

A CULTURAL CRITIQUE OF OUR AGING WORLD



Graeme MacKay, *The Hamilton Spectator*

**University College Maastricht
2017-2018, period 2
HUM3050**

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Course description

Headlines everywhere tell us that ours is a graying world and that population aging will be a defining influence on our twenty-first century, radically affecting public health and national economies. According to the World Economic Forum, the proportion of people aged 60 and over is predicted to rise dramatically in the decades ahead, from 11% (760 million) in 2011, to 22% (2 billion) by 2050. Even more pronounced, the share of those 80-plus, which in 2011 was 1.6% of the world population (110 million), is expected to reach 4% (400 million) by 2050. Thus, while the total population will increase by 2 billion between 2010 and 2050, 65% (1.3 billion) of those increases will come within the older population.

These demographic predictions – the result of the desirable trends of declining mortality and increasing longevity – are typically accompanied by dire warnings of the challenges ahead: unsustainable pension systems which will encumber younger generations, the critical need for more caregivers and more resources to care for the increasing numbers of those who are frail and dependent, concerns about maintaining technological progress and competitive workforces with an aging labor force, etc. Rarely, if ever, are such numbers presented in terms of the possible benefits that population aging might bring, such as in experienced leadership, informal caregiving, and a more flexible labor force less hampered by child care. Also often excluded from these projections is any sense of what life is actually like for the diverse millions of people who grow into old age. How do we know what these numbers will mean for our economies, our social structures, our loved ones, and ourselves?

To begin to address that question, we need to understand better what it means to grow old in the twenty-first century and how this meaning may have developed or changed over the course of history or be differently shaped by national and transnational cultures. This, then, will form the heart of the inquiry we will make in this course. We will explore what aging is and means from different disciplinary, historical and (trans)national perspectives, exploring as we do so the concerns raised about a graying society and the causes and consequences of ageism, which is prejudice or discrimination based upon a person's age.

Aging is a topic we all have a stake in. On one level, this stake is very personal. If we live the long lives we desire, we will all become old, whether or not the label “old” is one we fear or desire. On a larger scale, the concerns of population aging cross every discipline and ageism pervades all parts of our social and personal lives, even when we don't recognize it. Whatever occupation you pursue, a deeper understanding of aging will have relevance. This course will prepare you to engage critically in the current and future debates about our aging world and to interrogate your hopes and fears for your own aging experiences.

Course objectives

- To enable students to distinguish between the realistic concerns and the alarmist hype surrounding global population aging, and to think practically about what these demographic changes will mean for their own life experiences.
- To introduce students to how age functions as an identity category used to justify inequalities and differences of power, i.e., to both the causes and consequences of ageism.
- To understand how age as an identity category intersects with other categories like gender, sexuality, disability, and ethnicity.

- To recognize ageist discourses and practices and to reflect on their personal attitude towards age.
- To enable students to distinguish between multiple, disciplinarily-influenced ways of defining “age” including chronologically, functionally, subjectively, and culturally.
- To prepare students to recognize how the bodily, biological changes of aging are understood through and influenced by cultural experiences and representations.
- To understand and be capable of recognizing different methods that are implemented in aging research, such as visual methods, narrative and biographical methods, and ethnographic approaches.
- To be able to take a position in the debate and talk/write about it eloquently and nuanced.

Attendance

Class-room presence is compulsory. The minimum attendance requirement is 85%. As the course will have 12 tutorial group meetings and 4 lectures, you are allowed to miss 2 tutorial meetings and 1 lecture (this is not the rule but the exception and you have to contact your tutor in advance with a plausible explanation for your absence!). As the lectures will take place at the same day as one of the tutorial meetings (Monday meetings) you will easily miss both in case you are ill or something unexpected happens. Take this into consideration. In case you have not missed more than 30% of the course and were able to provide legitimation for your absence, you may ask for an extra assignment. This request has to be handed in at the office of student affairs not later than 10 days after the course is finished. You will have to answer to the learning goals formulated by your group in written form for the meetings you missed.

