The elderly in the United States are often inaccurately viewed as a homogeneous group. This course explores how the diversity of aging among racial and ethnic groups affects their health and well-being. Drawing on theories of aging and race/ethnicity, the course explores how the health of older persons of color are impacted by individual, family, and societal forces. In each of the domains that are examined we will distinguish the relative importance of culture versus structure to help identify targets for intervention. The empirical literature used in the course is drawn from the experiences of aging of African-American, Latino, and Asian-Pacific Islander elderly.

**Required Books**


Other readings are available in TWO xerox readers - a general reader and one for the race/ethnic group you choose. They are available from Westwood Copies, 1001 Gayley Ave (corner of Weyburn, 310-208-3233).

**Course Objectives:**

1) to develop an understanding of the relationship between aging, minority status, culture, and health in the contemporary United States.

2) to acquire significant knowledge of the academic literature on health and aging for ONE minority group.

3) to expose students to the personal experience of aging in a minority group through the process of collecting life histories.

4) to foster a personal understanding of the links between the biographies of minority elderly and the social history that shapes their health.

**Course Requirements:**

1) Weekly participation in class. This course is organized as a working seminar. Given the limited amount of course time, it is impossible for everyone to familiarize
themselves with all of the groups. Therefore, each class member will pick one group (African-American, Latino, or Asian-Pacific) and focus on the readings concerning that group when there is a choice of readings. For each class period, each person will bring/email/fax one discussion question per reading (including the group specific readings) -- the day before (9pm for email).

Everybody who makes an honest effort on the questions gets a check (full credit). Incomplete or mechanical questions get a "minus" (half credit). A particularly insightful, synthetic, or discussion-provoking SET of questions gets a plus (extra credit). For students whose final grade is near a dividing line (e.g. A versus A-) the score on the discussion questions will be the deciding factor.

2) Double Jeopardy Essay. For the group that you have chosen, write a 4-6 page essay on whether existing data support or contradict this thesis. You must use existing survey data and present it in a table format in your paper. The best source for data is the California Health Interview Survey since you can use their data query system to look on-line for the health indicator you want (you can also look at income, poverty, education). Go to [http://www.chis.ucla.edu](http://www.chis.ucla.edu) and click on "askCHIS." You need to register, then can go and select your variables. For published data you can also look at [http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm) which is the Health U.S. publication. You should have at least two tables. They can be of different health outcomes, or the same health outcome for different genders, income groups, etc.

Your essay should (1) define double jeopardy and its significance, (2) justify your selection of the indicators you use, (3) present the data both in tabular and narrative form, (4) discuss your findings, (5) discuss the limitations of your data, and (6) discuss the implications of what you have found. Be sure to include a reference list (NOTE: At least half of your references must come from published sources (i.e. books or journal articles)). Grading criteria include: it follows the outline, is technically accurate, is well written, and reflects creative and/or critical thinking on the issue.

3) Life History Interviews: Contact and conduct life histories with at least three older persons from the group you have selected. You can obtain respondents from any source, including senior centers, adult day health centers, relatives, or other sources. These interviews should be tape recorded. (At least) one interview that you feel is most informative must be transcribed, with no or minimal editing (except for replacing any names used with initials or pseudonyms). For the other interviews you will prepare 3-5 page summaries (in your own words) of the interviews. You will also hand in the tapes and consent forms of the interviews. All respondents must sign the consent forms provided. **Do not begin interviewing until after the class on interviewing.**

The TRANSCRIBED interview will be due during a class period in the last few weeks of the quarter. The whole class will read the transcript and discuss it as a case study to practice analyzing interviews and to provide case data to illustrate the course's topics. The summarized interviews are given only to the instructor during the last week of class. Grading criteria include the interview covering all the topics you chose with
adequate depth, good interviewing style (e.g. few or no leading questions, appropriate probing, good rapport), appropriate length.

4) Life History Analysis: Taking the interviews that you have conducted and the others circulated in class for your group, identify and illustrate common themes that affect health issues in the elders' lives. Construct this paper around the theme(s) rather than around the individuals. For example, if the central themes of the paper are work and family, then talk about their experiences in these areas and how those parts of their lives affect their current health and well-being. Use examples from the various interviews to illustrate the analysis. In addition to the theme(s) you present in your analysis, include a discussion of the relative importance of structure and culture in shaping the health of the elders you interviewed. You can include additional published literature that is not covered in class, and you must cite readings from the class (including group specific readings) when appropriate in your discussion.

