

The Horrors of Old Age!!
Community Studies 023
Summer Session 2, 2008

"We're practically a new species!"
-- Gloria Steinem,
in *Doing Sixty*

"Hope I die before I get old"
-- The Who,
from *My Generation*

"Old age is an excellent time for outrage."
-- Maggie Kuhn,
Founder of the Gray Panthers

Syllabus

Professor: Andrea Steiner, PhD, MSG (G for gerontology, the study of the social implications of population aging)
Department: Community Studies
Class offered: Summer Session 2, M and W, 6-9.30 pm
Room: Humanities Lecture 206
My office: Oakes 203
My contact info: (831) 459-1267; steiner@ucsc.edu
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Welcome to *The Horrors of Old Age*, a course designed to help you explore the diverse experiences of living ever longer lives in a society that marginalizes old age. I hope you will discover the constructed and contestable nature of age-driven expectations, including the Western idea that late life is a time to denigrate or fear. In this course we will use readings, guest speakers, and both popular and documentary films as the springboard for examining treatments of age throughout the life course, looking especially carefully at the exercise or loss of power, status, and opportunity in late life.

Films often provide a richer, more sensitive vision of social phenomena than our daily lives seem to, in part because of the filmmaker's sensibility, in part because of the chance to fantasize and exaggerate for emotional emphasis, in part because of the distance imposed (by definition) on the viewer. Your reading assignments will situate what we'll be watching, so as to sharpen the focus on gerontological scholarship.

This course has no prerequisites, and everybody is welcome.

Required Reading:

Only the reader! Pick it up at The Literary Guillotine, 204 Locust Street, Santa Cruz 457-1195

The following syllabus is meant to guide our study this summer and give you a clear picture of my expectations.

Aims:

- To introduce key concepts related to gerontology (the study of aging) and social justice
- To introduce an age consciousness where old age is neither medicalized, bureaucratized, nor demonized;
- To learn how scholars and filmmakers have attended to concepts of generation, old age, and the intersections of body and in America and elsewhere around the world;
- To reflect on the role of social location in determining and reflecting relationships within and among different age groups across the lifespan; and
- To examine the sociopolitical implications of a severely age-stratified society (US).

Objectives:

By the end of the summer, you will be familiar with

- Some useful frameworks for understanding aging, including the life course, political economy, and postmodern perspectives;
- Some of the ways that popular films, documentary and educational films and videos ascribe meaning to age; and
- The relationship between these images (these 'imaginaries') and the more prevalent realities.

You will be able to

- See the 'frames' placed around the imaginaries of the aging process;
- See the frames placed around social documentation of the old;
- Therefore, bring a critical eye to the semiotics of age and other social markers;
- Appreciate the concerns of people with very different situations from your own, and start to see them as your own;
- Develop your listening and group participation skills; and
- Think and write thoughtfully about aging and social justice.

Expectations (including assignments and due dates):

In order to get the most out of this course, I ask you to

1. **Attend classes regularly, and to arrive on time.** If this is a problem for you, come see me right away.
2. **Share your experience.** Aging is a subject that engages on many levels. In this class I ask you to share both analysis and personal insights during class discussions. But a note about 'sharing' in class: We all arrive with a personal style and a legacy of experience, where class, patriarchy, culture, and white privilege have made speaking out safer for some students than others. In this class I respectfully challenge you, and myself, to become – and to remain -- conscious of such patterns and to consciously disrupt them. In this class everybody talks, and everybody listens.
3. **Ask questions.** Learning doesn't even start to happen until we acknowledge our ignorance. Face it: that can be a deeply uncomfortable feeling. But it's crucial to get good at embracing the steeper parts of life's learning curves and it's exhilarating too. I hope you'll have some moments of it this summer. The learning sensation often begins by asking questions.
4. **Hand in two short papers.**
4a. The first is a report on the documentation of age in the media. I would like you to analyze the results of an informal "media search." Spend a week reviewing newspapers, magazines, radio, film, and/or television looking carefully at the depictions of age. You must discuss at least three specific sources. Do not take more than one source from the web. You should present a working thesis, which explains your general conclusions about how the media treats [old age] or [old compared to younger ages]. The paper should be 3 pages long, typed and double-spaced. At the end, list your sources. If citing print media, use APA or

MLA format. If a film, note the director and year it was produced. If television or radio, give the station, program, date and time of viewing (or listening). **Due date:** Monday, August 4th.