Resit

Students who fulfilled the attendance requirements (or are eligible to do an extra assignment) and did present in class, may do a resit in case they fail the final paper. The resit will consist of re-writing the paper, following the comments you received from your tutor to improve your writing.

Assessment

Your assessment will be based on the following aspects:

1. **Class room participation and performance as discussion leader (20%).**

Excellent participation requires you to be present and actively participating in the group discussions at all times; this implies having read all obligatory readings, having prepared answers to the learning goals and problem statement, being able to provide a summary of main elements from the readings’ argumentation, etc.

An excellent performance as chair or discussion leader implies:

- That you read all readings before the pre-discussion of the assignment and prepare possible problem statements and learning goals,
- That you look up all the difficult words or phrasings of the assignment description before the pre-discussion,

- That you lead the pre-discussion and make sure an appropriate problem statement and relevant learning goals result from the discussion,
 - That you prepare the post-discussion by identifying and studying difficult passages of the text and formulating additional questions to the learning goals,
 - That you make sure that the post-discussion covers the readings in their entirety instead of that it just provides answers to the learning goals (i.e., make sure that the argumentation of the individual texts are reconstructed during the post-discussion),
 - That you lead the post-discussion in an exemplary way by making sure that nobody dominates the discussion, participants treat each other with respect, and everybody gets the opportunity to contribute to his or her capability.
2. A 10-minute **PowerPoint/Prezi presentation** in class (20%). You will find the instructions for the presentation in Appendix 1.

The following criteria will be used to assess your presentation:

<p>SCOPE AND ANALYSIS (max. 4 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the case study well focused? - Is the case study analyzed in relation to the theories and concepts of the assignment under discussion? - Is the analysis convincing and well-developed?
<p>ARGUMENTATION AND STRUCTURE (max. 4 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the lines of argumentation worked out in sufficient detail? - Is the line of argumentation coherent? - Is it clear what the presentation is about? - Does the presentation have a clear structure, i.e., delineable introduction, body, and conclusion? - Are there clear references to the sources used?
<p>PRESENTATIONS SKILLS (max. 2 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the presenter keep your attention and stimulate you to critically reflect on the subject matter? - Is the language used grammatically correct and understandable? - Is the presentation well delivered (e.g., speed and volume of speech, general posture and positioning towards the audience)? - Does the presenter make efficient use of visual aids? - Does the presenter engage with the audience, and respond to questions and comments in a pleasant and professional way? - Time management?

3. A **final paper** (60%). You will find the instructions for the final paper in Appendix 2. The deadline of the final essay is Friday December 15, 2017, 8PM. You are expected to upload a soft copy on SafeAssign as well as hand in a hard copy in the special mailbox of UCM.

The following criteria will be used to assess your final paper:

<p>DEPTH AND BREADTH OF KNOWLEDGE DEMONSTRATED (max. 3 points)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the paper show a sufficient understanding of the course material? - Does the student understand the readings and manage to integrate them in a convincing way? - Are the new sources relevant and up to date? - Does the student sufficiently go beyond listed resources to carry out independent research? - Does the transcription of the interview demonstrate the capability of the student to work independently? - Is the interview conducted properly and the analysis sufficiently developed?
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QUALITY OF THINKING IN EVIDENCE (max. 4 points)

- Are the ideas, theories and examples well integrated to provide a convincing argumentation and conclusion?
- Is the line of argumentation coherent and consistent?
- Are theory and practice sufficiently put into dialogue?
- Does the analysis of the interview support the claims being made?

QUALITY OF COMMUNICATION (max. 2 points)

- Is the paper structured logically?
- Is the English sufficiently proficient (including grammatically correct language use, no spelling mistakes, adherence to word limit and an appropriate academic tone)?

