TEACHING ABOUT AGING THROUGH THE LENS OF THE ARTS AND HUMANITIES

A RESOURCE LIST

As the field of gerontology embraces competency-based education and the AGHE Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education celebrate seven years of implementation, educators with little training or experience applying the arts/humanities to their pedagogy may be unsure of how to teach students strategies to synthesize multiple ways of knowing through the myriad forms of richness arts/humanities perspectives can provide. Similarly, humanities faculty may not immediately think of aging or the experience of being older as a useful lens through which to teach their content. The 2022 AGHE Teaching Institute explored diverse ways of connecting arts/humanities and aging education, and the organizers are pleased to share these resources for broadening how we teach and learn about aging.

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INCORPORATING RELEVANT SCHOLARSHIP INTO TEACHING HUMANITIES AND ARTS IN GERONTOLOGY CURRICULA

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While recognition of the key epistemological value of humanities and arts has been apparent since the origins of gerontology, as indicated by a paper on Shakespeare and ageing by a professor of English literature in the first ever issue of the GSA's first journal[1], the evolution of scholarship has undertaken a number of routes.

A number of key texts and position statements on humanities, arts and aging (HAA) have emerged, including Tom Cole's guides to Humanities and Aging in several editions since 1992[2], Twigg and Martin's Cultural Gerontology[3] (good introduction in the Gerontologist[4]), Freeman's exploration of humanities and ageing in history and literature[5], and a manifesto on humanities and ageing from the North American Network in Aging Studies[6].

There is a growing presence of HAA within GSA including a commitment to including HAA in gerontology curricula[7] with a call to develop a deeper strategic and engaged presence both within GSA, and to external groupings with an interest. A particular grouping of interest is the North American Network in Aging Studies (and its sister European Network in Ageing Studies) which points to the need for critical enquiry in meaning, what gerontology does as much as what gerontology is, and the incorporation of insights from postmodernism, poststructuralism, discourse analysis, governmentality, phenomenology, the sociology of the body, social studies of science and technology, and feminist, LGBT, and disability studies. As argued eloquently by Katz, from the humanities, age studies looks to

biographical, feminist, and narrative perspectives on self, memory, meaning, and wisdom, and imaginative and imaginative alternative resources and experiences in performative, artistic, fictional, transsexual, poetic, and futuristic fields[8].

One of the elements that HAA shares with many interdisciplinary scholarly areas is that of marginality, and while this has advantages and disadvantages in terms of scholarship, this potentially can be more problematic in terms of teaching., a challenge it shares with a related enterprise of medical and health humanities[9], which is how to combine the insights of humanities and arts faculty with an interest in aging with those of gerontologists with an interest in HAA approach to aging in developing and delivering a teaching curriculum. Another parallel would be the teaching of biology of aging, equally calling for expertise in biology and aging.

Perhaps what is most important in opening out this area is to a) accept that this is an important challenge to the development of curricula, b) recognize that this is an issue which is not going to be resolved overnight but is a developmental issue, c) build on existing scholarly relationships between humanities and arts faculty and gerontology faculty, and d) emphasize the opportunities for scholarship and research potentially arising from such engagement. A possible opportunity is to develop reciprocity through delivering educational modules to humanities and arts students on aging, and its place in the broader context as well as humanities and arts.

Surveying gerontology and humanities and arts faculty on their thought and practices on providing HAA education might be a useful means of integrating best practice and innovative ideas, as well as insight into perceived barriers. Equally gerontology faculty may also be qualified in areas of HAA through the course of their professional career. In addition, developing a manual of best practice in joint HAA and gerontology approaches to teaching, as well as techniques and material which supports such initiatives. Lessons may also be learnt from descriptions of integrating HA and medical scholars in the medical and health humanities[10].

[1] Draper JW. Browsing Through the Ages: Shakespeare's Attitude Towards Old Age. *Journal of Gerontology* 1946;1(1):118-26.

[2] Cole TR, Van Tassel DR, Van Tassel DD, Kastenbaum R. *Handbook of the Humanities and Aging*. Springer Publishing Company; 1992

[3] Twigg J, Martin W, editors. *Routledge handbook of cultural gerontology*. Routledge; 2015

[4] Twigg J, Martin W. The challenge of cultural gerontology. *The Gerontologist* 2015;55(3):353-9.

[5] Freeman JT. *Aging, its history and literature*. New York: Human Sciences Press; 1979.

[6] Biggs S, Lowenstein A, Hendricks J (eds). *The Need for Theory: Critical Approaches to Social Gerontology*. Amityville, NY: Baywood, 2003

[7] Achenbaum WA. The humanities and arts in the Gerontological Society of America. *The Gerontologist* 2020;60(4):591-7.