4b. The second paper is to be a thematic analysis of one week's topic. Synthesize the week's readings, class lectures, and your analysis of the film(s) to form a single coherent discussion of a specific aspect of the aging experience. Focus on representations, of course, but also on their implications. In developing your thinking for this paper, lead with the readings rather than the movies. Your essay should be 3-4 pages long, typed and double-spaced, and appropriately referenced. That is, cite your sources in the body of the paper and include a list of references at the end. You may use APA or MLA format, but keep it consistent. **Due date:** You'll sign up to turn in this paper and your journal for review (see next item) on either Monday or Wednesday of week 3 or week 4.

5. **Maintain an analytic journal/scrapbook** throughout the quarter. In it, I want you to track the representations of old age (television, film, radio, digital and print media – you can cut out or copy clippings and images, adding your comments); also, and crucially: (1) Write a brief summary of each assigned reading along with your interpretations, questions, and analysis of its themes (not “I loved/hated this reading” but “This reading raises such & such an issue which makes me realize/consider...” and keep your reasoning intellectual); (2) Write an age-interpretive summary of each film; (3) Include a weekly analysis of the readings, films, and the week's class lectures and discussion taken as a whole; assignment 4-b is simply a more developed version of one of these analyses. (4) Finally, fold in any conversations overheard or engaged in outside of class that you think are relevant to our inquiry, any direct observations that you make walking around in the world, your reflections on old age and its social positioning, and so on. The idea of the scrapbook is to stimulate a way of observing what you may not have perceived before, or to re-interpret those perceptions in the light of course information. It should become a record of your coursework and a serious compendium of your responses to readings, class discussions, the world outside, and your age-conscious world within. **Due date #1:** We will review your progress once mid-quarter, on a date you'll sign up for. **Due date #2:** Hand in the entire, completed journal on Wednesday, August 27th (last day of classes). **SORRY, NO EXCEPTIONS.**
6. **Finally, complete a take-home exam.** The take-home final probably will consist of your responses to a series of short questions and one essay. You'll have some choice in selecting the questions that most appeal to you. The essay will be 3 pages long. **Due date:** I'll hand it out in class on Wednesday, August 27th (last day of class) and you will return the completed test to my office at Oakes 203 on Friday, August 29th, between 11 am & 6 pm. **NO EXCEPTIONS, unless it's to hand it in early.**

Evaluation:

I prefer to give narrative feedback rather than a letter or number grade during the quarter, although I do grade each assignment and keep a database of your marks throughout. If you want to know how you're doing, beyond the comments I make on your work, please let me know what kind of feedback would be most useful and I'll do my best to accommodate you.

- Class attendance Anyone who misses more than one unexcused class, or who leaves early, **will not pass.**
- Participation 10% I am looking for both speaking up and active listening; the goal is attentiveness and dialogue. You'll have to come to class prepared (having done the readings) and willing to exercise your voice. I realize that some people are far more comfortable with open participation than others, and will do

all that I can to create a variety of opportunities for you to feel safe speaking up.

- Media search 15% I will consider the thoughtfulness you bring to your observations, and the depth or subtlety of your reflections. I will also consider the type of sources you choose and your justification of your choice. Good writing matters: organization, clarity, spelling, grammar... if you are concerned about your writing skills, please come see me soon so we can try to help.
- Thematic analysis 15% I will assess this essay for completeness – you should review the whole week’s films and incorporate most or all of the readings for that week -- and for the quality of your analysis, by which I mean that I’ll be looking for insight, coherence, and adroit use of the week’s sources. I will also take into account the clarity and accuracy of your writing (including spelling, grammar and punctuation).
- Scrapbook review 10% At this initial stage I am looking for diligence most of all; are you keeping up and engaging with all aspects of the assignment? We’ll give you feedback on your strengths and weaknesses; please take our comments to heart.
- Final scrapbook 20% I will grade your scrapbook for evidence that you’ve taken this assignment seriously throughout the summer – it is meant to be a developmental project, and honestly cannot be done well in a cramming, last-minute manner. I’ll look at your creativity, the sharpness of your observations, the accuracy of your reading comprehension, the quality of your reading responses and film reviews, the perceptiveness of your reflections, what you chose to capture as age-relevant, how you choose to write it all up. I won’t require accurate academic writing for the scrapbook itself, because it’s a journal. Write comfortably first and foremost.
- Final exam 30% Again, we’re looking for accuracy, effective use of academic sources (i.e. the readings plus anything else you want to add), sensitive incorporation of film analysis, lecture notes, and class discussion, and clear articulation of your ideas.

A few notes about academic writing in the social sciences...

