I. COURSE RATIONALE

A. How the course relates to the School’s mission.

Social work practices are, in part, shaped by their context. All practitioners must be willing and able to adapt basic purposes, knowledge, values and skills for application in specific contexts. In keeping with the mission of the University of Kansas School of Social Welfare to educate students, conduct scholarly inquiry and perform community service, the Social Work and Aging curriculum promotes an approach to social work practice that advances the empowerment and well being of older adults.

Consistent with the mission of our school, students who successfully complete this course will be able to demonstrate a thorough and comprehensive level of knowledge for social work practice with older adults. This knowledge base prepares students for advanced level practice by integrating foundation level knowledge of policy, research, HBSE and practice with substantive knowledge from their chosen field of practice. The expected result is for students to know how to actively and appropriately perform professional gerontological social work roles and culturally competent practice according to the values and ethics of the profession. Students will also understand the social and economic justice concerns of older adults. Students enter a field of practice course that is complementary to their advanced field practicum.

B. How this course links with other courses in the curriculum.

Social Work and Aging builds on generalist practice, human behavior in the social environment, policy and research courses mastered in the foundation year of the program. At the advanced level, the course provides students with the opportunity to integrate and apply knowledge gained from other courses and their complementary advanced level practicum.

Students will continue their examination of client problems within the context of the person and environment with specific attention to practice with older adults. Emphasis on micro, mezzo and macro systems introduced in generalist practice will enhance integration of assessment, goal setting and intervention tasks in work with older adults. Students will strengthen engagement, assessment, planning, intervention, and evaluation skills as they apply to work with older adults and the systems that impact them. Support from individual and community human behavior courses will provide a knowledge base for examining life tasks during the last stage of life with emphasis on strengths and challenges experienced within the family, community, and institution. Mental health concerns common to older adults and policy content will be infused throughout the
course. Finally, knowledge of research will be strengthened as students critique and apply empirically based intervention strategies to their work.

C. **How this course prepares participants to be advanced level practitioners.**
This course prepares students for advanced level practice by integrating knowledge from policy, practice, research, and HBSE in their chosen field of practice, work with older adults. Substantive knowledge includes (1) implications of the biological, psychological, and social process of aging for practice, (2) results of recent research in gerontology which impacts interventions with older clients, and (3) specific federal/state/local policies and programs related to aging, and (4) issues in practice with diverse groups of older adults and families.

D. **In general terms, what this course covers.**
This course is designed to help students develop the knowledge, information and skills necessary for successful and competent practice with older adults, their families, agencies, and communities. It provides content on historical societal responses to the needs of older adults, current federal and state legislation, and current and future demographic contexts. This course provides analysis of current psychological, social, policy, programs/services, and intervention approaches with older persons. Tools for applying the strengths perspective to work with older adults are examined. Implications of each of these elements for culturally competent practice are explored. Students will examine and assess institutional policies, corresponding multi-level practice methods, and related research in accordance with the values and ethics of social work. This course is practice oriented because knowledge is applied to specific areas of practice with older adults. It builds on foundation content in policy, practice, and HBSE courses, applying skills developed in those courses to work with older adults. Content and assignments are linked to field placements with older adults.

In addition to being provided substantive knowledge, students in this class are challenged to (1) recognize that continued growth and development of self in the final stage of life is as possible as in other stages of life, (2) recognize that frail elderly persons who may need help are capable of decision making and self-determination, (3) become aware of their personal concerns/values about aging and the final stage of life, (4) identify ways to create more culturally sensitive programs and policies for a diverse older adult population, (5) recognize the importance of supporting elderly people in their efforts to advocate for themselves, (6) understand how to be gerontological leaders for this population.

The rationale in individual instructors' syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

II. **EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**
By the conclusion of this course, students will demonstrate an ability to:
1. Apply critical thinking skills and a critical perspective to content on gerontological social work practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 4, 5, 6)
2. Demonstrate the capacity to integrate research, policy, direct practice, and human behavior theory in considering issues central to gerontological social work. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 4).