CONFORMANCE TO FORMATTING GUIDELINES AND REFERENCING STANDARDS (max. 1 points)

- Do the in-text references and reference list meet the APA guidelines?
- Is there a balanced use of paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting sources?
- Is the text formatted as an academic paper?

Literature

The readings from the following books are available in the reading room at UCM:

Twigg, J. and Martin, W. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*. New York: Routledge.

Cruikshank, M. (2013, third edition). *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Gullette, M.M. (2004). *Aged by Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gullette, M.M. (2011). *Agewise: Fighting the New Ageism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gilleard, C., and Higgs, P. (2013). *Ageing, Corporeality and Embodiment*. London: Anthem Press.

Hughes, J.C., Louw, S.J., and Sabat, S.R. (Eds.)(2006). *Dementia: Mind, Meaning, and the Person*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Articles from journals, such as *Journal of Aging Studies*, *The Gerontologist*, and *Ageing & Society* are available online through UM library. All other texts will be made available on Eleum to the students by the tutor. The readings are presented in the preferred order they should be read (instead of alphabetically).

Lectures

This course includes 4 lectures (see schedule below) in which colleagues present their work in the field of aging studies. Presence at the lectures is compulsory (not only because you will learn from them but also as a courtesy to the lecturers). The remaining time slot in week 6 is reserved for a Q&A session regarding the final paper. During the first lecture time slot of the course, we will watch a few documentary short films on aging and later life to set the stage.

Course development

This course is developed by Prof. Dr. Aagje Swinnen (a.swinnen@maastrichtuniversity.nl), Center for Gender and Diversity, FASoS) in 2016 with input from Dr. Erin Gentry Lamb (Hiram College).

Week 1	Screening of a few documentary short films on aging and later life	Tutorial 1: Course Introduction Pre-discussion 1: Deconstructing Fear of Population Aging	Tutorial 2: Post-Discussion 1: Deconstructing Fear of Population Aging Pre-discussion 2: The Complexities of Ageism
Week 2	Lecture 1: Representations of Aging in Contemporary Film, Photography and Television (Prof. Dr. Aagje Swinnen)	Tutorial 3: Post-discussion 2: The Complexities of Ageism Pre-discussion 3: Cultural Aging and the Performativity of Age	Tutorial 4: Post-discussion 3: Cultural Aging and the Performativity of Age Pre-Discussion 4: “(Un)Successful” Aging and Embodiment
Week 3	Lecture 2: Person-Centered Approaches to Dementia Care (Dr. Ruud Hendriks or Dr. Ike Kamphof)	Tutorial 5: Post-Discussion 4: “(Un)Successful” Aging and Embodiment Pre-Discussion 5: Personhood in Dementia	Tutorial 6: Post-Discussion 5: Personhood in Dementia Pre-Discussion 6: New Visibilities of Aging in Popular Culture
Week 4	Lecture 3: Linguistic Strategies of Belonging in Nursing Homes (Jolien Clijssen)	Tutorial 7: Post-Discussion 6: New Visibilities of Aging in Popular Culture Pre-Discussion 7: The History of Old Age in “Western” Cultures	Tutorial 8: Post-Discussion 7: The History of Old Age in “Western” Cultures Pre-Discussion 8: Aging and Globalization
Week 5	Lecture 4: Becoming Who You Are: On Humanistic Gerontology (Dr. Hanne Laceulle)	Tutorial 9: Post-Discussion 8: Aging and Globalization Pre-Discussion 9: Spaces of Aging and the Meaning of Home	Tutorial 10: Post-Discussion 9: Spaces of Aging and the Meaning of Home Pre-Discussion 10: Prolongevity and Biogerontology
Week 6	Q&A session in relation to the final paper	Tutorial 11: Post-Discussion 10: Prolongevity and Biogerontology Pre-Discussion 11: Creativity and Self- Realization in Later Life	Tutorial 12: Post-Discussion 11: Creativity and Self- Realization in Later Life Course Evaluation
Week 7 EXAM WEEK			Deadline Paper submission Dec 15

SCHEDULE 2017-2018

ASSIGNMENT 1: DECONSTRUCTING FEAR OF POPULATION AGING



“Population aging” (or “demographic aging”) refers to a shift in the distribution of a country’s population towards a larger proportion of older people compared to the proportion of children as a result of declining mortality and fertility levels. The increase of the human life expectancy in combination with women’s choice to have less children causes the median age of countries to increase rapidly.

