

Gerontology

College of Public Health

The Ph.D. program in Gerontology is an interdisciplinary research-oriented degree specifically focused on developing critically holistic and integrative perspectives of aging and health. The program, based in the Graduate Center for Gerontology and the College of Public Health, is organized in a way that combines topical expertise, methodologies and facilities from more than 20 departments ranging from the biomedical sciences, through the social and behavioral sciences, to the humanities.

Admission Requirements

The Ph.D. Program in Gerontology encourages applications from individuals having expressed interests in advanced theoretical and research-based studies of aging processes or aged individuals and populations. Complete applications that will be considered for admission to the Gerontology Program must include:

- Application Form and fee payment,
- Official transcripts of all colleges and universities attended,
- Official report of the Graduate Record Examination (GRE).
- (International Students) Official TOEFL report
- At least three (3) letters of reference,
- Personal statement of interests, doctoral study plans, and career goals.

Students are encouraged to submit samples of scholarly writing, and are strongly encouraged to visit the program before admission decisions are made. All complete applications will be evaluated not only for evidence of strong academic accomplishment and high professional standards, but for evidence of a strong potential for success in advanced graduate studies and careers in gerontology-related fields.

Degree Requirements

The goal of the Ph.D. program is to provide advanced scholarly development in gerontology. Students will develop critical thinking and methodological skills through the study of topics that concern both the process of aging and the health and well-being of both individuals and populations. In addition, students will develop advanced expertise in related disciplines or areas of specialization. The course of study is flexible, stressing an integrative approach to the selection of course work and research activities. Emphasis is placed on tailoring each student's program to meet the specific needs of the individual's background and career goals. To fulfill these objectives, the program integrates formal course work in gerontology, specialized training in a related domain, opportunities for research, experiential learning modules and a problem focused research seminar. Graduates of the program will be able to conduct aging-related research, teach gerontology at the university level, direct gerontology educational programs, work in the aging services field, and consult with other professionals on various issues pertaining to aging and health.

Approximately 35 faculty from departments throughout the University are involved in the program's instruction and research activities. Departments represented include: Anatomy and Neurobiology, Anthropology, Behavioral Science, Civil Engineering, Communications, Dentistry, Epidemiology, Family Studies, Geography, Health Administration, Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, Management, Neurology, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physiology and Biophysics, Preventive Medicine, Psychology, Rehabilitation Sciences, Social Work, and Sociology. The diversity of the faculty facilitates the comprehensive study of aging and the aged. At the same time it allows for concentration in several areas of particular expertise and program specialization, including: rural aging, long-term care, cognitive and sensory change, public policy, ethical

issues, and the etiology and treatment of Alzheimer's disease, strokes, and other diseases prevalent among the elderly.

The Ph.D. program maintains close linkages with the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging, a Commonwealth Center of Excellence, which offers a broad base of programmatic support for the program as well as serving as the home of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center and the Stroke Center. Numerous sites for clinical/experiential training are available at various clinics, agencies and organizations, including but not limited to: The Kentucky Division of Aging Services, the University of Kentucky Hospital, Christian Health Center (a University-affiliated nursing home), Best Friends Alzheimer's Day Care Program, University of Kentucky Geriatric Support Services, University of Kentucky Memory Disorders Clinic, University of Kentucky Center for Rural Health, the Center for Creative Living, Cardinal Hill Hospital, St. Claire Medical Center, Northeast Area Health Education Center and the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Further information may be obtained by writing to:

John Watkins, Ph.D., Director of Graduate Studies
Graduate Center for Gerontology
401 Multidisciplinary Sciences Building
University of Kentucky
Lexington, KY 40536-0082
<http://www.uky.edu/publichealth/departments/gerontology>

Ph.D. Requirements

Students are required to complete the core curriculum in gerontology and 12 hours in an area of specialization. Elective courses to be taken will be recommended by each student's Advisory Committee.

