

DEPARTMENT OF GERONTOLOGY

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Associate professor and chair

The mission of the Department of Gerontology is to promote optimal aging for individuals and communities.

The basic philosophy of the department is to improve the overall well-being of elders through the development of educational programs that are responsive to the changing psychological, physical, social and political needs of people. Research, community service and continuing education in gerontology and geriatrics are integral parts of this educational effort.

History

The Department of Gerontology was founded in 1976 and offers the only Master of Science in Gerontology in the commonwealth of Virginia. The Department of Gerontology became a part of the College of Health Professions in January 1985.

Objectives

The mission to promote optimal aging for individuals and communities is evident through the department's innovative graduate and continuing education, scholarship and university-community partnerships. Graduates further the person-centered, transdisciplinary mission largely in the areas of administration, education, advocacy and entrepreneurship. The purpose of this program is threefold: (1) to train qualified professionals to work in administrative, planning, service delivery and instructional and staff development positions in programs and services for elders at the national, state and local levels, (2) to provide an opportunity for those studying in other disciplines, and whose work will encompass service to older people, to integrate their own training with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the aging process and (3) to stimulate the design and execution of gerontological research across the multiple disciplines.

Facilities

Offices of the Department of Gerontology are located in the College of Health Professions building at 900 E. Leigh St., 7th Floor, Suite 7000.

Diversity statement

The faculty, staff and students in the VCU Department of Gerontology in the College of Health Professions:

- Seek to support personhood by honoring the safety, dignity and well-being of all of our constituents
- Believe that diverse backgrounds and philosophies are crucial to academic excellence
- Seek to support an academic community whose members have diverse visions, cultures, backgrounds and life experiences
- Honor freedom of expression and civility of discourse as fundamental educational cornerstones
- Endeavor to foster a just and inclusive campus culture that promotes both cultural competence and cultural humility
- Aim to engage members of our community as active citizens in a multicultural world

- Recognize the need to identify and evaluate the ways in which social, cultural and economic inequities affect power and privilege in the larger society
- Consider equity and autonomy central to our mission to promote optimal aging for individuals and communities

Statement of values

As faculty, staff, and students of the VCU Department of Gerontology in the College of Health Professions, we will be guided by this departmental statement of values in the pursuit of our professional and academic endeavors and as we participate in the department's mission to promote optimal aging for individuals and communities. We recognize that this departmental statement of values is informed by the broader VCU Code of Ethics, and that we need to be mindful of our responsibility to adhere to both, as well as to any others which may be applicable to us by virtue of our professional affiliations or other obligations.

Professional competence

We will maintain the highest levels of competence in our work and will undertake only those tasks for which we are qualified by education, training or experience. We will embrace opportunities to work in inter- and transdisciplinary settings with colleagues from a wide range of disciplines, openly acknowledging the boundaries of our gerontological expertise and seeking opportunities to collaborate with other disciplines in our mission to support optimal aging. We recognize the need for continuing education in order to remain professionally competent and we will use the appropriate scientific, professional, technical and administrative resources needed to ensure competence in our professional activities. We will be open to asking for and receiving constructive feedback from others.

Integrity

We will conduct our affairs in ways that inspire trust, confidence and mutual respect and we will communicate candidly within the boundaries of confidentiality. We will strive always to provide an ethical and caring response to ourselves and others. We will use ethical decision-making frameworks and other tools in order to manage ethical dilemmas and other complex problems, working both individually and collaboratively with others. We will not knowingly act in ways that jeopardize either our own or others' welfare and we will appropriately report any concerns about the welfare of older adults. We will always disclose and resolve possible, perceived and actual conflicts of interest in the performance of our professional responsibilities.

Professional and scientific responsibility

We will adhere to the highest scientific, professional and personal standards in pursuing and promoting evidence-based practices and behaviors that support optimal aging across the life span and in a bio-psycho-social-spiritual context. We will show respect for other gerontologists and colleagues of all disciplines even when we disagree on theoretical, methodological or personal approaches to professional activities. We value the continuing establishment of the public trust in the emerging and evolving profession of gerontology and will pursue ethical behavior in order to support that trust. In research and teaching we will adhere to accepted principles for the protection of human participants in research.