[8] Katz S. What is age studies. *Age Culture Humanities* 2014;1(1):17-23

[9] Moss H, O'Neill D. Medical humanities--serious academic pursuit or doorway to dilettantism? *Ir Med J* 2012;105(8):261-2.

[10] Shaham D, Kandel L, Gural A. Establishing a medical humanities program in Israel: challenges and solutions. The European Legacy. 2011 Jun 1;16(3):307-15.

FILM PROPOSAL: EXPLORING HOW CREATIVE CHOICES INFLUENCE AND ARE INFLUENCED BY THE CHOOSERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE WORLD

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this assignment is to identify and critically evaluate different cultural portrayals of late life romance (film, novels, poems, TV shows, etc.). [Note that the subject matter can be altered easily to fit into the content of any course.] Drawing on what students learn from such sources, they then share an idea for a film or a show that portrays late life love in a thoughtful and sensitive way (i.e., that reflects the lived experiences of older adults in non-ageism-reinforcing ways). Proposals should include a synopsis of the plot as well as a clear structure for the story's progressions (e.g., a three-act structure where Act 1 is the set up [introduction of characters and conflict], Act 2 is the conflict [conflict expands until it reaches a climax], and Act 3 is the resolution [the final aspect of the conflict and how it is resolved]).

In approximately two pages, students address the following questions:
- What genre would this be? A comedy? Drama? Romance? Horror? Documentary? Why?
- Who are the main characters? Are they representative of majority groups in the U.S. (e.g., white, heterosexual, etc.) or would you want to see diverse characteristics represented? Either way, why?
- Is this a love story/romance that starts in late life or a continuation of a long-term relationship? What differences, issues, or challenges might need to be portrayed based on this decision?
- Who are the supporting characters? Adult children? Grandkids? Friends? Co-workers/former co-workers? Strangers? How would interactions with the main characters differ depending on their relationship with supporting characters?
- What conflicts or challenges might the main characters face? How would those conflicts be resolved?
  When answering the why and how questions posed above, students should draw on their gerontology knowledge and other credible information to support their creative choices - they should think about what the film/show could accomplish as viewers watch it (e.g., will it reinforce ageist ideas? Intentionally question gender binaries or heteronormativity? Draw on examples of real people?) Relevant, credible citations should be included to support students' creative choices.

ACTIVITY INFORMATION

Type
_X_In class (activity)
_X_Online
___Take home
___In community

Difficulty
___Introductory
_X_Intermediate
_X_Advanced

ACTIVITY LEARNING GOALS (AGHE COMPETENCIES)

Following this activity, students will be able to:
- Employ the Lifespan/Lifecourse perspectives to appreciate age over time in relation:
  - To the human life cycle and stages of growth and development within the social context
  - To life transitions and adaptive resources
  - To the historical context of cohorts
  - To age and gender, race and SES within social environments
- Describe human growth and development across the lifespan/course and late life outcomes such as life satisfaction, coping and adaptation.
- Recognize normal age changes in intelligence and cognitive abilities including changes that may impact late-life functioning.
- Recognize older persons' potential for wisdom, creativity, life satisfaction, resilience, generativity, vital involvement and meaningful engagement.
- Appreciate the diversity of the older population based on:
  - Age
  - Functioning
  - Gender
  - Culture
  - Language
  - Religion
  - Immigration status
  - Sexual orientation
  - Other variables

- Assess the impact of inequality on individual and group life opportunities throughout the lifespan/course impacting late-life outcomes.
- Acknowledge and promote unique contributions older adults can make to the social environment.
- Critique and analyze assumptions, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination related to age (ageism) at both personal and public levels
- Respect cultural values and diversity.
- Synthesize biological, psychological, social, and humanities-based ways of understanding human aging.

MINIMUM/MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
No limit

TIME NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT ACTIVITY
- Two hours preparatory reading/viewing (outside of class)
- Class time for presentation and/or discussion of ideas (can be done through asynchronous discussion boards, video posts and responses, in-person conversation, etc.)

SETTING
- Can be completed in any setting; does not require in-person interaction, although discussion can be engaged in-person

MATERIALS
No specific materials are needed for this activity. Students should be familiar with course content that is to be drawn on in the activity.