3. Identify, discuss, and analyze how research and social work values and ethics inform and define the best practices in gerontological social work. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

4. Analyze public policies, laws, and programs and the human values and social norms that shape them to determine their influence on goal setting, social and economic justice, and empowerment of clients at the direct service level. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5).

5. Explain how diversity issues including classism, ageism, racism and sexism in later life manifest themselves, leading to development of culturally competent practice. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5).

6. Identify and discuss how the major themes of the school--diversity, social justice, the strengths perspective, and a critical perspective--apply to practice with older adults. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 4, 6).

7. Compare and contrast the most common approaches for assessment and diagnosis in gerontological social work, including use of the DSM-IV. (Reflects Clinical Concentration Objectives 1, 4, 5).

The educational outcomes in individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

III. CURRICULUM THEMES
The overarching themes of the school are encompassed in a practice centered curriculum that promotes a critical perspective, focuses on people’s strengths, celebrates human diversity and promotes social justice. This course is practice oriented because knowledge is applied to a specific area of practice: practice with older adults.

- Consistent with a critical perspective, students in the Social Work and Aging course will be expected to raise questions, reflect upon and systematically evaluate and apply the divergent theories and knowledge upon which gerontological social work practice is based.

- The strengths perspective is a humanistic, empowerment approach to gerontological social work practice that operates on the assumption that all persons have untapped mental, physical, and emotional resources. Students are encouraged to extend their understanding of assessment, goal setting, design and selection of interventions, and evaluation practices with older adults and to view themselves as collaborators in working with clients to achieve their chosen goals.

- The commitment to principles of appreciating diversity while securing social and economic justice entails helping students develop an appreciation for difference and an awareness of how oppression limits human and community development. Focus
will include fostering economic and social justice that enables diverse groups of older adults to have resources to pursue their chosen goals.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus

IV. LIBERAL ARTS PERSPECTIVE
Because growing old is the culmination of life experience, the study of social work and aging necessarily requires that students draw on the following:

1. Their knowledge of biological, social and behavioral sciences which provides the framework to understand older adults’ physical, intellectual, social and emotional development. Further, the study of persons from cultures different than one’s own will emphasize variations in values.

2. Their knowledge of economics, sociology, history, and political science to understand the development of policies, programs and services provided to older people in our society.

3. Their knowledge of ethics and philosophy which forms the foundation for an examination of their own values and enhances their understanding of social work values and the code of ethics.

4. Their ability to think, analyze and clearly communicate their work, both orally and in writing. Students must be able to make assessments, plan interventions, and evaluate their practice effectiveness. Further, they must draw on gerontological research and generalize it to their own practice.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus

V. PROFESSIONAL PURPOSES AND VALUES
Gerontological social work students need to understand how professional purposes and values inform social work practice. In order to prepare to work effectively with older people and their families, the social work student will:

1. Examine theories, policies, and social work practices pertaining to older adults to identify implicit or explicit values, ethics, and goals for behavior.

2. Critically analyze these inherent values and goals, and reflect on their congruence with both personal commitments and professional values and ethics.

3. Consider the value implications of theories, policies, and social work practices in light of the mission of the School and the four curricular themes. (For example, is this practice strengths oriented? Does this social policy contribute to further oppression of older adults or support our work for social justice? Are these theories or practice approaches applicable to a diverse population?)

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus
VI. **PREPARATION FOR PRACTICE WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS**  
A life course perspective will be used to incorporate issues of human diversity in later life. Attention will be given to the following:

1. Racial/ethnic differences, gender experiences as related to mortality (women as long-lived), classism (poverty), the effects of age and disability, sexism, and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

2. The practice principles necessary to explore and support human diversity and to develop culturally competent practice. Special attention is given to ways of supporting people of varying ethnic and cultural backgrounds as they care for older adults and help them adjust to life transitions.