Core Requirements

CPH 605 Epidemiology (3 hr)
CPH 663 Issues in Public Health (3hr)
GRN 600 A Study of the Older Person (3 hrs)
GRN 612 Biology of Aging (3 hrs)
GRN 620 Human Aging and Adjustment (3 hrs)
GRN 650 Research Design in Gerontology (4 hrs)
GRN 656 Integrative Studies in Gerontology (3 hrs)

STA 570 (4) or 580 (3) Basic Statistical Analysis / Biostatistics
Elective Methods (6 hrs minimum)
Approved courses in area of specialization (minimum of 12 hrs)

Elective courses should be selected by the student with the guidance of the student's advisor and/or Advisory Committee. No more than 9 hours of independent readings or research may be used to fulfill this requirement.

It is assumed that students entering with M.S. or M.A. degrees will have taken some of the required courses or their equivalent. The student's Advisory Committee, in conjunction with the DGS, will determine the amount of prior course work to be credited toward specific requirements.

Committee Composition Requirements

Doctoral advisory committees conform to Graduate School requirements. Selection of committee members is done by the student with consultation and approval of the student's chair, co-chair (if applicable) and the

DGS. Final determinations of whether membership requirements are met are made by the DGS.

Possible elective courses from within or outside the Gerontology Program that may be selected by the student or required by the student's Advisory Committee include but are not limited to those listed below:

Course Descriptions

GRN 513 GERIATRIC PHARMACY. (3)

A course designed to educate students in the basic knowledge of attitudes and skills required to meet the pharmaceutical needs of the elderly. Topics include discussions of the aging process, physiological and psychological changes in the elderly, how these changes influence patient compliance and the responses to drug and nondrug treatments, monitoring drug use in long-term care facilities, and special community services available to the elderly. Prereq: PHR 849, 852, 853, 854 and 856 or permission of instructor. (Same as PPS 813.)

GRN 585 AGING AND ENVIRONMENT. (3)

Explores the elderly person's changing experience of environment. Physiological, psychological and social changes are related to adjustment within urban and rural community environments, special housing for the elderly, and long-term care environments. Prereq: Graduate or advanced undergraduate standing and consent of instructor. (Same as FAM/GEO 585.)

GRN 600 A STUDY OF THE OLDER PERSON. (3)

This didactic/experiential course is designed to give the student an overview of the experience of growing old by focusing on the individual older person. Framed from a cell to society perspective, didactic lectures will focus on historical, demographic, biological, psychological, social, environmental, life course and humanistic dimensions of growing old. Emphasis is placed on the relationship between individual experience and societal context. The experiential component will consist of having each student interact with a healthy elder mentor who will provide insight from the perspective of lived experience. Prereq: Admission to the Ph.D. Program in Gerontology.

GRN 602 CERTIFICATE PRACTICUM IN GERONTOLOGY. (3)

The course is a field experience of approximately 220 hours focused on aging. Content, site, and supervisor may vary; but the student must have an objective-based proposal approved prior to beginning the practicum. Prereq: Acceptance into the Graduate Certificate in Gerontology.

GRN 610 PSYCHOLOGY OF AGING. (3)

This is a graduate level seminar on the psychology of aging. The course will focus on many of the major topics and theories relevant to understanding the aging process. It focuses on health behaviors, sensation and perception, cognitive abilities, personality, social interactions, motivation and emotion, psychological disorders, end of life issues, and successful aging. The course examines the topics above from a normal aging perspective, atypical aging, successful aging, and demonstrates the interrelationships between the topics to address the aging individual. The course will also focus on the methods used to conduct psychological research with an aging population.

GRN 612 BIOLOGY OF AGING. (3)

A multidisciplinary discussion of how the process of aging affects biological systems. Coverage will be quite broad and includes topics such as subcellular and cellular aging, genetics, immunology, anatomy and physiology, animal model of aging, etc. Prereq: Enrollment in the doctoral program in Gerontology or a biomedical science department or consent of instructor. (Same as ANA/BIO/PGY 612.)

GRN 615 SEMINAR IN TEACHING MEDICAL SCIENCE (MED SCIENCE TEACHING I). (2)

A two (2) credit seminar course in which issues related to the theory and practice of life science education are discussed in a Socratic manner. May be repeated to a maximum of three credits. Prereq: Current enrollment in a life science graduate program. (Same as PGY 615.)