PROCEDURES

Preparation
- Review this example film proposal essay: https://www.ukessays.com/essays/film-studies/film-proposal-essay-8651.php (UK Essays, 2018)
- Complete readings relevant to the focus of the course. For example, in a course or module focused on late life romantic relationships, students might read:
  - Goldman, C. (2006). Late Life Love. Minneapolis, MN: Fairview Press.
  - Gore-Gorszewska, G. (2020). "What do you mean by sex?" a qualitative analysis of traditional versus evolved meanings of sexual activity among older women and men. The Journal of Sex Research, 1-15. DOI: 10.1080/00224499.2020.1798333
  - Lustbader, W. (2001). On marriage in What's Worth Knowing, pp. 92-115. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc.
  - Rahn, A., Bennett, C., Jones, T., & Lykins, A. (2020). Happily partnered older adults' relationship-enhancing behaviours. Australian Journal on Aging, 39(suppl. 1), 30-39. DOI: 10.1111/ajag.12731

Introduction
Provide an overview of the role popular media play in forming people's perceptions of a variety of topics in our society. As DiAngelo (2018) noted when talking about how cultural norms (she focuses on white supremacy, but as Butler drew parallels between ageism and racism and sexism, the precedent is set, and you can draw the same parallels) are disseminated and perpetuated, "Those who write and direct films are our cultural narrators; the stories they tell shape our worldviews." (p. 31) The goal of this project is to have students think about how creative choices are influenced by and influence people's worldview.

Activity
Assign students the film proposal task detailed above.

Discussion/reflection
In an online, asynchronous course, have students record a video where they "pitch" their film proposal. They can then watch and respond to a certain number of classmates' pitches (2-3 classmates; I like to have them create video replies as I think it's more fun to watch their discussions than read them all).

In synchronous courses, have students "pitch" their film to the class (or break them into small groups/breakout rooms for larger classes) then solicit feedback from their classmates.

Questions to facilitate discussion/feedback (online or in-person) include:
- What do you like about your classmates' proposals?
- What concerns do you have about how aging would be portrayed in this film?
- What suggestions do you have for improving the content/story, creative choices in terms of characters or setting, etc.?
- How is (or isn't) the diversity and heterogeneity of the older adult population reflected in the proposals?

Wrap-up
Facilitate a full class discussion (synchronously in class or asynchronously via discussion board) of common themes that emerged in the proposals (instructors should highlight relevant gerontology content regarding late life romance, gendered aspects of the life course, diversity and heterogeneity among older adults, revision of perceptions of acceptable behavior/norms, and/or other topics that relate to the focus of the class or this specific activity). Discuss the role that the personal history, experience, and beliefs of cultural narrators plays in their creative choices when developing the plot and casting actors to star (or serve in supporting roles) in a film. How do films then inform societal norms and expectations (particularly related to aging)?

Have students submit a final (video or written) post summarizing the feedback they got from their classmates, what they learned from the wrap-up discussion, and thoughts on how they might modify their proposal.

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DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

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Lustbader, W. (2001). *On marriage in What's Worth Knowing*, pp. 92-115. New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc.

Rahn, A., Bennett, C., Jones, T., & Lykins, A. (2020). Happily partnered older adults' relationship-enhancing behaviours. *Australian Journal on Aging, 39*(suppl. 1), 30-39. DOI: 10.1111/ajag.12731

UKEssays. (November 2018). Film Proposal Essay. Retrieved from https://www.ukessays.com/essays/film-studies/film-proposal-essay-8651.php?vref=1

USEFUL RESOURCES

Corrigan, T. (2015). *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* (9th ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. - although this book is, unfortunately, now out of print, if you can get hold of a copy, it is an excellent overview of why and how to analyze film, useful approaches to doing so, and strategies for doing so. At just under 200 pages, including multiple sample essays, this book is a fairly quick read (and you can just read the sections that seem most relevant) to give those without training in film studies a quick introduction to the topic.

Shary, T. & McVittie N. (2016). *Fade to Gray: Aging in American Cinema.* University of Texas Press: Austin, TX.

INTERGENERATIONAL PROJECT: BUILDING CONNECTIONS VIA SOCIAL HISTORY

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ACTIVITY INFORMATION

Type: Includes in-class and take-home. Can be adapted to include community-based.

Difficulty: Introductory/intermediate (this can be adjusted as needed)

Overview: This is an intergenerational learning experience between university students and older adult learners from the community. It is a collaborative project focused on significant social issues and events from a period in history that has particular historical importance to the cohort of older adult participants (e.g. the 1960s). The students and older adults work together in small groups to analyze and reflect upon a chosen historical issue or event from that time period to explore its meaning for different age cohorts and impact on the aging experience. There are multiple face-to-face discussion meetings that represent a semester-long learning experience done in small groups that culminates in final group presentations.