3. The impact of policies and planning on diverse segments of the aging population (i.e. increased coinsurance costs for Medicare and out-of-pocket expenses under Medicaid, continued emphasis on institutional rather than on community-based long-term care).

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus**

VII. **COURSE TOPICS**  
The emphasis of this course is on gaining knowledge of aging processes, understanding social and behavioral changes in later life, analyzing theoretical and empirical data, assessing policy impacts, and integrating this knowledge into practice with older adults and their families. Thus, the course is organized around the following topics.

**Required**

✓ Demographic data describing older people and their families (age, sex, income, education, ethnicity, mortality, etc.).

✓ Analysis and critique of theoretical and empirical findings related to the psychological, social, environmental, and biological and spiritual aspects of aging including activity/disengagement, continuity, psychosocial and developmental theories, life transitions, and social roles.

✓ Examination of normal aging processes including the strengths perspective.

✓ Examination of functional problems of aging including clinical assessment and intervention skills with older adults. This includes exploration of causes and treatment for depression, dementia, grief and loss, substance abuse and other common problems of aging.

✓ Examination of cultural aging experiences including emphasis on ethnicity/race, classism (poverty), sexism, ageism with the goal of achieving culturally competent practice. Examples include: feminization of poverty, age and sex discrimination, and support for same sex couples in long-term care.

✓ Identification and critique of age specific policies, programs and administrative bodies which have evolved for serving older people such as the Social Security Act, the Older Americans Act, and the Administration on Aging.
✓ Analysis of how social work practice skills can most effectively be used with older people. Skills examined include: (a) enhancing the strengths of older persons and their families and engaging both in problem solving; (b) completing assessments and intervention plans; (c) developing group work skills with older adults; (d) working at the local, state, and national level on issues of social and economic justice related to older adults.

✓ Ability to apply ethical decision making skills in practice with older adults.

Additional Recommended Topics

- Knowledge of comprehensive geriatric assessment protocols
- Ability to conduct care planning for older adults in health care settings
- Skill development with older adults who are unable to communicate (e.g. dementia and CVA/stroke)
- Identification of spiritual diversity in the aging process and the varieties of spiritual needs
- Awareness of policies related to hospice and palliative care as well as sociological aspects of death and dying in older adults
- Analysis of family dynamics in working with older clients
- Knowledge about love, intimacy, and sexuality in older ages

Individual instructors’ syllabi should provide a topical outline for the course and provide adequate information to determine where and when the required topics are being covered

VIII. RECOMMENDED READINGS

Texts


Individual instructors must either select one of the texts listed or obtain approval from the faculty mentor for an alternative text

A. Other Readings (Highly recommended readings are delineated by an *)


For individual syllabus, remove the word “RECOMMENDED.” In addition individual syllabi need to specify which readings are required and which are recommended. The entire list of “additional resources” does not need to be included in individual syllabi.

*Aging Websites Link*

The Office of Aging and Long Term Care [http://www.oaltc.ku.edu/](http://www.oaltc.ku.edu/). This website allows you to download reports on current research initiatives in aging at the School of Social Welfare. It also includes educational materials developed through the Hartford funded GeroRich project. It also provides links to major national gerontological websites.

**IX. RECOMMENDED ASSIGNMENTS**

These assignments are designed to provide an integrated experience which will include: getting to know an aging client system—individual and the supportive network (family, neighbors, friends, formal support system)—and in the last assignment analyzing and proposing practice strategies, policies, and programs which do or could enhance that older adult or another older adult’s quality of life.

All written work is expected to meet basic standards of writing proficiency and to avoid the use of sexist language. All written work must conform to accepted standards for quoting other’s work through referencing. Use the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* as your guide. All assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade in this class.