Take a look at and compare two public videos on Youtube that intend to explain the phenomenon of population aging in a few minutes. The first video is “Global Aging” by the International Monetary Fund (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ukNFMeZvcc>). The second video is “European Economy Explained – Going further together – The Ageing Population” by the European Commission: (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zISQEpG1AcQ>). Ask yourself:

- which statistics are presented in the videos,
- how older people are positioned in the videos,
- how younger people are positioned in the videos,
- how the viewer is positioned in the videos,
- what narratives the videos convey,
- how the videos differ aesthetically (cf. soundtrack, colors, visual metaphors,...).

After having watched the videos, you will probably also be able to explain what the cartoon shown above is commenting on or making fun of.

Presentations of numbers are never “innocent.” They are inscribed in narratives that carry certain ideologies. Could you explain and elaborate on the following quotes from the readings for assignment 1?

On their own, statistical predictions can mean very little. However, they acquire their alarmist hue when inserted into the context of discussions about healthcare, pensions, social security, retirement, taxes and intergenerational relations. (Katz 1992: 204)

Words and phrases such as “epidemic,” “onslaught,” “tsunami,” and “time bomb” denigrate old women and men. Instead of being seen in multiple roles or as having diverse economic needs, they are caricatured as parasites, “living too long, consuming

too many societal resources, and robbing the young,” a perception that justifies cuts in their benefits (Estes, “Critical Gerontology,” 29). This viewpoint falsely assumes that young families and children are directly harmed by spending on the elderly. (Cruikshank 2013: 29-30)

Stephen Katz and Margaret Cruikshank, amongst others, have shed critical light on the way population aging is framed and to what end. They provide possible explanations for where the fear of aging comes from and how it impacts the world we live in.

Readings

Cruikshank, M. (2013). “Fear of an Aging Population.” In: *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging* (pp. 25-34). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Katz, S. (1992). “Alarmist Demography: Power, Knowledge, and the Elderly Population.” *Journal of Aging Studies*, 6(3), 203-225.

ASSIGNMENT 2: THE COMPLEXITIES OF AGEISM

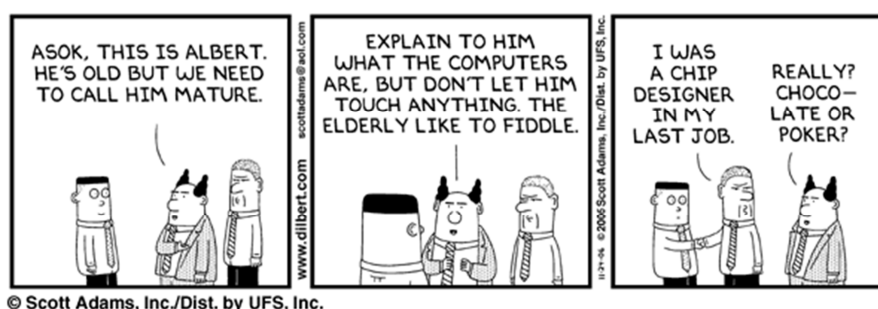
Please, read the testimony of a woman who recounts her experiences with the National Health Service of England (NHS) below (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7850907.stm>). According to research published by the charity Help the Aged, many geriatricians, affiliated with the British Geriatrics Society, believe that the NHS is institutionally ageist.

