

**Department:** Sociology

**Course number :** Soci 248W

**Course title :** Aging in American Society

**Number of Credits :** 3

**Contact Person :** Brad Wright

**Catalog Copy :** Soci 248. Aging in American Society. (Also offered as HDFS 248). Either Semester. Three credits . This course may be used once to meet distribution requirements. *Eisenhandler, Sheehan*. Social gerontology: the role and status of older people in a changing society.

Soci 248W. Aging in American Society. Prerequisite: Engl 110 or 111 or 250.

**W Criteria :**

Two review essays and one research paper are part of the formal requirements for the W students.

The review essays (film and book) emphasize critical thinking, focused response, and effective presentation of ideas to an audience that has not viewed or read the material that is under review by the student. The reviews ask students to present central features of the aging experience (such as the changing roles and relationships between children and parents, or the loss of mobility in late life) and to evaluate the film-maker's or writer's effectiveness in conveying this to an audience. The reviews range from 3-5 pages exclusive of title page and reference section and are 15-20% of the W grade.

The research essay based on a face-to-face interview of someone 55 or older takes the student through the process of IRB review, creating an interview protocol, completing a focused literature review, conducting an interview, and integrating the scholarly work of others with the findings from his or her interview. This is an extremely powerful and valuable way of encouraging respect for other scholarship at the same time that it asks for genuine originality from the student in terms of a topic, focus, and in the writing that results from this effort. In its final form (the third step in a semester-long process) this research paper ranges from 10-16 pages exclusive of title page and reference section and is (40-50%) of the final W grade. In each of the earlier steps the students complete a 2-4 page proposal and a 4-7 page preliminary paper or partial draft (this version includes a proposed interview protocol).

All of the modes mentioned above are used as needed and with respect to the individual student's preference and responsiveness to suggestions about writing. Individual conferences and comments on papers are the primary ways used to address the substantive and technical aspects of writing. In addition, "micro-mini" segments of 10-15 minutes (class-time) are periodically used to address issues such as the purpose of research papers, intellectual honesty, the idea of audience, organization, topic sentences, paragraph development, documentation, and basic grammar.

For the two essays (film and book reviews), W students receive additional instruction in the purpose of writing reviews, with emphasis on the idea of writing for an audience (i.e., sociologists). Students are

strongly encouraged to discuss drafts with the instructor before final versions are submitted. These two assignments are intended to illustrate the value of seeking input as a paper develops—once certain pieces of expository prose are written particularly those designed for timely publication (e.g., reviews), the ideas and writing are “as is,” and the writer will have to stand by his or her words or eat them.

For the research paper based on a face-to-face interview, W students, and actually all students, follow a three step progression with opportunities in the first two steps to receive thorough comments from the instructor about the interview schedule, the organization of papers, clarity of expression, and the substantive content (quality) of their sociological perspective on the specific topic (one associated with aging and life course). Students are given ample opportunity to work with the instructor outside the classroom in order to discuss issues related to writing about material derived from the interview, overall organization, and the most effective ways of integrating the interview material with the other scholarly evidence (studies, findings, and the like) they have gathered on this topic.

**Role of Grad Students :** None