- Make sure you have a carefully considered and explicitly stated thesis (point of view) around which you organize your paper.
- Emphasize analysis (asking why and how) over description (asking who, what, where); instead, **use** descriptive details to support your analytic observations.
- Please remember: the paper is not about you; it’s about ideas. It is important to be conscious of your social location (things like class, gender, race, age, sexual orientation... the ‘givens’ of your life that lead you to take certain things for granted that the person sitting next to you might find completely exotic) and I’d like you to describe clearly how your social location affects what you bring to the assignment, even before you begin. But once you’ve done that, be careful to keep your writing focused on the assignment, the ideas; get into a dialogue (in effect) between yourself and the readings/lectures/films.

- The library has a link on its homepage for APA and MLA citation format; whichever you choose, please follow it precisely.
- If you think writing may be a problem for you, please come see me as soon as possible so that we can do something about it.

Summary of Assignments / Due Dates

Assignment	Week 1	Week 2		Week 3		Week 4		Week 5		
	M, W 7/28, 30	M 8/4	W 8/6	M 8/11	W 8/13	M 8/18	W 8/20	M 8/25	W 8/27	F 8/29
Paper 1		X								
Paper 2				<i>Sign up for your hand-in date</i>						
Journal review			<i>Sign up for your hand-in date</i>							
Final journal									X	
Take-home final										X

Course Outline, by week

The readings are listed under the day they are due.
R xx-yy refers to the pages in the Reader where you'll find them.

Week 1

Introductions

Demographic transition, Age as a floating signifier The gendering of middle age (1: Femininities)

- M, 7/28 Introductions, explanations / Apocalyptic demography / Age as a floating signifier (*Zimmer Generation*, *youtube.com*, ~ 4m and *Spirited Away*, 2001, dir. Hayao Miyazaki, 132m)
- Reading
(catch up with this for Wednesday)
- Markson, Elizabeth (2003) Demography, population. Excerpt from chapter 3 of *Social Gerontology Today: An Introduction*. Roxbury Publishing. **R 1-8**
 - Kalache, Alex (1996) Ageing worldwide. Chapter 3 of Ebrahim & Kalache (Eds.) *Epidemiology in Old Age*. BMJ Publishing Group. **R 9-13**
 - Coles, Robert (1997) The documentary impulse. Excerpt from *Doing Documentary Work*. Oxford University Press. **R 14-16**
- W, 7/30 Social construction of female aging as "loss"
(*Death Becomes Her*, 1992, dir. Robert Zemeckis, 103m)
- (for Wednesday)
- Lorde, Audre (1984) Age, race, class and sex. In *Sister Outsider*. The Crossing Press. **R 17-21**
 - Cruikshank, Margaret (2003) Preface & Introduction to *Learning to be Old*. Rowman & Littlefield. **R 22-27**
 - Morell, Carolyn M. (2003) Empowerment and long-living women: return to the rejected body. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 17:69-85. **R 28-44**
 - Andrews, Molly (1999) The seductiveness of agelessness. *Ageing & Society*, 19:301-318. **R 45-54**

DUE next Monday, 8/4: Paper #1, Media Search (see syllabus) and, if you signed up to get your journal reviewed, then remember to bring it in on **Wednesday**, 8/6

Week 2
The gendering of middle age (2: Masculinities)
Social location, biography and history
'The problem of generations'

HAND IN Paper #1 / If you signed up to get your journal reviewed this Wednesday, remember to bring it in

M, 8/4 Social construction of male aging as "maturity"
(*The Weatherman*, 2005, dir. Gore Verbinski, 123m)

Reading

- Courtenay, Will H. (2000) Constructions of masculinity and their influence on men's well-being: a theory of gender and health. *Social Science & Medicine*, 50:1385-1401. **R 55-71**
- Hearn, Jeff (1995) Imaging the aging of men. In Featherstone & Wernick (Eds.) *Images of Aging*, Routledge Press. **R 72-81**

W, 8/6 Social location and aging / Intersections of biography, history, and culture / Generations in relationship
(*Rhapsody in August*, 1991, dir. Akira Kurosawa, 98 minutes)

Reading

- Stoller, Eleanor P. and Gibson, Rose C. (2000) Excerpt from Advantages of using the life course framework in studying aging. In *Worlds of Difference: Inequality in the Aging Experience*. Pine Forge Press. **R 82-86**
- Yeo, Gwen et al. (1998) Cohort experiences – African American elders. From *Cohort Analysis as a Tool in Ethnogeriatrics*. SGEC Working Paper Series #12, Palo Alto CA: Stanford Geriatric Education Center. **R 87**
- Yeo, Gwen et al. (2000) Asian and Pacific Island American Elders. (handout) **R 88**
- Steiner, Andrea. (2005) Loss of heritage, discovery of injustice: elders and premature babies. In Childs (Ed.) *Hurricane Katrina: Response and Responsibilities*. New Pacific Press. **R 89-91**
- Cruikshank, Margaret (2003) Cultural myths and aging. In *Learning to be Old*. **R 92-100**

DUE next week: Paper #2 (thematic analysis) and/or journal for review, according to the dates you signed up for.