Activity learning goals:
- Critique and analyze assumptions, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination related to age (ageism) at both:
    - Personal and
    - Public levels
- Respect cultural values and diversity.
- Consider heterogeneity in addressing communication styles and promoting the preferences of older persons including:
    - Cultural
    - Racial/ethnic
    - Cohort
    - SES
    - Health literacy
    - Sexual preference
    - Immigration status
    - Geographical location
- Apply social theories of aging to analyze and appreciate the experience of aging among diverse groups.
- Recognize older persons' potential for wisdom, creativity, life satisfaction, resilience, generativity, vital involvement and meaningful engagement.
- Acknowledge and promote unique contributions older adults can make to the social environment.
- Integrate humanistic and artistic understanding with other ways of understanding human aging:
    - Biological
    - Sociological
    - Psychological

Minimum/maximum number of participants: Varies. Works best with a smaller class (25 or less), along with 12+ older adults. Ideally, each small group would be comprised of two older adults and three to four university students.

Time needed to implement activity: This is a semester-long project, with take-home prep activities and in-class group work, but could easily be scaled down to comprise fewer weeks.

Setting(s): Flexible. Depending on resources and location flexibility, the project can be carried out in the classroom, in another campus location, in the community (or even virtually with a little extra creativity).

Materials: No specific materials are needed for this activity, apart from standard presentation software (such as PowerPoint) should you choose to use it during class. Throughout the project, students will draw upon course content to inform their analysis throughout, and bring items from home to share with their small group, per the discussion topic for that week.

PROCEDURES

Introduction: Students are provided with an overview of the project during the first week of class, including its structure, schedule, and expectations.

Structure: The project is broken down into the following graded components:
- o   Participation in four small-group meetings
- o   Contribution to the group project, via outside readings and activities
- o   One small group project presentation (done during the fourth meeting)
- o   Written reflection at the end

Intergenerational Meetings: Each of the four meetings involves key intergenerational collaboration, done through four in-person sessions:
- o   *Meeting 1*: Group formation, introductions, group project issue/topic selection, and an initial discussion of the topic;
- o   *Meeting 2*: Each participant brings 2-3 personal and/or cultural artifacts related to their group's topic/issue to discuss with their group members. The group discussion that day centers on these artifacts as they pertain to the topic and time period;
- o   *Meeting 3*: This discussion centers on the experience of and perspectives on the topic by different cohorts and is related to aging theories (and theories from other disciplines, if applicable). Information about key theories should be provided to the older adult learners at least a week prior to the session (although, they serve as assigned readings for the students).
- o   *Meeting 4*: All groups (including students and older adults) present their findings and conclusions about their topic/issue to the class. These are not meant to be "formal" presentations, but there will be general guidelines provided.

Final Presentations: These intergenerational presentations take place during the final meeting. The manner in which the groups structure their presentations are left to their discretion (e.g. the use of software, interactive style, simply speaking to the class, etc.). Groups are asked to present their information in a way they believe would be the most meaningful and interesting for the class. They are provided with the following prompts:

- o During your presentation, describe any key information and learnings your group discussed, but, at a minimum, please be sure to include the following information:
  - The societal significance of your topic (past, present, etc.);
  - Ways in which your topic might have been experienced by different age groups and how the process of growing older could impact one's perceptions of this topic/event;
  - Other important, noteworthy, and/or surprising revelations or types of awareness that your group discussed and analyzed;
  - What has it been like to discuss your group's topic with people from a different generation? What surprises have you encountered?

Reflection: At the conclusion of the fourth session, the older adults are asked to provide a reflection on the activity via pen and paper. The students are required to submit a reflection about the experience to the instructor via the learning management system.
- o The students respond to the following prompts in their required reflection:
  - Describe your group's process and dynamics. For example, what did the group talk about during the sessions? How did the conversation flow? Did some participants contribute differently than others?
  - Identify the course concepts you learned about this semester that were relevant to this intergenerational experience. In what ways did they relate?
  - During this experience, in what ways did you view your group's social issue from the perspective of your older adult group members?
  - What knowledge and skills from class did you use to see the issue from the older adults' perspectives?
  - To what extent, and why, do you believe it is important to have meaningful experiences with people from different generations?
  - Describe the most significant change you experienced throughout this project regarding your assumptions about older adults.
  - What are the 1-2 key takeaways from this project that will stick with you?

- o The older adults are asked to respond to the following prompts in their reflection at the end of the fourth session:
  - Looking back over this intergenerational project, what did you gain from this experience?
  - Describe the most significant change you experienced throughout this project regarding your assumptions about younger adults.
  - What are the 1-2 key takeaways from this project that will stick with you?
  - If you could do it again, is there anything you'd like to see done differently or added/removed from the project experience?
  - Additional thoughts?