Jean: “I was told to go private”

Jean Austin went to see her GP about problems with her foot which had been bothering her for about 18 months, and was beginning to affect her job as a librarian. She said: “My GP simply put it down to age. When I challenged him, he told me to wear sensible shoes – or ‘treat’ myself to a private consultation as a retirement present. His attitude was: ‘Look at your age – you’re coming up to 60.’ I was about to leave his office when something sparked inside me. I thought: I’m not taking this. I’m not a forceful person, but on this occasion something made me protest. When I did, he agreed to an x-ray which showed a broken bone. The specialist who dealt with me said it was a very nasty break which hadn’t healed properly, and he took the bone out. It’s been fine ever since. Mine wasn’t a life-and-death case, but it was important to me. I go to the gym twice a week and I intend to remain active.”

The website of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (<https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/litigation/selected/adea.cfm>) lists pending and resolved cases under the Age Discrimination Employment Act (ADEA). This is one resolved case from 2012:

Kelley Drye & Warren: (S.D. N.Y.) resolved 4/11/12 by New York District Office – The Commission alleged that Kelley Drye & Warren, a law firm with over 300 attorneys, had a system in which attorneys who practiced law after turning 70 years of age received dramatically reduced compensation compared to similarly productive younger attorneys solely because of their age. The EEOC further charged that Defendant unlawfully retaliated against an attorney who had practiced law at the firm for over 40 years, by further reducing his compensation after he complained about this discriminatory policy and filed a charge with the EEOC. Case settled for \$574,000 for one attorney who continued to practice at the firm after he turned 70 and end of policy requiring partners to give up equity in firm once reached 70 years old.



Discuss both case studies and the cartoon. Could you think of other forms of “age discrimination” or “ageism”? What are the similarities and differences between ageism and

other forms of discrimination, such as racism, sexism, and ableism? How is age discrimination related to the stereotypification of specific age groups?

Social inequalities emerge from relations between groups of people in which the privileges of one group are entwined with the disadvantages of another. In order to study the intersections of age-related inequities with other discriminations (based on, for instance, class and sexuality), Toni Calasanti and Neal King (2015) propose to further develop Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw was the first to systematically point out the intersection of race and gender in reference to violence against women of color) and implement it in cultural gerontology.

It is not as self-evident as it may seem to distinguish between ageist and non-ageist speech, behaviour, images, social practices, etc. Nikolas Coupland and Justine Coupland (1993) propose a discursive approach to accounts of ageism to show how complex the attributions of the labels ageist and anti-ageist to situated talk in health care settings really is. They distinguish between "ageist discourse" and "discourses of ageism":

[...] we consider how the everyday talk of older people can itself be taken to reproduce ageist assumptions (in this case, about health-in-aging) and how such talk can become a focus for anti-ageist conversational work by others (in this case, in what is said by doctors in medical consultations). What this implies is that we feel there is a need to investigate the relationship between ageist **discourse** (the forms of talk and ways of meaning to which the ascription 'ageist' is locally applied) and **discourses of ageism** (the forms of talk and ways of meaning that negotiate rights, obligations and opportunities in the context of an attribution of ageist practice). In approaching discourse and ageism in this way, we loosen the obligation upon researchers to evidence and to defend their own moral judgments about the desirability or problem-status of specific linguistic or other behaviors. We shift research attention onto how individuals and groups **themselves** represent and respond to moral and political evaluations in specific cases. Discursive accounts of ageism can then be seen as attempts at social influence and change at the micro level. (Coupland and Coupland 1993: 280)

Readings

Gullette, M.M. (2011). "The Eskimo on the Ice Floe." In: *Agewise: Fighting the New Ageism in America* (pp. 21-41), Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Cruikshank, M. (2013). "Ageism." In: *Learning to Be Old: Gender, Culture, and Aging* (pp. 137-160). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Calasanti, T., and King, N. (2015). "Intersectionality and age." In: Twigg, J. and Martin, W., *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 193-200). New York: Routledge.