Respect for personhood, rights, dignity and diversity

We will respect the personhood, rights, dignity and diversity of all people and will use person-centered, nondiscriminatory language and

approaches when engaging with others. We will strive to eliminate bias in our professional activities, through self-reflection, self-awareness and the practice of cultural humility, and we will encourage those with whom we partner to do the same. We will not tolerate any forms of discrimination based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, health conditions or marital, domestic, parental or socioeconomic status. In all of our work-related activities, we will acknowledge the rights of others to hold values, attitudes and opinions that differ from our own.

Social and advocacy responsibilities

We will maintain awareness of our personal, professional and scientific responsibilities to the communities and societies in which we live and work, making public and applying our evidence-based knowledge in order to contribute to the public good. We will seek to educate ourselves and others about the damaging nature of ageism and through our role-model leadership we will support ourselves and others to promote optimal aging across the lifespan through positive language, behaviors and practices. In undertaking these responsibilities, we will be courageous and compassionate, remaining open to new opportunities, ideas, and experiences in all aspects of the field of aging.

- Gerontology, Master of Science (M.S.) (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/gerontology/gerontology-ms/>)
- Gerontology, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in geriatric care management (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/gerontology/gerontology-ms-geriatric-care-mgmt/>)
- Aging Studies, Certificate in (Graduate certificate) (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/gerontology/aging-studies-certificate/>)

GRTY 501. Physiological Aging. 3 Hours.

3 credits. This course is taught at an introductory level in contrast to the more substantive background required for GRTY 601. Distinguishes between normal aging and those chronic illnesses often associated with aging in humans. This course would be valuable to those interested in the general processes of human aging.

GRTY 510. Aging. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Introduces the student to the biological, psychological, social, ethical, economic and cultural ramifications of aging. Presents an interprofessional approach to the complex issues and realities of aging. Discusses aging concepts and biopsychosocial theoretical frameworks relevant to the field of aging studies.

GRTY 601. Biological and Physiological Aging. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Biological theories of aging; cellular, physical, systemic and sensory change; health maintenance.

GRTY 602. Psychology of Aging. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 seminar hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment requires permission of instructor. Students must complete social sciences research methods before taking this course. Psychological adjustment in late life; special emphasis on personality, cognitive and emotional development; life crises associated with the aging process. Crosslisted as: PSYC 602.

GRTY 603. Social Gerontology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment requires permission of the instructor. Focuses on the sociopsychological and sociological aspects of aging. Various sociopsychological and social theories of aging will be discussed. The course will provide a broad overview of several general topics such as the demography of aging, politics and economics of aging, and cross-cultural aspects of aging. The course will offer an in-depth analysis of particular role changes that accompany aging (i.e., retirement, widowhood, institutionalization).

GRTY 604. Problems, Issues and Trends in Gerontology. 4 Hours.

Semester course; 4 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 4 credits. Covers a broad range of topics of critical interest to practitioners, policymakers and researchers working with older persons. Explores how societal trends affect the health and social services systems. Recognizes the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to the study of aging issues: Insights from practitioners and the knowledge of researchers will be combined to investigate viable responses to emerging trends. Provides a multifaceted view of these issues based on research expertise and practical experience. Students will experience a visit to the General Assembly and will follow and critically evaluate current aging-related legislation in state government.

GRTY 605. Social Science Research Methods Applied to Gerontology. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Enrollment is restricted to students who have completed a graduate statistics course. Application of social science methods and techniques to study of the aged; data sources; types of problems encountered; data analysis; research reporting; use of research findings.

GRTY 606. Aging and Human Values. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Identification and analysis of value systems of the aged, exploration of religious beliefs; death and dying; moral, ethical and legal rights; human values and dignity.

GRTY 607. Field Study in Gerontology. 1-4 Hours.

Semester course; 1-4 field experience hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 1-4 credits. May be repeated to the required maximum of four credits. Focuses on identification and systematic exploration and study of a community-identified need, issue or task germane to the student's gerontology concentration with special attention given to funding opportunities and grant writing. Applies specific concepts and approaches to assessment analysis as determined in consultation with the student's program adviser. Implementation and evaluation of a terminal project and dissemination of the results through a portfolio collection, as well as potential professional presentation, grant submission or manuscript submissions. Graded as S/U/F.

