and research in this area and how it fits into the larger picture of age-related changes in cognition.
4. **Learn about basic research** and **think 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 with your peers** on a class project that involves applying our knowledge from the course to a **community-based setting**.

**Attendance:** Each student has 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.

## Course Evaluation:

**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., questions that could be answered with minimal effort by the student).
- 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.

**Opposing-views discussions:** You will be responsible for guiding the class through discussion of a topic for which there are opposing views (based on a pair of chapters from *The Aging Population*; other students in the class will each read one of the two chapters). You will summarize the gist of the discussion and you will organize a class discussion (not necessarily in that order). The class discussion should be organized around a theme or themes from your source, while tying the findings into the larger themes of the course as well.

**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.

**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.

**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 will result in a reduction of *1 letter grade* (i.e., 10%) *for every calendar day late* beginning 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). ***I only accept work turned in by email if you have arranged with me to do so for that particular assignment.***

**Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides for some accommodations to be made for students with certain disabilities. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of Academic and Disability Support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

***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 values:**

Class participation/Journal	20%
Discussion leader	15%
Opposing-views discussions	15%
Aging in the Public Eye Report	10%
Group grant project	20% (fixed)
<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.

**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> Aug 27, 29	M: Introduction W: Why be interested in older adults?	W: Chs. 1-2 Myths
<b>2.</b> Sept 3, 5	M: <b>No class – Labor day</b> ; W: General theories (of age-related declines)	W: Ch. 1 Primer
<b>3.</b> Sept 10, 12	M: Memory (basic types) W: Cognitive Neuropsych of Aging	M: Ch. 5 Primer* W: Ch. 6 Primer*
<b>4.</b> Sept 17, 19	M: Autobiographical memory W: Memory cont'd	M: Ch. 4 Myths; Ch. 8 Primer* W: Rahhal et al. (2002); Liu & Park (2004)
<b>5.</b> Sept 24, 26	M: Executive function W: Cognition, Aging, & Everyday life	M: Ch. 3 EF* W: Ch. 12 Primer*
<b>6.</b> Oct 1, 3	M: Everyday Decision Making W: <i>Opposing-views discussion</i> <sup>o</sup>	M: Denburg et al. (2007)*
<b>7.</b> Oct 8, 10	M: <b>No class – Fall break</b> W: Interventions	W: Bugos et al. (2007); Winningham & Pike (2007); <i>Reflection 1</i>
<b>8.</b> Oct 15, 17	M: Use It or Lose It? W: <i>Opposing-views discussion</i> <sup>o</sup>	M: Ch. 5 Myths; Salthouse (2006)*; <i>Reflection 2</i>
<b>9.</b> Oct 22, 24	M: Developmental trajectory W: <i>Opposing-views discussion</i> <sup>o</sup>	M: Ch. 2 EF*; <i>Reflection 3</i>
<b>10.</b> Oct 29, 31	M: Children & Theory of Mind W: <i>Opposing-views discussion</i> <sup>o</sup>	M: Carlson et al. (2004); <i>Reflection 4</i>
<b>11.</b> Nov 5, 7	M: Autism W: <i>Opposing-views discussion</i> <sup>o</sup>	M: Baron-Cohen et al. (1986); <i>Reflection 5</i> W: <i>Intervention paper outline due</i>
<b>12.</b> Nov 12, 14	M: Enrichment: start grant project W: <i>Opposing-views discussion</i> <sup>o</sup>	King & Suzman/Hertzog et al. (2009); <i>Reflection 6</i>

<b>Dates:</b>	<b>Class proceedings:</b>	<b>Readings &amp; Assignments:</b>
<b>13.</b> Nov 19, 21	M: Unhealthy aging: Alzheimer's W: <b>No Class [Thanksgiving]</b>	M: Prologue Nun; Bäckman et al. (2005); <i>Reflection 7</i>
<b>14.</b> Nov 26, 28	M: Optimal aging W: Social/Emotional Factors in Aging	M: Ch. 10 Myths; Snowdon (2003); assigned Chs in Nun W: Levy (2003); Ch. 7 Myths
<b>15.</b> Dec 3, 5	M & W: Group grant project	
<b>Finals Wk</b>	<b><i>Intervention paper due Wed, Dec 12<sup>th</sup> by 5pm</i></b>	

\* = 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

Nun = Aging with Grace: What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More Meaningful Lives (Snowdon, 2001).

°TAP = The Aging Population (Ed. Katherine Swartz, 2009); to be provided by Prof. Johnson—chapters for opposing-views discussions.

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

### **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, and ***I require that you not use any direct quotes in assignments or papers.*** 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. 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 cite appropriately. When an assignment specifically requires collaborating (i.e., the group grant project), I will discuss the expectations regarding the collaboration. 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 others.

## Service Learning Component

Your learning and deeper understanding of this topic cannot take place within the four walls of our classroom. It is essential that you incorporate personal experiences—with older adults in your personal life, with observation of people in everyday situations, with your own experience regarding your development of cognitive functions or in observing children in your family, etc.—in order to more fully develop your understanding. As part of that personal experience, you will have the opportunity this semester to engage in service-learning, in which you give of your own time to provide services to and interact with older adults in the Lehigh Valley. We will do this in collaboration with an organization in the Lehigh Valley. As you provide services to the older adults in the community, they will in turn help you to better realize the different facets and the importance of the issues we will be discussing in class.

Each student will be responsible for completing 1.5 hours of service per week at the designated location over weeks 6-12 of the semester (for a total of 10.5 hours for the semester). You must spread your time out over those 7 weeks (i.e., you cannot just do 2 or 3 bigger chunks of time). For most of those weeks, your activities will be determined by what is needed at the organization or facility, but for some weeks, you will be asked to talk to some of the older individuals at the organization with some specific questions or issues in mind.

Each week, you will write a reflection paper about your experiences (1 single-spaced typed page). For the first and last week of the service-learning timeframe, I will give you a couple of questions to address in the reflection paper. For the rest of the weeks, you will be on your own to decide what to write about (I will give some suggestions in class). Each week's reflection paper is due on the following Monday at the start of class, except for the first which is due on that Wednesday (due to Fall break). Try to relate your experiences at the site to specific material we have covered in class.

**Grading:** Your reflection papers will be graded along the same lines as your regular class journal, and will be incorporated into that grade. Failure to complete reflection papers on time will result in a 25% deduction in the class participation grade for the related week of service (e.g., failure to turn in reflection paper #1 will result in a 25% deduction in the class participation grade for week 6).

The actual service hours will not be graded, per se. For each hour of service you fail to complete, your final grade will receive a 1.5% deduction (as well as the corresponding deduction to your class participation grades for those weeks). If you have some serious circumstance arise that makes you unable to fulfill your time commitment for that week, you can arrange to do a make-up time with the facility. Your contact at the organization will help you arrange this, but keep me informed of the situation.

A **Service Learning Agreement form** will be filled out by you and signed by the site coordinator, and a second form will be completed at the end to indicate that you have successfully fulfilled your commitment to the site.

### **SERVICE LEARNING OPT-OUT OPTION:**

If you wish to opt out of the service-learning hours and associated reflection papers, you can choose instead to do an APA-style review of research on a topic related to the class themes. The topic must be discussed with and approved by me, and you must **get approval by Sept 21<sup>st</sup>** (end of week 4). The paper will be 10 pages and include at least 8 empirical sources. Guidelines and expectations for the paper will be distributed to those students who are interested in choosing this option.