

# Gerontology

## Interdisciplinary Minor

**Director:** Christy S. Carter

**Committee on Undergraduate and Graduate Education in**

**Gerontology Director:** Christy S. Carter

**Associate Directors:** Steve Austad (Biology), Karlene Ball (Psychology), Bryan Breland (Health Services Administration), Michael Crowe (Psychology), Patricia Drentea (Sociology), Vithal K Ghanta (Biology)

Gerontology is the study of the processes of aging in all their diversity—the complex interaction of individual, social, and organizational phenomena producing change over the entire life span. Gerontological education necessarily encompasses many traditional disciplines in the biological, behavioral, medical, and social sciences, as well as numerous professional specialties. The philosophy of the Gerontology Education Program is that research and instruction of the highest quality are achieved when faculty and students are trained within their parent discipline or field and apply their insights to questions of aging through interdisciplinary education. In this sense, students bring a firm disciplinary background with a specialized body of knowledge into their future endeavors.

UAB's Gerontology Education Program offers interdisciplinary courses in gerontology, leading to an undergraduate minor. The study of gerontology at this level provides students educated in various disciplines with the background needed to work in programs related to aging and the aged. The program's main goals are to provide students with a thorough background in existing theory and research in gerontology and to supplement their existing backgrounds and professional disciplines.

The academic program is administered by the director of the Gerontology Education Program. The director is also responsive to the guidance of the Committee on Undergraduate and Graduate Education in Gerontology and serves as chair of the committee. The committee is made up of representatives from academic departments throughout UAB who are active in the study of aging and the aged. The director reports to the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the director of the Center for Aging.

The multidisciplinary gerontology program is offered to all UAB students in good standing. The program has the sponsorship and support of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Center for Aging. Students may obtain the program's Operating Policies: Standards and Procedures Manual through the program director.

## Minor in Gerontology

Requirements	Hours
<b>Required Gerontology Courses</b>	
GER 280 Biology of Aging	3
GER 425 Psychology of Aging	3
GER 469 Sociology of Aging	3
<b>Practicum or Independent Reading/Research Project</b>	
Complete a practicum or independent reading or research project for three credit hours. See your advisor for details.	3
<b>Gerontology Electives</b>	

Select six hours from Gerontology (GER) courses	6
<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>18</b>

## Grade Requirement

A grade of C or better is required in all courses applied to the minor. Additionally, students must have a GPA of at least 2.5 in all courses applied to the minor.

## Courses

### GER 280. Aging: From Cells to Society. 3 Hours.

Americans born in the 21st century can expect to live 100 years or more. That is what some prominent aging researchers believe. Already, we are living longer than at any time in human history. Does that mean that society can expect to be overwhelmed by Alzheimer's disease and other diseases of later life as the century progresses? Why do we age anyway? What goes wrong inside our body as we grow older? Why does it happen 5 times as fast in a dog? 30 times as fast in a mouse? What are the prospects for an aging "breakthrough" that might allow us to live much, much longer? What would be the societal impact of such a breakthrough? This course will address these and other questions, providing a solid background in the biology of aging, and the social implications of this biology in a rapidly changing world.

### GER 285. Introduction to Aging. 3 Hours.

Aging experience in modern world. Theories of aging, dimensions of aging, everyday concerns associated with aging, and future prospects of aging. Guest lectures by professionals in the field and other faculty in gerontology.

### GER 309. Community Resources for Special Populations. 3 Hours.

Analysis of community-based programs for specific populations: older citizens, persons with HIV/AIDS, and the chronically ill.

### GER 397. Advanced Directed Readings in the Biology of Aging. 1-3 Hour.

Reading and independent study in selected areas under supervision of faculty sponsor. Gerontology topic required.

### GER 398. Research Practicum in Psychology. 1-3 Hour.

Independent project, study, or reading supervised by member of faculty.

### GER 403. Politics of Aging. 3 Hours.

Role of aging in political process. Political demands made by elderly, role of aging in political decision-making, and policy outputs relevant to older population.

### GER 407. Pathology of Memory. 3 Hours.

Memory disorders from stand point of experimental psychology and neuropsychology. Amnesic syndrome, dementia, transient memory disorders, Alzheimer's disease, epidemiology and public health issues.

### GER 411. Bio-Psycho-Social Aspects of Aging for the Health. 3 Hours.

Overview of current gerontological-geriatric information. Special needs of the elderly in receiving healthcare services.

### GER 420. Anthropology of Old Age. 3 Hours.

Anthropology of Old Age: Cross-cultural perspective of status alternatives for elderly. Examination of differing roles, especially kinship, of elderly in Africa, Europe, Oceania, Middle East, and various ethnic groups in U.S.

### GER 425. Psychology of Aging. 3 Hours.

Age changes in human cognition and behavior. Sensory processes, memory, intelligence, physiology and health, psychopathology, and life-span development and adjustment.

**GER 438. Gerontology and Geriatrics Multidisciplinary Core. 3 Hours.**

**GER 455. Minority Aging. 3 Hours.**

Cross-racial/ethnic exploration on national level of special problems of minority aged groups such as Latinos, Blacks, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Pacific-Asians, and American Indians. Family, church, health care, housing, adult education, retirement, income, and recreation.

**Prerequisites:** SOC 100 [Min Grade: D]

**GER 456. Death and Dying. 3 Hours.**

Death and dying from sociological and social psychological perspectives. Social significance of death as human existential phenomenon. Recent trends in definition, distribution, and handling of death and dying (e.g., interaction with dying persons, hospice movement, and funeral practices).

**Prerequisites:** SOC 100 [Min Grade: D]

**GER 457. The Aging Family. 3 Hours.**

Exploration of changes in family structure; status of aging in family in various societies; intra-and inter-generational relations; family-related role transitions.

**Prerequisites:** SOC 100 [Min Grade: D]

**GER 462. Environment and Aging. 3 Hours.**

Analysis of special consequences of residential environment for older people. Patterns of residence among elderly; fit between lifestyles and types of residence; consequences of living in segregated versus age-integrated neighborhoods, retirement homes, and nursing homes; examination of policy options.

**GER 480. Women and Aging. 1 Hour.**

Subjects of special interest, such as women and religion, women in civil rights movement, and theories of women's studies. Varies in content depending upon topic. Students may enroll under these numbers multiple times but topic may not be repeated.

**GER 485. Age Stratification. 3 Hours.**

Description of normal aging process; survey of individual troubles and group social problems associated with aged. Specific topics include health, economic status, work/retirement, family relations, housing/living environments, and transportation problems.

**GER 488. Sociological Practice. 3 Hours.**

Students will be involved in community research projects related to intergenerational relations, aging, medicine, and/or health. Placement in community organizations, e.g. schools, senior centers, to focus on research methods related to social policy.

**Prerequisites:** SOC 100 [Min Grade: D]

**GER 490. Independent Study and Special Courses in Sociology. 1-3 Hour.**

Individually designed programs for students wishing to conduct semi-independent research or guided reading in gerontology.

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**GER 498. Independent Study I. 1-3 Hour.**

Community service projects under direction of faculty.

**GER 499. Independent Study II. 1-3 Hour.**

Community service projects under direction of faculty.