GRN 616 TEACHING SEMINAR IN GERONTOLOGY. (2)

The purpose of this seminar is to prepare doctoral students as classroom instructors, and to enhance instructional skills of those students with teaching experience. Emphasis is placed on developing the fundamental knowledge and skills needed to survive and excel in the classroom. Topics covered include: course development strategies; lecture preparation and delivery; interactive and group learning; writing for learning; student evaluation; student advising; and instructional ethics and responsibilities. Seminar activities include development of instructional materials, thematic discussion, and demonstrations/simulations of classroom experiences. Prereq: GRN 600 and GRN 620, or consent of instructor.

GRN 617 TEACHING PRACTICUM IN GERONTOLOGY. (3)

This practicum provides a forum for continued development of teaching skills by concurrently combining classroom instruction experience with formal instructor debriefing sessions. Problematic and successful experiences will be discussed, and specific instructional concepts and issues will be addressed in depth. Prereq: GRN 616 and concurrent classroom teaching.

GRN 618 EPIDEMIOLOGY OF AGING. (3)

This course introduces the application of epidemiologic methods to the study of older persons. Prereq: Enrollment in a Public Health degree and SPH 605/PM 620 Intro to Epidemiology and GRN 650, or consent of instructor. (Same as SPH 618.)

GRN 620 HUMAN AGING AND ADJUSTMENT. (3)

The intent of GRN 620 is to provide continued development (from GRN 600) of critical interdisciplinary skills in studies of the aging process. Students will, as a group, identify a single central issue associated with aging and conduct comprehensive literature reviews and appropriate research to thoroughly address that issue. Prereq: GRN 600 and admission to the Ph.D. program in gerontology.

GRN 644 DEMOGRAPHY AND AGING. (3)

This course examines the dynamics of human population distributions, densities, and growth patterns as they relate to population aging. The essential demographic processes of fertility, mortality, and mobility are addressed from multiple disciplinary perspectives, and topical coverage includes the environmental, social, political, economic, and cultural impacts on personal demographic behavior and population change. Emphasis is placed on historic and contemporary meanings and influences of population diversity, and how this diversity affects the patterns and consequences of aging across space and time.

GRN 650 RESEARCH DESIGN IN GERONTOLOGY. (4)

This course will provide training in research design appropriate for the study of aging and the aged and will critically assess special considerations involved in studying this population. Topics to be covered will include: philosophy of science; data sources for research on aging (including medical informatics and clinical epidemiology sources); the use of animal models in aging research; special design considerations for the study of aging [reconciling age, period, and cohort effects]: longitudinal research; measurement tools for assessing the elderly [functional assessment, ADLs, life satisfaction scales, etc.] issues in interviewing older people; qualitative methods in aging research; the ethics of research on aging and the aged. Prereq: Admission to Gerontology Ph.D. Program.

GRN 651 QUALITATIVE GERONTOLOGY. (3)

This course (1) critically evaluates different qualitative epistemologies including biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and the case study; (2) assesses the value of alternative qualitative methodologies for gaining deeper understanding of the experience of elders; (3) explores practical issues in employing such methodologies; and (4) provides opportunities for participants to engage in different styles of qualitative research. Prereq: Graduate standing.

GRN 653 LABORATORY RESEARCH IN GERONTOLOGY. (3)

Students will be exposed to current biomedical techniques by conducting supervised research in a laboratory setting. Prereq: Permission of instructor.

GRN 656 INTEGRATIVE STUDIES IN GERONTOLOGY. (3)

This seminar is designed to provide gerontology doctoral students the opportunity to place individual dissertation topics within the broader field of gerontology, and to broaden the authority with which the students engage in their dissertation work. Although work will largely be independently driven, frequent class meetings provide ongoing feedback from the group on progress and allow all participants to learn from each others work. Prereq: Completion of gerontology core requirements.

