

Gerontology

Program Description

The curriculum is designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge necessary for careers related to gerontology. Within this framework, students are provided with a broad educational base concerning the impact of aging on individuals and cultures. The courses in the program draw upon a variety of disciplines such as management, the behavioral and social sciences, economics, political science, and the natural sciences. The gerontology core courses as well as the program electives are concerned with maximizing the application of gerontological knowledge particularly in areas of direct service, consulting, program development, management, and administration.

As the population of the United States and other parts of the world ages, the need for individuals in all aspects of society and business with knowledge of aging will only increase. Those who prepare for this change in demographics by developing an expertise relative to gerontological issues and concerns will be quite marketable as professionals. The gerontology curriculum is designed to provide students with the requisite core knowledge regarding aging individuals and the impact of this "age wave" on social, economic, and political structures.

Gerontology courses may be taken as electives in conjunction with other graduate programs.

Learning Goals for the Gerontology Program

Upon completion of the program, students should:

- Be able to demonstrate their knowledge of concepts related to healthy aging in terms of physical, psychological, economic and social science domains.
- Be able to demonstrate their understanding of theoretical approaches to healthy aging in the physical, psychological, economic and social science domains.
- Be able to apply scientific research to real world issues including program development.

Program Curriculum

The 36 credit hours required for the master of arts (M.A.) or the 51 credit hours required for the master of business administration (M.B.A.) with an emphasis in gerontology must include the following courses:

GERN 5000 Gerontology (Requisite Course)
GERN 5600 Economic Issues for Older Adults
GERN 5620 Physiology of Aging
GERN 5630 Psychology of Aging
GERN 5640 Management of Programs for Older Adults
GERN 5660 Research and Assessment in Gerontology
GERN 5670 Social Science Perspectives in Gerontology
GERN 6000 Integrated Studies in Gerontology

In addition, the student chooses elective courses offered in this major and/or from the program curricula of other majors.

If the requisite course is waived, the student must choose an elective course from this major or from the program curriculum of another major. Students pursuing dual majors who have the requisite course(s) waived will complete only the remaining required courses for the dual majors.

The required courses and electives listed in this core may be taken as directed studies, subject to the conditions stated in the Directed Studies section listed under Academic Policies and Procedures in the catalog.

Graduate Certificate in Gerontology

The certificate program in gerontology is designed to expand students' marketability and skills in their chosen profession by providing a broad educational base concerning factors related to the aging of individuals and society. The program was developed on the premise that students and professionals in a variety of disciplines and professions have the greatest potential to meet the pressing needs of the aged and our changing society, provided they are given the requisite training in the application of gerontological knowledge.

All certificate courses must be taken at Webster University. Students may pursue the certificate by itself or integrate their certificate studies with an M.A. degree program. Students enrolled in the M.A. degree program in gerontology are not eligible to receive the gerontology certificate.

The 18 credit hours required for the graduate certificate in gerontology include the following courses:

GERN 5000 Gerontology (Requisite Course)
GERN 5600 Economic Issues for Older Adults
GERN 5620 Physiology of Aging
GERN 5630 Psychology of Aging
GERN 5640 Management of Programs for Older Adults
GERN 5670 Social Science Perspectives in Gerontology

Students seeking the gerontology certificate should consult the Admission, Enrollment, Academic Policies, and Graduate Certificates sections of the catalog for information regarding application, admission, registration, and the academic policies of Webster University.

Course Descriptions

GERN 5000 Gerontology (Requisite Course) (3)

This course introduces the student to the gerontology specialty area. The course provides the student with an overview of the psychological, sociological, political, and physiological processes related to aging and the elderly. This course includes an examination of basic theoretical perspectives, problems, and the future of gerontology.

GERN 5500 Professional Seminars (1-3)

Students participate in seminars designed to examine contemporary issues in gerontology. The professional seminar supplements the core and elective courses in the area of gerontology by focusing on issues of current and special interest. Course may be repeated for credit if content differs. Graduate students may apply a maximum of 3 credit hours of these seminars as electives to meet the credit-hour requirements for graduation. This course may not be completed by directed study.

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GERN 5600 Economic Issues for Older Adults (3)

This course focuses on the economic issues relevant to middle-aged and older adults. The student examines topics related to pre- and post-retirement planning, such as financial planning, housing options, and legal concerns. Particular emphasis is placed on what gerontology specialists can do to assist middle-aged and older adults in facing later life transitions. The course includes an examination of the economic impact of the older adult on society.

GERN 5620 Physiology of Aging (3)

This course provides the student with an overview of the changes that occur in the human body as a function of age. All of the major systems within the human body are discussed, ranging from the cardiovascular system to the central nervous system. This course focuses on normal, age-related physiological changes; however, age-related dysfunctional changes are discussed. Additional emphasis is placed on the implications of physiological change on the psychological functioning of the aging individual.

GERN 5630 Psychology of Aging (3)

This course provides the student with an introduction and analysis of current knowledge and concerns related to psychological aging. It addresses the theoretical and empirical foundations relevant to the psychological study of the later part of the life span. The course is taught from an interdisciplinary perspective and focuses on topics related to perceptual, cognitive, personality, and interpersonal social development. Issues related to psychological adjustment and the topic of death and dying are examined.

GERN 5640 Management of Programs for Older Adults (3)

The student examines the theory and practices relevant to the management and administration of organizations. Particular focus is placed on organizations providing services for the elderly. The economic, political, legal, and social issues that affect these organizations are studied in the context of the effect these issues have on the administration of services. Identification of deficiencies in current programs and the proposing of alternative modes of care for the elderly are explored.

GERN 5650 Counseling for the Aged (3)

This course provides a comprehensive examination of the mental health needs of older persons and counseling-related services that help to meet some of these needs. Counseling theories and methods are discussed, with emphasis on the role of the paraprofessional counselor.

GERN 5660 Research and Assessment in Gerontology (3)

The course introduces the student to basic statistical methods, methods of research, and methods of assessment. The research aspect of the course includes the empirical research process, the deductive method, the inductive method, the survey, the field experiment, the field study, and program evaluation. In addition, the student is introduced to the basics of statistics as these apply to research and assessment. Basic research methods in gerontological administration and programming are examined and applied. This course is cross-listed with HRDV 5750.

GERN 5670 Social Science Perspectives in Gerontology (3)

The realities of the lives of older adults, viewed from a cross-cultural perspective with a concern for social issues and problems, will be the focus of this course. Ageism, homelessness, poverty, the structure of family, the meaning of community, and the role of government will all be examined. Using the tools of anthropology and sociology, we will explore variations among older adults that emerge from ethnicity, sex and gender, sexual orientation, race, nationality, and geographic origin. We will seek an understanding of the meanings that various cultures give to their aging populations and to the social consequences of those meanings.

GERN 5680 Practicum in Gerontology (3-6)

Professional training is provided by gerontological specialists in aging network, business, social service, and health care industries. Field placement is dependent upon the student's discipline or profession. A formal practicum proposal must be submitted to the program mentor before a student can register for the practicum. May be repeated to a maximum of 6 credit hours.

GERN 5690 Issues in Gerontology (3)

Current and significant issues in gerontology are examined. The course focuses on existing theories and practices, with emphasis given to new and emerging topics in the field. Course may be repeated for credit if content differs.

GERN 6000 Integrated Studies in Gerontology (6)

The student is expected to synthesize and integrate the learning experiences acquired in gerontology and to evaluate the research and current topics relative to this major. Techniques used to accomplish these goals may vary. Prerequisite: completion of all other required courses in this major.