Coupland, N., and Coupland, J. (1993). "Discourses of Ageism and Anti-Ageism." *Journal of Aging Studies*, 7(3), 279-301.

ASSIGNMENT 3: CULTURAL AGING AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF AGE

Cultural gerontology and humanistic aging studies emerged from the cultural turn in the social sciences and the humanities. One of characteristics of the cultural turn is, according to Julia Twigg and Wendy Martin, the recognition that “culture is constitutive of social relations and identities” (2014: 353). From this the question follows how we are “aged by culture” and how “age identities” are constituted.

We are all (often unconsciously) familiar with conceptualizations of age in terms of chronology (the number of years that you have lived – think of your birthday), demography (e.g., population aging cf. assignment 1), and functionality (a person’s physical or functional capacity). However, we tend to overlook the ways in which we are “aged by culture.” Age critic Margaret Gullette was the first to draw attention to “cultural aging” and its consequences. She distinguishes between “decline” and “progress” narratives that accompany different stages of the life course. Do you recognize references to these narratives in the following image?



Are you already familiar with Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity (cf. courses Crucial Differences in the 21st Century and Cultural Studies I)? Butler theorized gender in terms of “doing” rather than of “being.” From the moment we are born, we learn gender scripts. Through the reiteration and embodiment of these behavioural scripts, gender identities emerge. Scholars in aging applied Butler’s theory to aging. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What could it mean to “do your age”?
- What are the scripts that go along with your specific chronological age?
- And, what are the repercussions if one refuses or is unable to perform hegemonic aging scripts?

Many birthday cards play with the notion of “not acting one’s age,” as in the examples below. How do text and image interact in these examples and which age (and gender) scripts can you detect?



Readings

Gullette, M. (2015). "Aged by Culture." In: Twigg, J. and Martin, W., *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 21-28). New York: Routledge.

Twigg, J., and Martin, W. (2014, first published online Jun 28). "The Challenge of Cultural Gerontology." *The Gerontologist*, 55(3), 353-359.

Basting, A. (1998). "Acting Your Age: Performance and Performativity in an Aging Society." In: *The Stages of Age: Performing Age in Contemporary American Culture* (pp. 6-10). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Swinnen, A. (2016). "The Performativity of Age." In: Wynants, M., *Age: From the Anatomy of Life to the Architecture of Living* (pp. 48-56). Brussels: Brussels University Press. (→ Take also a look at clips from *Benidorm Bastards* or its American spin-off *Betty White's Off Their Rockers* that are uploaded on Youtube.)

ASSIGNMENT 4: “(UN)SUCCESSFUL” AGING AND EMBODIMENT



“Successful Aging – it’s your choice!”



“Age 72. What’s your excuse?!”

Starting from the assumption that we are “aged by culture,” does not imply that cultural gerontologists and humanistic aging studies scholars overlook the significance of aging as a bodily affair. As Emmanuelle Tulle writes in the *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology*:

It seems obvious to state that becoming and being old has a physical component. However, how we describe this component, the importance we attribute to it to explain other aspects of ageing, brings the bodily aspect of ageing into a different realm, that of the social and the cultural. It also makes bodily ageing amenable to critical analysis and theorising. (2015: 125)

The body is at the center of how aging is perceived, assessed, organized, and lived. You have already read that age performances are embodied through the reiteration of behavioural scripts. And, you have also learned that the changing status of the aging body is a cause of concern not only for policy makers but for individuals as well.

The discourse of “successful,” “active,” or “positive” aging is entwined with a very specific disciplinary bodily regime for the so-called third age. In order to be “successful,” older persons are supposed to take responsibility over their health and fitness. This is what the captions below the photographs above seem to convey. What happens if you do not manage to live up to this ideal and become ill and in need of care?