Week Three
A critical look at 'productivity' in late life
Theories of social gerontology
The documentation of old age

HAND IN Paper #2 and/or journal for review (per your sign-up dates)

M, 8/11 Theories of social gerontology, and a specific look at discourses about productivity
(*The Gleaners and I*, 2000, dir. Agnes Varda, 142 minutes)

Reading

- Powell JL. (2006) Theorizing aging: critical explorations of modernist sociological approaches. Chapter 3 in *Social Theory & Aging*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc. **R 101-111**
- Freidenberg, Judith N. (2000) "La edad es según la persona" ("Age depends on the person"). Chapter 6 in *Growing Old in El Barrio*. New York University Press. **R 112-123**
- Estes, Carroll et al. (2001) A political economy critique of "productive aging." Chapter 9 in *Social Policy & Aging*. Sage Publications. **R 124-130**

W, 8/13 Documenting old age: From biology to institutions to activism
(*Intimate Universe Part 7*, 1998, dir. Christopher Spencer, 60m; *Two audio minutes from Sekou Sundiata*, www.npr.org/template/story/story.php?storyId=12122622); *On Lok*, 2002, fundraising promotion, 11m; *Number Our Days*, 30m; *Maggie Growls*, 2000, dir. Barbara Attie and Janet Goldwater, 60m)

Reading

- Moody, Harry R. (2002) Why do we grow old? In *Aging: Concepts & Controversies (4th edition)*. Sage Publications. **R 131-144**
- wikipedia.org (wince!) Entry: Jeanne Calment. Accessed July 1, 2008. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeanne_Calment **R 145-148**
- Hochschild, Arlie R. (1973) in JF Gubrium & JA Holstein (Eds.) (2000) *Aging and Everyday Life*. Blackwell Publishers. **R 149-161**
- Kuhn, Maggie (1991) Reflections. Chapter 10 in *No Stone Unturned*. Ballantine Books. **R 162-173**

DUE next week: Paper #2 (thematic analysis) and/or journal for review, according to the dates you signed up for.

Week Four
Healthy memory / Diseases of memory

HAND IN Paper #2 and/or journal for review (per your sign-up dates)

M, 8/18 Reminiscence & life review
(*Wild Strawberries*, 1959, dir. Ingmar Bergman, 91m)

Reading:

- Slater, Robert (1995) Looking back [and] Finding meaning. Chapters 8, 9 in *The Psychology of Growing Old*. Open University Press. **R 174-182**
- Butler, Robert N. (1996) Life review. *Encyclopedia of Gerontology*. Academic Press. **R 183-188**

W, 8/20 Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia
(*Complaints of a Dutiful Daughter*, 1994, dir. Deborah Hoffman, 44m; *Iris*, 2001, dir. Richard Eyre, 91m)

Guest speaker

Representative of Alzheimer's Association

Reading

- Kitwood, Tom (1997) The experience of dementia. Chapter 5 in *Dementia Reconsidered*. Open University Press, 70-85. **R 189-196**
- De Baggio, Thomas (2002) excerpt from *Losing My Mind*. The Free Press. **R 197-206**
- Cruikshank, Margaret (already cited) An excerpt about caregiving. **R 207-210**

DUE next Wednesday, 8/27: Completed journal. NO EXCEPTIONS.

ALSO on Wednesday: Pick up take-home final at end of class.

Week Five
Quality of Life
Art, Community, and Identity

M, 8/25 The transformative (and staying) power of art
(*Ballets Russes*, dir. Daniel Geller & Dana Goldfine, 2006, 118m)

Reading:

- Slater, Robert (1995) Belonging – supportive relationships. Chapter 6 in *The Psychology of Growing Old*, Open University Press. **R 211-218**
- Steinem, Gloria (1994) Doing sixty. In *Moving Beyond Words*. Simon & Schuster. **R 219-234**

W, 8/27 Wrapping up
(*Harold and Maude*, 1971, dir. Hal Ashby, 91m)

No reading: instead, **HAND IN** your completed journal/scrapbook
And, **PICK UP** your take-home final exam

Your final is due on Friday, August 29, by 6 pm. NO EXCEPTIONS. Bring your exam to OAKES 203 (up the main stairs, turn right, through the doors, office is on the left)

Thanks, everyone ~ That's it