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American Federation of Aging Research (2011). *Infoaging guide to theories of aging*. https://www.afar.org/imported/AFAR_INFOAGING_GUIDE_THEORIES_OF_AGING_2016.pdf
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THE BLAME GAME: DEVELOPING AWARENESS OF LIFE COURSE AGEISM THROUGH CRITICAL RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

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Activity information
Includes in-class and take-home activities

Overview
In this scalable project involving reading and writing activities, students should engage with historical and present-day media representations of generations and age cohorts—ideally, representations around a similar kind of social problem—and develop critical responses to the rhetorical use of age group labels. Media messaging about age and generational identity rely on age biases to accomplish rhetorical goals, as generational conflict is often overrepresented for political and economic gain. For example, consistent media headlines pinning blame for economic downturns on Millennials collided with the reactive "Okay, Boomer" social media trend of 2019 and 2020 (Lorenz, 2019; Meisner, 2020). Using reductive generational stereotypes to find easy explanations for complex social problems, public discourses in mainstream and social media outlets feed a sense of intergenerational conflict rather than the much-needed multigenerational collaboration needed to address large-scale social issues. Rhetoricians might recognize such arguments as examples of what Aristotle called "epideictic" rhetoric, or discourse whose primary goal is to praise or blame a person or group in a way that the audience is likely to find agreeable. The problem with epideictic rhetoric, of course, is that it doesn't really solve a problem, but rather demonstrates–and reinforces–values that already exist (Heinrichs, 2020). In this assignment, students are asked to hone their critical media literacy practices by examining the patterned ways that age bias has been circulated and maintained through a "contrived war" between generations (Gullette, 2004, p. 52). In this project, students should gain critical perspectives of such generational warfare by historicizing generational ageism as a perennial rhetorical strategy, and by examining it through a life course perspective of ageism—that is, as bias that affects people of all ages in specific social contexts (Lamb, 2021).

Activity learning goals
Through this reading, writing, discussion, and reflection activity, students will be able to:
- Develop comprehensive and meaningful concepts, definitions and measures for well-being of older adults and their families, grounded in Humanities and Arts.
- Recognize older persons' potential for wisdom, creativity, life satisfaction, resilience, generativity, vital involvement and meaningful engagement.
- Distinguish factors related to aging outcomes, both intrinsic and contextual, through critical thinking and empirical research.
- Develop a gerontological perspective through knowledge and self-reflection.
- Engage, through effective communication with older persons, their families and the community, in personal and public issues in aging.
- Engage collaboratively with others to promote integrated approaches to aging

Minimum/maximum number of participants
No limit

Time needed to implement activity
Several class meetings, depending on the number of readings assigned.

Setting(s)
Any classroom setting–preferably one in which students can sit easily in work groups.

Materials
- **Required:** A curated set of published texts from mainstream or social media sources featuring discussion of particular age groups, ideally surrounding a shared topic and representing different time periods. For example, the reading set might share technology use, literacy, or economic crises as a common thread.
- **Optional:** It may also be helpful to provide students with a guide to their critical analysis–see useful resources listed below.

Procedures
- **Preparation:** Prior to the class meeting, students may be asked to write a reflection about what they have "heard" about various social generations (Boomers, Millennials, Gen X, Gen Z, etc.) from social media or other media outlets.
- **Introduction:** Students receive an overview of the project's central goals; this can be initiated as a unit at any point in the course.

Activity
- Part 1: Analysis
  - Reading: Students should read a curated collection of nonfiction texts from mainstream media sources (newspapers, magazines, television) and/or social media trends (Twitter, Reddit, TikTok) and take notes about where they notice age groups being represented and how they reacted to those representations in their independent reading. Providing a set of guiding questions may be useful here. Those questions might include:
    - What is the central social problem this text is arguing about?
    - What age groups are being "blamed" for the problem?
    - What assumptions about age groups are writers making in order to justify the blame?
    - Did you find yourself agreeing with those assumptions?
    - Did you find the representations to be frustrating or even offensive to you?
  - Descriptive analysis: Working in small teams, students should meet to name the WHAT (how are age groups being blamed?) and the WHY (why does blaming an age group suit the writer's purpose?) about the individual textual artifacts.
  - Observing (OPTIONAL): Working in teams, students should conduct a keyword search in Google for social media, news articles, and other popular sources that reference generational language (e.g., Millennials, Gen Z, Boomer). As a team, they should assemble a collection of 3-6 additional artifacts. In their groups, they should share their findings and discuss:
    - In what contexts do these generation labels appear?
    - What kinds of arguments are they used to make?
    - Do these make similar or different kinds of arguments from the texts read previously?
  - Critical analysis: finally, groups should take a step back from describing what they see and start *questioning* the writer's choices. Again, discussion questions as a guide might be useful, such as:
    - What are the limitations of using age groups for making these arguments?
    - How might you go about testing the assumptions about age groups that these writers put forward?
    - What other choices could the writer have made to develop their argument that did not rely on blaming a particular age group?

