

Ministry With Older Adults

CL 677

Spring Semester

United Theological Seminary

New Brighton, MN

Tuesday 8:15 – 11:30

Classroom “C”

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The inevitability of aging is a reality of the human condition. The impending retirement of the “baby boomer” generation compels those involved in religious leadership to address this growing number of people in society and the faith community. The course will give consideration to both the *problems* as well as the *potential* that comes with aging, particularly in the retirement years and beyond. Attention will be given to the physical, emotional, developmental and spiritual concerns that arise as a consequence of the aging process. The impact of culture, context and community are core issues that will be studied in relationship to the phenomenon of aging. Biblical, theological and care giving perspectives in this course will provide multiple lenses and angles of vision for ministry with this segment of the population.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. To become sensitized to the vast diversity of older persons and the complexity of their lives in appropriating and their life experiences.
- B. To give consideration to the inherited and developing biblical and theological perspectives as it relates to aging.
- C. To create a personal theology of aging that informs one’s professional and personal posture on the subject.
- D. To develop care giving approaches and competencies in working with older persons within the context of the church and wider community.
- E. To identify the particular problems as well as the special gifts that older people bring to the life of faith.
- F. To become more intentionally aware of our own ideas, feelings and concerns as it relates to the aging process and how that impacts ministry.
- G. To develop strategies, advocacy and intentional ministries which challenge the phenomenon of “ageism” in the household, church and society.

COURSE TEXTS

Kimble, Melvin and Susan McFadden (eds.) *Aging, Spirituality and Religion, Vol. II.*
Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Koenig, Harold and Andrew Weaver. *Pastoral Care of Older Adults*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Schachter-Shalomi, Zalman and Ronald S. Miller. *From Aging to Sage-ing: A Profound New Vision of Growing Older*. New York: Time Warner Books.

Watkins, Derrel (ed) *Practical Theology for Aging*. New York: Taylor/Francis Pub.

COURSE BIBLIOGRAPHY (Separate Handout)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Attendance at class and participation in small group discussions. ***More than two unexcused absences constitutes failure for the course.***

B. Reading of assigned materials in the syllabus for each class session.

C. “Reflection Paper – Personal Aging”

This paper is to reflect where you are at the present moment with regard to the aging process, irrespective of your current age. Give consideration to the following questions as a possible framework for constructing your paper. (This is **not a mandated** framework if you have a better way, that is your own unique way of sharing this information.

1. What “images” or “ideas” come to your mind when you hear the word “aging?” From whence did these images or ideas originate?
2. As you contemplate your own aging process:
 - a. what excites you most about growing older?
 - b. what frightens you most?
3. If you were to describe “your ideal situation for yourself” as related to aging, what would it be and why?
4. Who is the “most influential” older person in your life? Why? What is most significant about this person?
5. How does your faith tradition inform (or) not inform you with regard to how you think about aging? Is there a biblical ‘figure’ of great age who is for you a good example of one who “aged well?”
6. How does the “reality of mortality” factor into your understanding of aging?

(Four to Five pages double spaced – come prepared to discuss your papers in a small group)

D. “Interview Paper”

Interview a parish pastor as well as a person who is specifically trained to work with older adults (chaplain, parish nurse, pastoral counselor or a director of ministry with the aging in a congregation). Record their responses and compare and contrast their theology, philosophy and understanding of ministry with those who are aging. You may develop your own set of

questions predicated on what you want to find out. *Possible questions might include the following:* **This is NOT a mandated format, only a suggestion.**

1. What theological tenets inform your ministry with aging people in your congregation?
2. What are the “greatest joys” that you have experienced?
3. What are the “greatest sorrows/disappointments in this ministry?”
4. Share a “story” from your ministry that represents how you experience ministry with those who are aging.
5. What do you feel you do well in this ministry? What more would you like to see done in this specific area of ministry?
6. With the growing population of older adults, what do you think that ministry will look like in the future?

(Four to Five pages double spaced. Come prepared to share your findings with colleagues in class.)

D. “Book of Your Choice” on Aging

Select any book or series of articles on aging from the bibliography or other resources that you know of (internet) and write *in your own words* how this resource was helpful for you in formulating an understanding of aging and the manner in which it shapes and informs your ministry.