GRN 660 AGING ISSUES AND FAMILY RELATIONS. (3)

The study of dynamics of family interactions and issues when some family members are elderly. Emphasis is placed on perspectives from multiple generations and across various kin categories. (Same as FAM 660.)

GRN 704 MENTAL HEALTH AND AGING. (3)

The aim of this class is to provide some breadth and selected depth in the area of Mental Health and Aging, aimed at research perspectives. Various psychiatric syndromes will be evaluated in lectures and throughout the readings in relation to prevalence, assessment, etiology, and treatment in reference to research in older adults. Prereq: Graduate student status.

GRN 705 COGNITIVE AGING. (3)

This is a graduate level seminar on cognitive aging. Topics to be addressed include theories of aging, memory, sensation, and perception, attention, language, social cognition, intelligence, decision-making, and dementia.

GRN 706 HEALTH PROMOTION AND AGING. (3)

In this class health promotion in old age will be examined. The theory behind health promotion programs and the status of existing health promotion program for older adults will be reviewed and discussed. Finally, the knowledge acquired in class will be used to develop and demonstrate an innovative health promotion program for older adults. Prereq: Graduate student standing.

GRN 710 AGING OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM. (3)

This course will examine the alterations in the brain that occur with aging and in neurodegenerative disorders such as Alzheimer's disease. The emphasis will be on human aging although the relevance of animal models to studies of human aging will be a recurrent theme. The course will examine aging at several levels, including molecular, cellular, organismic, and behavioral. A strong background in the basic sciences is encouraged. (Same as ANA/PGY/PHA 710.)

GRN 720 GERONTOLOGY/GERIATRIC DENTISTRY. (1)

This course is designed to help students gain an appreciation for the significant opportunities as well as challenges the aging population will bring to their oral health practice. This course will provide students

basic knowledge and information in gerontology/geriatric dentistry. Lecture, 17 hours. May be repeated to a maximum of two credits. Prereq: Permission of course director.

GRN 731 ELDER MISTREATMENT. (3)

This course reviews major issues and trends related to elder mistreatment. The course emphasizes individual and systemic issues related to elder abuse, neglect, exploitation, and self-neglect on individual, local, state, and federal levels. Special consideration is given to dynamics that shape past, current, and future issues related to elder mistreatment. Prereq: Graduate student status and/or permission of instructor.

GRN 749 DISSERTATION RESEARCH. (0)

Half-time to full-time work on dissertation. May be repeated to a maximum of six semesters. Prereq: Registration for two full-timemesesters of 769 residence credit following the successful completion of the qualifying exams.

GRN 767 DISSERTATION RESIDENCY CREDIT. (2)

Residency credit for dissertation research after the qualifying examination. Students may register for this course in the semester of the qualifying examination. A minimum of two semesters are required as well as continuous enrollment (Fall and Spring) until the dissertation is completed and defended.

GRN 769 RESIDENCE CREDIT FOR THE DOCTOR'S DEGREE. (0-12)

May be repeated indefinitely.

GRN 770 SPECIAL TOPICS IN GERONTOLOGY. (1-3)

This course is designed to present contemporary topics in gerontology in either a lecture or seminar format. It is intended to provide students with opportunities to be informed of current issues in gerontology as well as to explore in-depth studies of particular gerontological topics. May be repeated to a maximum of twelve credits.

GRN 771 AGING IN RURAL ENVIRONMENTS. (3)

In the context of a changing rural environment, this seminar explores the life circumstances and life experience of rural elders in relation to the health and well-being of this population.

GRN 772 AGING AND THE LIFE COURSE. (3)

This seminar will establish a common foundation of knowledge through examinations of traditional "life courses" influencing individuals as they age through time, including household and family, education and work, and housing. This foundation will be built upon using critical examinations of such themes as gender roles, spatial experience, cognitive change and memory, and structural effects on life trajectories. Emphasis will be placed on surveys of existing literature and on integrating various life course elements within social and behavioral theory.

