I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course builds on the foundation courses to focus on clinical social work practice with older adults and their families. The emphasis is on holistic bio-psycho-socio-spiritual, evidence-based approaches to assessment and intervention in a variety of practice settings in the community and within institutions. Effective gerontological clinical social work requires a solid understanding of the aging process from multidisciplinary perspectives, which focus on physical, psychological, social and spiritual well being. This course explores these domains both in terms of deficits as well as competencies, strengths and resiliencies. The course examines aging as a dynamic developmental stage of life that occurs within a socio-historical, cultural context. Throughout the course, the impact that age, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual-orientation, and aging policies have on older adults is explored. Unique ethical dilemmas that arise out of working with older adults and their families are also considered throughout the course.

II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course (as demonstrated via class discussions and presentations, role-plays, audiovisuals, interviews, and written assignments) students should possess the following:

1. Increased knowledge and understanding of the normative bio-psycho-socio-spiritual changes associated with aging (including end-of-life issues) and the importance of the interplay amongst these domains;

2. Heightened awareness of personal and societal attitudes, feelings, and values towards older adults and their families vis-à-vis the aging process and social work practice;
3. A keener appreciation of the unique issues confronting older adults from outside the dominant culture;

4. Appreciation for and understanding of ethical issues (including self-determination) and considerations that arise in gerontological social practice with diverse, often oppressed, populations;

5. Ability to identify, critique, and apply major theoretical models that inform clinical social work assessment of older adults;

6. Ability to identify, critique, and apply major theoretical models that inform clinical social work interventions with older adults;

7. Ability to interview and counsel older adults and their families using appropriate gero-interviewing skills;

8. Ability to employ key assessment methods effectively with older adults and their family and caregivers: differentiating adaptive and maladaptive psycho-socio-spiritual reactions to the aging process from the perspectives of strengths, resiliency, and person-in-environment;

9. Knowledge of evidenced-based and creative contemporary gerontological intervention strategies and treatment techniques, including group work;

10. Ability to create effective care plans, with an understanding of supportive community and housing services;

11. Ability to evaluate the effectiveness of assessment and intervention.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Required Texts


B. Recommended Texts


C. **Required website:**

http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/toc.html#chapter5
Mental health report of the Surgeon General (2001)
Foreword, Preface and Executive Summary
Chapter 1: Background
Chapter 6: Challenges in Mental Health & Aging

http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging_Statistics/Profile/index.aspx
2010 Profile of Older Americans

http://www.cswe.org/File.aspx?id=26849
Chronic illness and Aging: The role of social work in managing chronic illness care

D. **Recommended Websites**

AARP: http://www.aarp.org
Administration on Aging: http://www.aoa.gov
American Society on Aging: http://www.asaging.org
Gerontological Society of America: http://www.geron.org
National Family Caregivers Assoc.: http://www.geron.org/online.html
Online Resources for Aging: http://www.geron.org/online.html

E. **Course Assignments**

**Assignment 1: Aging Awareness Project.**  
**Due: Class 2**
Instructions will be provided during first class. This assignment is designed to increase awareness and sensitivity to the changes that occur as individuals age; how aging affects roles and engagement in social relationships; and how values, attitudes and biases impact individuals as they age.

**Assignment 2A: Agency context for social work practice with the elderly.**  
**Due: Class 5**
This assignment requires that each student arrange a visit to an aging program and interview a service providers (preferably a geriatric social...
worker) and observe the community/situational context in which services are delivered. Students are to submit a two page report on the agency, its staffing pattern and its clientele.

OR

Assignment 2B: Conducting an Interview with an older person.
Due: Class 5

Conducting a structured interview with an older adult who lives in an independent residence or some type of supportive housing.

This assignment is designed to allow you the opportunity to experience interviewing older adults, and is not to be considered a formal assessment. Rather it affords you a chance to practice gero-interviewing techniques, focus on competencies, strengths and resiliencies, and gain a greater comfort level in working with older adults. The interview should last no more than 30-60 minutes. Guidelines for interviewing and writing a summary of your experience will be handed out in class. All interviewees will have given their consent prior to being interviewed.

Assignment 3: Bibliography & Outline
Assignment 4: Scholarly Paper
Due Class 8
Due Class 13

These assignments are related; the bibliography and outline form the foundation for a scholarly paper. The scholarly paper focuses on a specific gerontological practice issues, theories, therapeutic intervention, or problem that is of particular interest to you. Guidelines will be handed out during class and posted on Blackboard. An annotative bibliography and outline is due by Class 8. Appropriately referenced literature review from professional journals and texts is required. Your final paper is due by Class 13. You are also required to participate in a group panel presentation on related aging topics, based on your paper, during Class 14.