GRTY 608. Grant Writing. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 2 credits. Provides the skills necessary to research and write a grant. Explores how to find grant funding opportunities through both private and public sources. Describes the process of preparing a proposal including writing the narrative and preparing a budget.

GRTY 609. Career Planning. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Focuses on the transition from academia to the professional role and workforce. Identifies individual strengths and evaluates career goals. Prepares students to deliver resumé and communication strategy for job seeking in the aging workforce.

GRTY 610. Gero-pharmacology. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Prerequisite: undergraduate course in statistics. Discusses description of medication-related problems that may be experienced by older adults. Identifies strategies to prevent medication-related problems in older adults, defines the role of the pharmacist as a partner in resolving medication-related problems, applies the strategies for preventing medication-related problems to patient cases and evaluates the medication regimen for an older adult residing in assisted living.

GRTY 611. Death and Dying. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Focuses on questions surrounding death, dying and bereavement, with a special focus on developmental and cultural issues. Explores concepts through research, experiential learning and reflection.

GRTY 612. Recreation, Leisure and Aging. 3 Hours.

3 credits. An analysis of the quality and quantity of leisure in maximizing the quality of life for the older person. Focus will be on concepts of leisure; the interrelationship of leisure service delivery systems and other supportive services; the meaning of leisure to the elderly in the community and within institutional settings; and innovative programming.

GRTY 613. GLBT in Aging. 2 Hours.

Semester course; 2 lecture hours. 2 credits. Explores the biopsychosocial and ecopolitical aspects of the intersection of aging and being a member of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender-identified minority populations. Reviews normative aging factors in the context of being a member of the GLBT population. Discusses the intersection of these with such factors as race, socioeconomic status and other confounding factors.

GRTY 615. Aging and Mental Disorders. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. The course deals with common psychological disorders and problems of late life, their etiology, methods of evaluating psychological status and intervention strategies that have been used successfully with older persons. Topics include epidemiology of psychological disorders and mental health service utilization; late-life stressors and crises; psychology of health, illness and disability; techniques and procedures in the evaluation of the older adult; functional and organic disorders; institutionalization; individual, group and family therapy; behavioral techniques; peer counseling and crisis intervention; and drugs and the elderly. Crosslisted as: PSYC 615.

GRTY 616. Geriatric Rehabilitation. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Provides an overview of the process in geriatric rehabilitation with an assessment, psychosocial aspects and rural issues in rehabilitation. Considers major disabling conditions in late life, and emphasizes the nature of the interdisciplinary rehabilitation process with aging clients.

GRTY 618. The Business of Geriatric Care Management. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Evaluates information and materials needed for a basic understanding of the fundamentals of geriatric care management. Distinguishes and critically evaluates the tasks required of a geriatric care manager and the knowledge and skills needed to perform those tasks. Compares and contrasts multiple geriatric care management business models.

GRTY 619. Geriatric Care Management Practicum. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 1-3 credits. Prerequisites: GRTY 601, GRTY/PSYC 602 and GRTY 603. Pairs a student with a geriatric care manager practicing in the field. Applies information learned in gerontology core classes to hands-on clinical experience with a geriatric care manager. Supervises field experience with clients, providing advocacy and supervision, and coordinating needs to ensure independence and safety.

GRTY 620. Geriatric Interdisciplinary Team Training. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Emphasizes interdisciplinary teamwork with a focus on geriatrics. Increases the awareness of the importance of interdisciplinary teamwork when working with older adults. Uses a case-focused approach to discuss care for older adults in a variety of settings, including acute care, long-term care, rehabilitation, PACE and home health care.

GRTY 621. Professional Writing. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour. 1 credit. Provides instruction on APA guidelines for writing and referencing articles in scholarly papers. Emphasizes critical thinking and awareness skills for reviewing journal articles.

GRTY 624. Community and Community Services for the Elderly. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. A conceptual/theoretical overview of community focusing on the ecological, psychological and social dimensions of community and on communities of the aged. Crosslisted as: SOCY 624.

GRTY 625. Aging and the Minority Community. 3 Hours.