GRN 773 ETHICS AND AGING. (3)

The focus of this class is on applied ethics and aging. We will address the following topics: mid/late life reproduction; research with older adults; spirituality/selfhood; legal issues; cultural issues; vulnerable older people; caregiving and community-based care; specific issues related to Alzheimer's Disease; issues at the end of life, and other timely ethical issues that may arise during the course. The course will make use of provocative readings, case studies, supplementary professional articles, a presentation and paper, lively class discussion, and outside speakers who will share their expertise with you on a variety of ethical issues related to aging.

GRN 774 PUBLIC POLICY AND AGING. (3)

This course reviews major issues and trends in the economics of aging and social policy and aging. The course emphasizes health, economic, and welfare policies and considers their implications on federal, state, and local levels. Special consideration is given to dynamics that shape past, current, and future policy in the area of aging. Prereq: Graduate standing.

GRN 775 CLINICAL GERIATRICS. (3)

This course provides a perspective of clinical geriatrics. Basic concepts of geriatric care are presented, along with concepts of gerontology as it applies to geriatric medicine. This course is designed for both clinicians and non-clinicians.

GRN 778 CURRENT TOPICS IN BRAIN AGING. (3)

Students will learn cellular and molecular changes that occur in the brain through AD progression in addition to the impact of these changes on individual lifestyle and on society.

GRN 780 APPLIED GERONTOLOGY PRACTICUM. (1-3)

This course is designed to provide students the opportunity to experience the practical application of gerontology in such domains as government, administration and clinical environments. In addition, the student will gain in-depth experience with the organization and an introduction to problems in applied research. Students will work under the supervision of a gerontology faculty member to coordinate efforts, establish timelines for completion, and determine grading criteria. May be repeated to a maximum of six credits. Approval of the Director of Graduate Studies required.

GRN 781 STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PRACTICUM. (1)

This practicum provides an opportunity for students to present and discuss their research findings in a venue that promotes skill development in the areas of preparation and delivery of research presentations. Students are required to enroll in GRN 781 during each of the first five semesters in residence. Prereq: Admission to Gerontology Ph.D. program.

GRN 782 WOMEN'S HEALTH AND AGING. (3)

This class explores the issues related to health and well-being among older women. Using a multidisciplinary approach that blends humanities, social and medical science and public policy, the course examines social, economic and cultural contexts of chronic physical and mental health. Prereq: Upper level/graduate class in social science. (Same as BSC 782.)

GRN 783 PUBLIC HEALTH AND AGING. (3)

Public Health and Aging is an elective course in the Graduate Center for Gerontology and Department of Health Behavior and is offered to students on the graduate level. The focus of the course is to help students identify a public health framework and a paradigm for addressing the issues of social, emotional, physical, and mental health in older adults, as well as a keen understanding and awareness of chronic disease prevention, mortality, and quality of life issues that are germane to aging in the United States. Prereq: Graduate standing.

GRN 785 INDEPENDENT RESEARCH IN GERONTOLOGY. (1-6)

Open to doctoral students who have the necessary training and ability to conduct research at an advanced level. Students will work under the supervision of a gerontology faculty member to coordinate research efforts, establish timelines for completion, and determine grading criteria. May be repeated to a maximum of 9 credits. Approval of the Director of Graduate Studies required.

GRN 786 INDEPENDENT READINGS IN GERONTOLOGY. (1-6)

Open to doctoral students who have the necessary training and ability to work independently at an advanced level. Students will work under the supervision of a gerontology faculty member to identify readings appropriate for the student's chosen topic, establish timelines for completion, and determine grading criteria. May be repeated to a maximum of nine credits. Approval of the Director of Graduate Studies required.

GRN 790 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN GERONTOLOGY. (1)

This seminar will cover elements of professional development in the areas of research, teaching and service as students are prepared for obtaining positions and developing careers in gerontology. Emphasis will be placed on means of documenting progress and accomplishment (e.g., CV building, teaching portfolio development, evaluation), effective strategies for searching for and securing jobs (e.g., interview skills), and strategies for promoting quality performance and professional success in gerontology-related professions. Prereq: Admission to the Gerontology Ph.D. program.