F. Grading Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 4</td>
<td>35% (5% = class presentation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G. Course and Instructor Evaluation

NCSSS requires written evaluation of this course and the instructor. Forms for this purpose will be distributed at the last meeting of the class. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to requests.
H. Preparation, Attendance & Participation: Students are expected to read and understand required texts and supplemental readings in their entirety prior to each class for which they are assigned. Since active class participation is essential to this course, students are expected to attend all classes. The instructor adheres to an adult learning philosophy that recognizes students as adults who bring their unique experiences to the process and take responsibility for their own learning. Collaborative learning in a safe environment requires students to participate actively in class, respect the diversity of opinions, and allow all to participate equally. The instructor may give as a final grade, a lower grade than that achieved on examinations if the student has had excessive class absences.

I. Due Dates: Assignments are expected to be submitted to instructor on the due date. For each day the assignment is submitted late, 5 points will be deducted.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. Scholastic Expectations
   Please refer to NCSSS Announcements or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and should be carefully proof read by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. Academic Honesty
   Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. Accommodations
   Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
# Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Topics and Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to Social Work Practice with Older Adults/Engagement of Older Adults in the Geriatric Social Work Relationship</strong>&lt;br&gt;Course Overview/Knowledge of Aging quiz/Aging competencies pre-test&lt;br&gt;Required Readings&lt;br&gt;McInnis-Dittrich, K. Chapter 1: The Context of Social Work Practice with Older Adults.&lt;br&gt;Gonyea, Judith G. (2004). Charting a course to advance social work practice with older adults and families. Gerontologist, 44: 436-439.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Understanding Physiological and Medical Aspects of Aging, including chronic illness</strong>&lt;br&gt;Required Readings&lt;br&gt;McInnis-Dittrich, Chapter 2, Biological Changes and Physical Well-Being of Elders.&lt;br&gt;Christ &amp; Diwan (2007). The role of social work in managing chronic illness care. Arlington, VA: Council on Social Work Education. Retrieved from</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recommended Readings

Hooyman & Kiyac, Part 2, The biological and physiological context of social aging; Chapters 3 & 4 (65-160).

4 & 5 Understanding Psychosocial Aspects of Aging: Psychosocial Theories of Aging/Geriatric Assessment

Required Readings

McInnis-Dittrich, Chapter 3, Psychosocial adjustment to aging.
Chapter 4, Conducting a biopsychosocial Assessment
Chapter 5, Differential assessment and diagnosis of cognitive and emotional problems of older adults

Recommended Readings
Zarit, chapter 1, Introduction: Clinical practice with older adults
Zarit, chapter 2, Normal processes of aging
Zarit, chapter 6, The clinical interview

http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/toc.html#chapter5

http://www.aoa.gov/mentalhealth/aging
The Administration on Aging Reports on Mental Health and Aging

6 Understanding Socio-Cultural Aspects of Aging

Required Readings


McInnis-Dittrich, K., Chapter 13, Aging in place: Income programs, health insurance and support services for older adults.

Recommended Readings
Berkman, chapters 77 – 86, Local, state & federal policies and regulations affecting older adults

7 **Spirituality and aging & Ethical and value issues**

Required Readings

McInnis-Dittrich, chapter 10, Spirituality and social work with older adults
Soniat & Micklos, (2010), chapter 4, Value issues and ethical dilemmas

8 **Social Work Interventions with the Elderly: Practice Models for working with Individuals and Groups**

Required Readings:

McInnis-Dittrich, K. Chapter 6: Individual and group interventions in the socioemotional and cognitive problems of older adults.
McInnis-Dittrich, K. Chapter 7: Alternative interventions in the socioemotional problems of older adults.
McInnis-Dittrich, K. Chapter 8: Substance abuse and suicide prevention in older adults.

[www.familiesinsociety.org](http://www.familiesinsociety.org)

9 & 10 **Social Work Interventions with the Elderly: Practice Models for Working with Families & Informal Support Networks.**

Required Readings

McInnis-Dittrich, K., Chapter 12, Working with older adult support systems: Spouses, partners, families and caregivers.
Zarit, chapter 13, Family Caregiving


11 Social Work Practice with Vulnerable Older Adults
Required Readings

McInnis-Dittrich, chapters 8, Substance abuse and suicide prevention chapter 9, Identifying and preventing abuse and neglect of older adults.


Soniat & Micklos (2010), chapter 1, Vulnerable older adults: A population demanding attention”

12 Helping Elders Plan for Long Term Living, Long Term Care and End of Life Issues
Required Readings

Berkman, (ed.) Chapter 52, Older adults and their families in Long term residential care (Rosalie Kane)

McInnis-Dittrich, chapter 11, End of life care for older adults

Berkman, (ed.), chapter 26, Roles of Social Workers in Palliative and End of Life Care (Judy Howe and Louise Daratsos)

Berkman, (ed.) chapter 27, Psychosocial Services at the End of Life, (Irene Gutheil and Margaret Souza)
Recommended Readings

Hooyman & Kiyac, The Social Context of Aging; Chapter 13, Death, dying, bereavement, and widowhood (pp. 480-524).


13 Evaluating Practice and the Effects of Interventions

Required Readings


14 Student panel presentations based on scholarly papers.
Summary and wrap up.