The paper should start with a brief introduction to the group you are writing about. Then include a brief introduction to the interview respondents (how they were located, general characteristics of the respondents -- #, age, gender, etc). Next move to your analysis. Be sure that your analysis includes both reference to the literature AND data from the respondents. Try to use interview data to provide their “voice” in your paper. Interview data can either be summarized, paraphrased, or direct quotes from the interviews (or a mixture of those). Be sure to end the paper with a summary that recaps the general “story” that your paper is telling. This assignment should be about 12-15 pages. Grading criteria include whether the introduction to the paper establishes the topic/significance, how well it identifies and develops 2-3 themes, how well the data are used to support that analysis, if there is an appropriate use of the literature, and how well the culture versus structure forces are explained.

Grading:  
Double Jeopardy Essay - 30%  
Life History Interviews - 15%  
Life History Analysis - 40%  
Class Participation - 15%

Due:  
October 26  
one during quarter, two by Dec 9  
December 16  
weekly

And FYI, a good resource to look for writing term papers – tho not necessarily this one – is “How to Research a Term Paper in Gerontology,” by Harry R. Moody at http://research.aarp.org/ageline/modhome.html

URLs for downloadable publications:
Infotrac:  

Ingenta:  
http://ejournals.ebsco.com/Direct.asp?AccessToken=54WWRT6NVEIS32RVFXEAWRX0Q ET6N46&Show=Object
1. **September 30: Overview of the course**

Introduction and overview of the course

2. **October 5: Racial & Ethnic Health - Difference or Disparity?**


3. **October 7: Health Status of Minority Communities**


read one of the following:

**African American**


**Asians**


**Latinos**


4. **October 12: The Context of Health and Aging**

Guest Faculty: Valentine Villa, Ph.D.


5. **October 14: Research in Minority Communities**


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read one of the following:

**African Americans**


**Latinos**


**Asian-Pacific**


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6. **October 19: Structure versus Culture - I**


Goodwin, J.S., S.A. Black, S. Satish. 1999. "Aging versus disease: The opinions of older black, Hispanic, and nonHispanic white Americans about the causes and treatments of common
medical conditions.” Journal of the American Geriatrics Society. 47:973-979. At
home.mdconsult.com [if prompted, username=ucls, password=ucls]

7. October 21: Structure vs. Culture - II

journals.cambridge.org

8. October 26: Theories of Race & Ethnicity [Double Jeopardy Assignment Due]


9. October 28 The Social Construction of "Old Age" and Health

www.sciencedirect.com
read one of the following:

**African American**

**Latino**

**Asian-Pacific**

10. **November 2: Older Women**


11. **November 4: Family and Health**


read one of the following:

**African American**

**Latinos**

**Asians**

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12. **November 9: No class - complete independent video viewing**


EPISODE 1- The Difference Between Us (56 min.) examines the contemporary science - including genetics - that challenges our common sense assumptions that human beings can be bundled into three or four fundamentally different groups according to their physical traits.

EPISODE 2- The Story We Tell (56 min.) uncovers the roots of the race concept in North America, the 19th century science that legitimated it, and how it came to be held so fiercely in the western imagination. The episode is an eye-opening tale of how race served to rationalize, even justify, American social inequalities as "natural."

EPISODE 3- The House We Live In (56 min.) asks, If race is not biology, what is it? This episode uncovers how race resides not in nature but in politics, economics and culture. It reveals how our social institutions "make" race by disproportionately channeling resources, power, status and wealth to white people.

See also http://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm

13. **November 11: Veteran’s Day Holiday - no class**

14. **November 16: Family and Health - II**


read one of the following:

**African American**

**Latinos**

**Asians**

15. **November 18: Family Caregiving Issues**
Guest Faculty: Carolyn Mendez, Ph.D.


Read one of the following:

**African American**

**Latinos**

**Asians**
16. November 23: Community and Society


November 25 – Thanksgiving Holiday

17. November 30: Historical Contexts


Read one of the following:

**Asians**


**Latinos**


**African American**

18. December 2: Community and Society - II


19. December 7: Reducing Disparities


20. December 9: Race, Ethnicity & Public Policy


December 16: Final papers due
On Aging*

by Maya Angelou

When you see me sitting quietly,
Like a sack left on the shelf,
Don't think I need your chattering.
I'm listening to myself.
Hold! Stop! Don't pity me!
Hold! Stop your sympathy!
Understanding if you get it,
Otherwise I'll do without it!