- o Part 2: Synthesis
    - ▪ Group synthesis: Then, collaborative groups should begin to develop a working answer to the question: *What hypothesis can we develop about how age groups are used to help define, explain, or resolve arguments about social problems?*
    - ▪ Presentation: Groups should then present their conclusions to the class.

Wrap-Up: Post-project written reflections can invite students to think about what they learned about representations of age and age bias over the life course. How do they feel about "blaming" age groups for social problems now?

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Lamb, E. G. 2021. Not your grandmother's ageism: Ageism across the life course. *Cultural perspectives on aging: A different approach to old age and aging.* De Gruyter, pp. 65-80.
Meisner, Brad A. 2020. Are you OK, Boomer? Intensification of ageism and intergenerational tensions on social media amid COVID-19. *Leisure Sciences 34*(1-2): 56-61.

Useful resources
- Carroll, L.B. 2010. Backpacks vs. briefcases: Steps toward rhetorical analysis. *Writing Spaces*. Colorado State UP, pp. 45-58.
    This chapter, appropriate for even introductory-level students, provides a basic overview of rhetorical analysis as a method of reading texts critically and determining the writer's goals–and evaluating the means by which they attempt to achieve their goals.
- Sample set of curated artifacts:
    Generational literacies and societal decline
        Meyrat, A. 18 Apr. 2022. **The dumbest generation wallows in mediocrity and self-pity**. *The Federalist.*

        Munger, K. 5 May 2018. **Old people can't open new tabs**. *The outline*.

        Sheils, M. 8 Dec. 1975. Why Johnny can't write. *Newsweek.*

For the collaborative aspects of this work, mind-mapping tools such as JamBoard and Padlet–or simply using sticky notes or dry erase boards–can be useful for organizing this collective thinking.

USING STORYTELLING IN AGING COURSES:
MAKING AGE-FRIENDLY EDUCATION MORE DEMENTIA-INCLUSIVE

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OVERVIEW

Changing age demographics are reshaping societies and challenging institutions of higher education to consider how they can respond to aging populations through new approaches to teaching, research, and community engagement (Montepare, 2019; Talmage, Mark, Slowey, & Knopf, 2016). The Age-Friendly University (AFU) initiative, and its set of ten principles, established by Dublin City University (Ireland) offers a guiding framework for how higher education can respond to aging populations through age-inclusive programs, practices, and partnerships (O'Kelly, 2015). In short, age-friendly institutions encourage the participation of older adults in core campus activities; promote lifelong learning, aging education, and intergenerational exchange; and support aging-focused research and community dialogue on aging issues.

Advocates of age-friendly efforts have argued that such efforts should also consider how they can be dementia-inclusive (Turner & Morken, 2016). That is, age-friendly efforts may overlook the specific needs of people experiencing cognitive changes, and call for being mindful of providing educational opportunities for these older adults (Montepare & Pandolfi, 2019). The need for bridging age-friendly and dementia-inclusive efforts is even more pressing when one considers the dramatic predicted rise in the incidence of dementia as populations age (CDC, 2018).

Using storytelling as the foundation, this activity offers an opportunity to incorporate a teaching and learning experience in an aging class that engages students with older adults living with dementia. More specifically, this activity uses the TimeSlips program developed by Ann Basting, which is a creative, collaborative storytelling technique designed to support social connections and cognitive engagement in older adults experiencing cognitive impairment (Fritsch, et al., 2009).

ACTIVITY INFORMATION

Type
_X_In class (activity)
___Online
___Take home
_X_In community

Difficulty
___Introductory
_X_Intermediate
_X_Advanced

ACTIVITY LEARNING GOALS

Following this activity, students will be able to:

- Describe what dementia entails and its associated communication challenges.
- Engage with individuals experiencing dementia through conversation and the use of storytelling.
- Discuss the creative, personal, and collective benefits of storytelling.

ACADEMY FOR GERONTOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION (AGHE) COMPETENCIES

CATEGORY I - Foundational Competencies to All Fields of Gerontology, 1.5 THE HUMANITIES AND AGING - Develop comprehensive and meaningful concepts, definitions and measures for well-being of older adults and their families, grounded in Humanities and Arts.

CATEGORY II - Interactional Competencies Across Fields of Gerontology, II.3 COMMUNICATION WITH AND ON BEHALF OF OLDER PERSONS - Engage, through effective communication older persons, their families and the community, in personal and public issues in aging.