3 credits. An analysis of the relationship between the aging process and American minority communities. In addition to the sociological factors, the course will examine demographic, physiological and psychological aspects of minority aging. Attention also will focus on dominant social problems and federal policies toward the aged.

GRTY 627. Psychology of Health and Health Care for the Elderly. 3 Hours.

Focuses on factors in the etiology, course and treatment of illness; patient/practitioner relationship; patient compliance and psychosocial issues in terminal care.

GRTY 629. Spirituality and Aging. 2-3 Hours.

Semester course; 2 or 3 lecture hours. 2 or 3 credits. Explores the spiritual, psychological and social dynamics associated with aging. Provides special attention to the spiritual and emotional impact on caregivers who work with aging patients. Crosslisted as: PATC 629.

GRTY 638. Long-term Care Administration. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Explores the history and development of the long-term care continuum in the United States. Emphasizes assisted living and the knowledge and skills required to be a successful assisted living administrator. Utilizes the five domains of assisted living administration as the framework. Facilitates learning on leadership and management, with a focus on providing optimal, person-centered care and services to older adults living in a licensed and regulated environment.

GRTY 639. Human Resource Management and Leadership for Gerontologists. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 1 credit. Provides an introduction and foundation to human resources in aging services geared toward administrative and entrepreneurial gerontologists. Emphasizes leadership theory and utilizes the human resource management domain of practice as a guide for structure. Emphasizes developing the culture of an organization to facilitate effective practices in managing a safe and healthy work environment. Reviews state and federal laws, rules and regulations. Allows students to apply skills through cases and exercises relevant to their intended career path.

GRTY 640. Financial Management for Gerontological Leaders. 1 Hour.

Semester course; 1 lecture hour (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 1 credit. Provides an introduction and foundation to financial management in aging services geared toward administrative and entrepreneurial gerontologists. Utilizes the financial management domain of practice as structure for this course. Emphasizes creating and managing organizational finances and multiple payment systems. Reviews state and federal laws, rules and regulations. Allows students to apply skills through cases and exercises relevant to their intended career path.

GRTY 641. Survey of Psychological Assessment and Treatment of the Older Adult. 3 Hours.

3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A combination didactic and skills training course; review of major treatment strategies and techniques for utilization with the older adult client with emphasis on group, individual and paraprofessional delivery systems; evaluation of crisis intervention and consultation team approaches; lectures, demonstration and classroom practice of actual treatment techniques. Crosslisted as: PSYC 641.

GRTY 642. Practicum in Clinical Geropsychology. 3 Hours.

3 practicum hours. 3 credits. An initial practicum geared as an entry to the team practicum experience; focus on familiarizing the student with mental health service delivery systems for the elderly in the Richmond community; rotation through a limited number of facilities such as nursing homes, retirement centers, nutrition sites, emergency hotline services for the elderly and various agencies involved in deinstitutionalization; possible extended placement in a particular facility. Crosslisted as: PSYC 642.

GRTY 691. Topical Seminar. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 lecture hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 3 credits. Seminars on specialized areas of gerontological interest. Examples of special topic courses taught in previous years: nutrition and aging; psychophysiology and neurobiology of aging; wellness and aging; and preretirement planning.

GRTY 692. Independent Studies. 1-3 Hours.

Semester course; 1-3 independent study hours (delivered online, face-to-face or hybrid). 1-3 credits. Directed in-depth independent study of a particular problem or topic in gerontology about which an interest or talent has been demonstrated.

GRTY 792. Independent Studies for Master's-/Ph.D.-level Students. 3 Hours.

Semester course; 3 credits. Independent study in selected area under supervision of gerontology faculty. Focuses on in-depth research and analysis of a major focus area of gerontology, leading to a comprehensive, publishable quality review paper. Emphasizes integrating previous graduate training into aging topical area.

GRTY 798. Thesis. 3-6 Hours.

3-6 credits. A research study of a topic or problem approved by the thesis committee and completed in accordance with the acceptable standards for thesis writing.

GRTY 799. Thesis. 3-6 Hours.

3-6 credits. A research study of a topic or problem approved by the thesis committee and completed in accordance with the acceptable standards for thesis writing.