When my bones are stiff and aching
And my feet won't climb the stair,
I will only ask one favor:
Don't bring me no rocking chair.

When you see me walking, stumbling,
Don't study and get it wrong
'Cause tired don't mean lazy
And every goodbye ain't gone.
I'm the same person I was back then,
A little less hair, a little less chin,
A lot less lungs and much less wind.
But ain't I lucky I can still breathe in.

Some Basic Style Rules for Papers

1. Please type your paper, double space, 12 point type. Leave approximately 1" margins, number the pages, and include a title page with your name and paper title before page 1.

2. Be sure to cite the source of your ideas and data that come from material you have read. You need the citation whether you are using a direct quote or not. Include a bibliography of works cited within the paper. Be sure to include the authors, year, full title, publisher's location, and publisher (for books); authors, year, full title, full journal name, volume number, and page numbers (for journals).

3. ALWAYS cite required class readings where appropriate.

4. Avoid using the passive voice. Money has been raised to solve problems of the elderly (passive voice). The community raised money to solve problems of the elderly (active voice).

5. Avoid the "royal we." If you alone did something, say "I did it."

6. Avoid gendered language when you are speaking generally. E.g. "humanity" for mankind, "people live longer" vs. "man lives longer."

7. Descriptive subheadings are useful to help guide the reader through the text and ease transitions between topics.

8. Make sure you have followed the instructions for the paper fully. If the directions say to "compare and contrast," be sure that you have a section comparing, and another contrasting.

9. STYLE: If you are already familiar with a standard academic style (e.g. APA), you can follow those guidelines. If you are unsure about style, there are several excellent reference works, including:

   ♦ the Chicago Manual of Style is the most comprehensive
   ♦ The Elements of Style by Strunk & White is the most common short work
   ♦ the American Psychological Association style manual is comprehensive and commonly used in psychological and medical writing
   ♦ You can also look at any journal, like the Gerontologist or AJPH, to see how they format articles. The last page of most journals gives a brief description of how to format citations.

   Whatever style you follow, be consistent.

10. Include a title page with your name, assignment title, and course number. On the paper itself include page numbers but do not repeat your name (if you want to use a running head, use the paper topic).
General guide to life-history write-up

There is no single "right" way to construct this paper. The goal is to draw on your three interviews and the transcribed interviews from the others focusing on your group to describe some of the themes in the lives & health of the elderly. The papers should:

* be 12-15 pages (not including bibliography), double spaced
* Include references from class readings where appropriate

A general outline of the paper may look like:

1) Introduction (1-2 pages), describing the significance of the topic and, if you want any general background

2) Methods [1 page; optional] Describe how you obtained respondents, how you conducted interviews, how you identified themes in the data (be sure to cite appropriate methods references)

3) Themes from interviews: For this type of paper, 2-3 themes are appropriate to develop. This should be the bulk of the paper (8-10 pages). In going through the interviews, look for common issues that cut across respondents that seem to be important issues in their lives. We have covered many issues during the quarter such as: gender, health status, immigration, religion, work history/ economic opportunities, ethnic identity, race relations, family, community, definitions of old age/aging, social support, long-term care, etc. Organize your discussion around the themes, drawing examples from the interviews to illustrate your points. Do NOT simply summarize individual by individual. Avoid "quantitative" language in this qualitative analysis. The number of individuals with a particular trait or pattern is less important than the processes, relationships, meanings, patterns, and types of experiences that the interviews talk about. Be original and creative and explore issues. If you want you can argue whether or not you think your findings are special to your group (i.e. is a desire for independence or health unique to Latino elderly? Explain why you think this. If it is not, is there anything special in the lives of Latinos that affects this desire for independence?).


4) The assignment requires you to also work into your paper a discussion of structure versus culture in the lives and health of these elderly. You can do this either by including it as an issue you raise in looking at the themes in #3 (i.e. what are the relative influences of structural forces & cultural patterns in the ethnic identity of these elders, etc.), or you can save the discussion for the concluding section where you can spend a page or so discussing what and/or how structure & culture cut across various themes in the interviews.

5) Be sure to have a concluding section that ties the paper together. If you discuss the structure/culture issue in the themes section, the conclusion will be shorter (could be as short as a few paragraphs). Use your last paragraphs to bring closure to the ideas you discuss and raise implications of those ideas for other issues you feel are important.