**A. Current Issues in Aging  Semester-long assignment**

The goal of this assignment is to increase your awareness of current aging issues. You are to look for articles of interest about aging or that have impact for aging in our society. These articles from the popular press can be about cutting edge research in aging, policy initiatives, or practice areas. Three times during the semester you are to bring in an article
or newspaper clipping and discuss it with the class. Please also bring copies for the class (9 copies). (Meets educational objectives 1,3,4,5,6)

**B. Personal Practice Statement or Alternate Assignment:**

1. **Personal Practice Statement** (Educational objectives 3,4, and 6)

   The purpose of this assignment is to help you reflect on your current philosophy, orientation, and style of practice with older adults (if applicable). Papers should be 5 pages. How would you describe your personal philosophy of practice with older adults?

   a. What is your understanding of the challenges older adults encounter? What particular strengths and resources may they bring to these challenges? Paint a picture of the nature of the helping relationship with older adults. In what ways does it differ from work with other populations?

   b. Think about the theories of aging we have discussed in this class. What are the frameworks or theories that you will utilize most in your work with older adults? Why? (You may want to refer to your HBSE texts or class notes.)

   c. What types of interventions (social work helping activities) do you believe will best fit your own style? (It is likely that the interventions you choose will flow out of the theory base or bases you identify above.) If you do not plan to work in direct practice, what type of work do you envision that you may do?

   d. How does your own experience with aging or your previous experience with older adults influence you now? What are your personal and professional strengths? What areas will you choose to develop over the next several years?

2. **Alternate Assignment** (Educational objectives 3,4,5,6):

   In five pages, develop a detailed prospectus of what you plan to accomplish in your PPAE leadership project or other project. Use the following format:

   a. Goal of project (eg research, education development, etc) in specific terms
   
   b. Background (why did you choose this project, how did the idea develop, what literature supports it);
   
   c. Collaborators (who you will be working with on this project),
   
   d. Major Project Steps (especially if you are working with someone else);
   
   e. Specific steps you will be responsible for
   
   f. Desired outcomes
   
   g. Resources needed (from agency, from PPAE)
   
   h. How this project will contribute to your learning and leadership development

**C. Older Adult Interview** (Educational objectives 1,3,4,5,6)
The purpose of this assignment is to provide an opportunity for students to develop interpersonal skills in a direct interview with an older adult and to allow an older adult to serve as a resource for the student in understanding a particular area of aging. Paper length should be 10-12 pages.

1) You will need to complete the Human Subjects Research Tutorial online and have a signed consent form, a sample of which will be handed out in class. The form should be signed by your interviewee before you begin the interview.

2) Identify a person who is at least 65 years old and willing to be interviewed. You may:
   a) use questions from the Oral History guide given out in class or,
   b) develop a list of questions surrounding a theme or topic of interest.

   Some possibilities may be: exploration of mental health issues (caregiving, loss issues), positive or negative experiences with the long-term care continuum, how chronic problems affect perception of aging, how one assesses the meaning of her/his life, what role memory plays in aging, legal concerns or needs of the older adult, etc

3) Conduct the interview.

4) Write about the process and the content of the interview. Describe the circumstances of the interview and your feelings. What material did your informant provide? Evaluate and discuss how the interview increases your understanding of an area or stimulates further questions.

   Locate four to five references that apply to one of the major themes that emerged from the interview. What seems to be universal and what may be particular about your informant’s experience?

5) Share the paper with your interviewee and include their comments in a brief closing paragraph. What was the interview like for them?

D. Research Paper: (Educational objectives 2,3,4,5,6,7)

The purpose of this assignment is to increase your expertise in an area of policy or practice that interests you. Please include a reference from a professional working in this area. Paper length: 12-15 pages. Class presentations will be 20-30 minutes.

1. You are to describe a problem often encountered by older adults. Thoroughly review the relevant literature on your topic. Locate twelve sources minimum.