(Four to Five pages double spaced. Come prepared to share your findings with colleagues in class)

E. Final Project ***Choose one of the following options:***

1. Develop a curricular piece for a congregation that focuses on the topic of “aging.” The curriculum should reflect the following:
 - a. How you would advertise the course
 - b. Who the course is designed for in the parish
 - c. Develop ***four sessions*** that indicate the following:
 - 1) The structure of each session
 - 2) A detailed outline of material to be covered
 - 3) Accompanying activities (should you so choose) for each session you are planning.
 - 4) Evaluative process for participants to respond after the course is completed.
2. A research paper focusing on some particular aspect of aging that most interests you or what you think would be most helpful for you in your ministry.
3. An “integrative notebook” kept throughout the term. The notebook would feature the following “entries” each week.
 - a. A summation of salient points from the readings assigned
 - b. Information you found of value in class presentations/discussions
 - c. Notes that you took either in terms of ‘extra’ reading you did or information you picked up from the media related to aging.

- d. Integrate what you have learned theologically as well as what this means from a care giving perspective.
4. An art project that features some dimension or aspect of aging that could be shared with others. This can reflect your own “ideas/feelings/understanding” of aging or it can be a piece that would reflect in some way the “process” of aging. An accompanying explanation should be made relative to the origination, design and completion of the art form.

Length of the project is contingent on what you choose. No more than 10 pages, double spaced! Consult with the instructor if you have questions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

February 9 Introduction to the class, discussion of class syllabus and assignments. Consideration of ‘attitudes’ towards aging that determine our perspective and posture for ministry.

February 16 Biblical Perspectives regarding aging and the elderly.

Required reading: Watkins, Chapters 3, 4 and 6
Select a biblical narrative, a passage from “wisdom” literature or other significant passages that have reference to aging. Come prepared to share in small groups or in plenary session.

February 23 Theology and the Phenomenon of Aging

Required reading: Watkins, Chapter 5
 Kimble, Chapters 18, 20, 21, 22 and 24
 Schachter-Shalomi, Intro. chaps. 1-3

Small group or plenary session

1. What is meant by a “theology of aging?”
2. What theological tenets or perspectives inform your theology of aging?
3. How does your theology impact the shape of your ministry with the aging?
4. What social attitudes and dispositions either support or detract from a theology of aging?
5. What from the assigned reading aided in informing approach? (If in fact it did!)

March 2 Aging As An Exercise in Limits

Required reading: Kimble, Chaps. 15 – 17 and 19

Koenig, Chapters 1, 2, 12-15
Schachter-Shalomi, Chaps. 4-6

- March 9** Spirituality and the Aging Process
Required reading: Kimble, Chap. 1,3,5
Koenig, 9-11
- March 16** Finding Meaning in Older Adults
Required reading: Kimble, Chap. 7, 10
Koenig, Chaps. 10, 11
Watkins, Chap. 7
Film: "Bucket List"
- March 23** **Reading Week (No class)**
- March 30** Providing Care Giving for those Suffering from Dementia
Required reading: Kimble, Chap. 2, 6, 10, 26 and 27
Koenig, Chap. 3 and Chap. 5
Watkins, Chap. 11
Film: "Iris"
- April 6** **HAPPY EASTER RECESS – No Class**
- April 13** Aging and End of Life Issues
Required reading: Kimble, Chap. 23 and 25
Watkins, Chap. 14
Schachter-Shalomi, Chaps. 7-8
- April 20** Transition to a New Environment
Required reading: Koenig, Chap. 6 and Chap. 8
Required reading: Morgan, *Settling In: My First Year in a Retirement Community*
- April 27** Aging and Congregational and Communal Care
Required reading: Koenig, Chap. 4 and 7
Kimble, Chap. 8, 9, 11, 13-14
Schachter-Shalomi, Chaps. 9-10
- May 4** Potential in Ministry With the Aging
Required reading: Kimble, Chapters 12, 28-32
Watkins, Chapter 8, 12, 13

May 11 **Course Wrap Up** – Discussion Opportunity
 Finalization of issues/concerns/questions
 Possible panel of seniors

May 18 **Sharing of your personal research papers with class members!**
Required reading: Koenig, Conclusion
 Unfinished business!

COURSE GRADING:

- A. Attendance at class sessions. **More than two unexcused absences constitutes failure for the course. Tardiness at class will also factor into the final grade.**
- B. Evidence of having read the assignments for each class session, participation in small groups and plenary discussions.
- C. Quality of the “Reflection” papers that are written for class.
- D. Quality of the “Book of your Choice” review/outline
- E. Quality of the final project.

COURSE INSTRUCTOR:

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 Phone: (651) 255-6133
 E-mail: balbers@unitedseminary.edu

Office Hours:

Monday: 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
 Wednesday 2:30 - 4:30 p.m.
 Thursday 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Other times by special appointment!!