CATEGORY III - Contextual Competencies Across Fields of Gerontology, III.5 ARTS AND HUMANITIES Promote engagement of older people in the arts and humanities.

MINIMUM/MAXIMUM NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

- 10 to 20 students
- 8 older adults

TIME NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT ACTIVITY
Depending on class size, each student team (2 members) should be able to complete at least 1 storytelling session. Including a practice session run by the instructor, this would entail approximately 5 to 10 class sessions. In a class of 20 students, sessions would be limited to 10 students and 8 older adults so that 2 students could lead the session while other students are paired with an older adult to assist with the activity. During designated classes for these 10 students, the other 10 students may be given independent aging-focused work to complete.

SETTING
A comfortable, quiet space (such as an activity room) where participants can sit in a semi-circle around the session leaders.

MATERIALS
- Pictures to prompt stories
- An easel with a flip chart of paper and large tip markers that one team leader can use to record responses as the other leader presents the story prompts and speaks with participants to build the story.
- Questions for leaders to prompt stories, as well as printed questions for students to prompt older participants who may have hearing or communication difficulties. Questions may include core story building questions (e.g., Where does this take place? What should we name the people? What are the people doing? What are they saying? What are they feeling? What will happen next? What is a good title?) along with questions that capture unique elements of the picture prompt.

PROCEDURES

Classes Prior to Activity: Students complete TimeSlips training as they are learning about related aging concepts. Prior to the storytelling sessions, students meet the older participants and engage in an activity to get to know them.

Activity: Students complete the online [TimeSlips](#) training program during the first part of the semester, during which time they are also learning about aging concepts including cognitive and related changes associated with dementia. During the second part of the semester students meet during designated class sessions with a group of older adults diagnosed with dementia who were residents of an affiliated continuing care community. Student teams (of 2) take turns leading the storytelling activity during different sessions, while other students are paired with an older adult to assist with the activity. Stories are recorded during the session on flip charts and afterwards in digital files so that they can be compiled and shared in a final story book prepared by students.

During each session – Student teams (of 2) lead, record, and read back the stories. Other students are paired with older participants to engage with them and encourage their participation.

Discussion/Reflection: After each session, the students and instructor meet to discuss the storytelling experience along with interaction and communication challenges and strategies. In addition to discussing what worked well during the session (e.g., particular pictures, prompts, etc.), along with challenges experienced during the session (e.g., non-participation, communication difficulties) and how they might be addressed in subsequent sessions.

Assessment: Pre- and post-course surveys may be used to assess changes in students' knowledge using the Alzheimer's Disease Knowledge Scale (ADKS, Carpenter, et al., 2009). As well, changes in attitudes and concerns about dementia may be assessed with a variety of measures, including both quantitative and qualitative means. For example, quantitative measures may include 7-point Likert scale responses to statements such as *Does having dementia causes a great deal of suffering for a person? Can a person with dementia/Alzheimer's disease experience enjoyment in daily life? How concerned are you about developing dementia when you are older? Do you think you have accurate knowledge about dementia?* Qualitative measures may include word generation items (e.g., *What three words would you use to describe what it's like to have dementia?*) or sentence completion strategies (e.g., *The thing that would concern me most about developing dementia when I am older is…; If I developed dementia when I am older, one thing I would wish for how I am treated by others is…*). Feedback from staff who were present during the sessions may also be gathered to gain information about how the activity was received by residents.

REFERENCES
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CDC Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018, September 18). U.S. burden of Alzheimer's disease, related dementias to double by 2060. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2018/p0920-alzheimers-burden-double-2060.html
Fritsch, T., Kwak, J., Grant, S., Lang, J., Montgomery, R., Basting, A. (2009). Impact of Timeslips, a creative expression intervention program, on nursing home residents with dementia and their caregivers, The Gerontologist, 49, 117–127.
Montepare, J.M., & Pandolfi, G. (2020, in press) Students' dementia experience, knowledge, and concern: An opportunity for Age-Friendly University (AFU) programming. Gerontology & Geriatrics Education.
Talmage, C. A., Mark, R., Slowey, M., & Knopf, R. C. (2016). Age friendly universities and engagement with older people: Moving from principles to practice. International Journal of Lifelong Education, 35(5), 537–554. doi:10.1080/02601370.2016.1224040

OTHER STORYTELLING ACTIVITIES

- Read personal essays, memoirs, and narratives to fuel discussions.
- Explore StoryCorps - Listen together and discuss stories, arrange to record your own stories about aging or conversations between generations.
- Write and share stories around lifespan issues.
- Use stories as research tools (see Narrative Gerontology in Research and Practice (2013) Kate de Medeiros PhD).
- Invite researchers and writers to class to speak about their work and use of stories to explore personal development.
- Organize an intergenerational book club.