2. a. Discuss the state of the art in terms of appropriate interventions for this problem.
   b. What social policies promote or inhibit work in this area? What are the policy strengths or weaknesses?
   c. Are there any issues of social justice addressed or neglected?
   d. What strategies would you employ and what is your rationale?
   e. What do you think the future challenges will look like due to the increase in the aging population?
3. Prepare to present your results in class. Please bring a copy of one resource you have found to share with classmates. This will be an interactive presentation in which your class colleagues will ask questions.

X. **GRADING**

What Grades Mean (plus and minuses are assigned at instructors’ discretion)

A = Exceptional work: outstanding: this grade will be assigned to work that shows extensive use of the literature as well as wide use of concrete examples from practice.

B = Fully meets graduate standards: this grade will be assigned to work in which all aspects of assignments are completed satisfactorily, showing a combination of accurate use of theory and principles, and precise descriptions of practice.

C = Overall performance is unsatisfactory, below graduate standards, although all aspects of assignments were completed.

F = Failure: overall quality of work is unsatisfactory, or some aspect of assignments not done.

**Incomplete grades.** A temporary grade of Incomplete may be assigned to a student who, for a reason beyond the student’s control, has been unable to complete the required work in a course on time. It is the student’s responsibility to request an Incomplete from the instructor. A request signed by the student and the faculty member must be on file when grades are submitted. A student may not enroll in a course sequential to one in which he or she has an I or F letter grade. An incomplete not removed by the end of the next semester will be changed to an F.

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should specify the following:**

A. The weighting of each assignment in the course and the dates by which they are done.

B. For every assignment, explain the standards used for grading.

C. If class participation is part of the grade indicate what this means. For example, if 10 points are awarded for class participation, one point will be deducted for every class missed.

D. Indicate the policy on late assignments, e.g., they are not accepted and treated as an “F” grade or the grade is reduced by ___ for each day, week, etc.

E. Indicate how final grades will be determined

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students are expected to attend class (and be on time), which is essential for learning skills, learning from lecture and class discussion and for socialization to the profession of social work. Students may miss two classes only without penalty. A third absence will result in deduction of a full letter grade in the class. Additional absences will result in the student being asked to withdraw from the course or be assigned a failing grade.

**Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.**
XI. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS
For example: If there are any circumstances, which require that I and/or the class adapt to your special needs, please consult with me. Circumstances include such things as a disability or a family emergency that may interfere with your completing the assignments as assigned, or meeting the due dates for assignments. The University of Kansas has supportive programs in place to assist those students who have special learning needs with successfully meeting course expectations.

Please notify me if your religious observances conflict with class or due dates for class assignments so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

XII. RECORDING AND SHARING RECORDINGS OF LECTURES
Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. On request, the instructor will usually grant permission for students to audio tape lectures, on the condition that these audio tapes are only used as a study aid by the individual making the recording. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person, whether or not that individual is enrolled in the course.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

XIII. HIPAA REGULATIONS
The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requires that any personal information that may identify a person must be removed to protect confidentiality. Confidentiality applies to both classroom discussions and to written work. Please follow these simple, yet essential guidelines:

- Always disguise the name and other personal identifying information when you speak and write about a person, following the guidelines established by HIPAA.
- If writing in great detail about a client, ask permission from the client.
- Share nothing about specific clients, agencies or other students outside of the classroom.

Any information shared with the class/instructor will be confidential, within the limits defined by the Code of Ethics and state guidelines.

Individual instructors’ syllabi should be exactly the same as in the master syllabus.

XV. INSTRUCTOR AVAILABILITY
Individual course syllabi should provide students with information on how to see and/or reach instructor.

XV. INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY
In the event of inclement weather students should call
Lawrence: the University (785) 864-SNOW, or if hearing impaired and have
TTY/TDD equipment, (800) 766-3777
Edwards Campus: (913) 897-8499
KCKCC Campus: (913) 334-1100

to determine if classes have been cancelled. Class will be held if classes have not been cancelled, and students should contact the instructor if weather or driving conditions make it impossible for them to get to class.