Examples of Picture Prompts

Danielle Guenther Photography   Irina Danielyan

AGHE/GSA RESOURCE LINKS

75+ Resources for Gerontology Education

This collection of 75+ teaching resources represents a broad range of gerontology-based materials (e.g., videos, teaching tips, webinars, research, syllabi, open education resources) to assist both new and seasoned gerontology educators. **Download PDF**

Standards and Guidelines for Gerontology and Geriatrics, 7th Edition

The AGHE *Gerontology and Geriatrics Curricular Standards and Guidelines in Higher Education* provides an integral resource for colleges and universities implementing and revising programs in liberal arts, the sciences, and health professions education. The evolution of the field of aging with a focus on both gerontology and geriatrics has demanded increased breadth and depth of gerontology and geriatrics content. Through AGHE's leadership, gerontology education is now competency-based, as the health professions programs have been for years. All chapters in the 7th edition have been comprehensively rewritten to include the standards and guidelines for competency-based education (CBE), including the addition of curricular matrices in the appendices for both gerontology and health professions programs. This publication offers tools to identify and implement CBE in programs and to develop students' skills and abilities needed in our workforce.

To obtain a copy of the seventh edition of the *AGHE Standards and Guidelines for Gerontology and Geriatrics*, visit our **online store.**

Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education

The **AGHE Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education** were adopted on November 20, 2014, after an Association-wide multi-year effort of gathering and integrating feedback to build consensus. The effort was led by the AGHE Competency Workgroup and was built upon the work of Wendt, Peterson and Douglas (1993) as well as current literature in foundations of gerontology and competency-based education. The AGHE Gerontology Competencies for Undergraduate and Graduate Education are a resource for competency-based gerontology education with liberal arts, professional and/or scientific program orientations. The framework for the competencies encourages gerontology education programs to maintain their specific orientation (e.g., liberal arts), and utilize the competencies with flexibility and creativity. The competencies may be applied to gerontology programs with majors, minors and certificate programs at the associate, undergraduate and/or master's level. Please find a mapping tool **here**.

GSA Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Gerontology "Humanities, arts, and cultural gerontology scholars focusing on issues of aging are scattered across all academic disciplines. GSA's Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Gerontology Advisory Panel seeks to cultivate a vibrant, supportive community that integrates these scholars so that they can work together and learn from each other."

Journal of Aging, Humanities, and the Arts "The Journal of Aging, Humanities, & the Arts (JAHA) is the official publication of the Humanities & Arts Committee of GSA. The H & A Committee and the Editorial Board of JAHA foster a dialogue between the humanities and arts and the bio-medical, psychological, behavioral, and social sciences to challenge stereotypes, further our understanding of the aging process, and provide creative approaches to the exploration of issues pertaining to aging. Such interdisciplinary inquiry can emerge in the following ways (1) Language and Communication; (2) Literary Production, Reception, and Analysis; (3) Biography, Autobiography and Memoirs; (4) Human Beliefs and Spiritual Values; (5) Art, Music and Dance Therapy with Older Adults; (6) Narrative Medicine in Interactions with Older Adults and their Families (7) Issues of Death and Dying; (8) Creativity and Aging and (9) Social Construction of Age.

Humanities and the Arts articles in the Gerontologist "The featured articles below are selected from the Humanities and the Arts (H&A) Committee of The Gerontological Society of America. They represent papers that H&A; see as providing an especially significant contribution to the field of gerontology, specifically in humanities and the arts. To access articles like these and more, H&A; scholars should consider joining **The Gerontological Society of America**, the oldest and largest interdisciplinary organization devoted to research, education, and practice in the field of aging."

The Arts, Health, and Aging in America: 2005–2015
Gay Hannah, Linda Noelker & Bienvenu

Thinking Differently About Aging: Changing Attitudes Through the Humanities
Leni Marshall

The Challenge of Cultural Gerontology
Julia Twigg & Wendy Martin

"There's No Correspondence Between Me and My Age": Old Age in Theresia Walser's King Kong's Daughters
Sinead Crow

The Loneliness of the Aging in Two Contemporary Novels
Maricel Oró-Piqueras

Sir James Reid and the Death of Queen Victoria: An Early Model for End-of-Life Care
Robert C. Abrams

Critical Perspectives on Successful Aging: Does It "Appeal More Than It Illuminates"?
Stephen Katz & Toni Calasanti

"Who "Owns" Gerontology? The Importance of Thinking Beyond the Sciences
De Medeiros

What's the Point of Aging? Does Philosophy Make a Difference?
Thomas Cole

Dementia as a Cultural Metaphor
Hannah Zelig