Decay, disease, and impurity that embody disgust are relegated to the category of the so-called “fourth age.” The dichotomy between third and fourth age (or between young old and old old people, or between independent self-serving older individuals and dependent so-called miserable institutionalized older persons) is strongly contested. Gilleard and Higgs propose to examine the separation of third and fourth age through the lens of Kristeva’s concept of “abjection.” They write:

Abjection for Kristeva [...] is not a position that is devoid of power. Besides being a threat to the agency and identity of the sufferer, abjection can pose an equal threat to the dominant social order. Not simply a pitiable position made harsher by the pitiless exclusion of the abject body, abjection has the power of ‘transgression’, a capacity to destabilize the cultural order that authorizes and regulates its exclusion. Kristeva does not treat abjection primarily as a social condition of class oppression, and for her, the

transgressive potential of abjection does not lie within the radical potential of an underclass. Rather, its transgressive power arises primarily within the dynamic interchange between dominance and submission that characterizes many human relationships, [...] (Gilleard and Higgs 2010: 136)

With their common interest in the promotion of a positive model of corporeal difference, aging studies and disability studies could easily be allies. Yet, aging and old age have often been avoided by disability movements. Gilleard and Higgs (2013) describe one of the reasons for this avoidance:

The temporality that defines ageing contrasts with the ‘atemporality’ associated with the social positioning and representation of disabled people. Although there is increasing interest in the history of disability and disability organisations, the contextualisation of disability has been set against social, not personal, timescales. Idealised models of disability stress both its lifelong nature and its unchanging presence [...] Even when disability is contextualised by reference to the life course, the focus remains static, as if children with disabilities remain forever children, working adults forever working age while old people remain old and largely silent. (81)

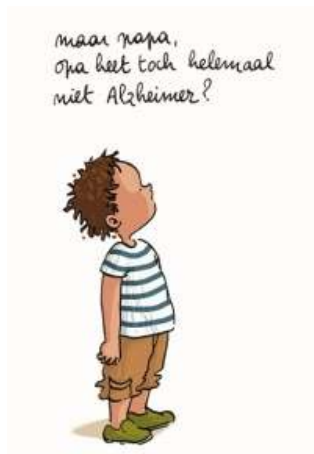
On the other hand, also scholars of aging have felt discomfort over associations with disability studies? What could possible reasons be for this discomfort?

Readings

Gilleard, C., and Higgs, P. (2013). “Corporeality, Embodiment and the ‘New Ageing’,” “Disability, Ageing and Identity” and “Fitness, Exercise and the Ageing Body.” In: *Ageing, Corporeality and Embodiment* (pp. 21-32, 69-85, 131-144). London: Anthem Press.

---. (2010). “Ageing Abjection and Embodiment in the Fourth Age.” *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25(2), 135-142.

ASSIGNMENT 5: PERSONHOOD IN DEMENTIA



But dad, grandpa's name isn't Alzheimer's, is it?



Oh grandma, as long as we still recognize who you are...

Please, take a look at the cartoons (retrieved from <http://www.onthoumens.be/>) above from the Flemish campaign “Vergeet dementie, onthou mens” (Forget dementia, remember human/person/Mensch). How do you understand the cartoons? What message do they convey and to whom?

With age, the probability of developing Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (from now on referred to as dementia) increases; as people live longer, more individuals are getting dementia. As such, Western societies not only have to make resources available for the diagnosis and treatment of dementia and the organization and management of long-term care. They also have to face the moral challenge to think of measures that assure the inclusion and participation of people with dementia – phrased in policy papers as the need to develop more “dementia-friendly” communities.

The latter has proven difficult. Dementia is seen as a particularly frightful medical condition because it violates the disposition of autonomy, productivity, and development that defines what it means to be human in so-called “hyper-cognitive” cultures. The Cartesian model, designating the mind as the locus of personhood, has led to the stigmatization of people with dementia as “non-people.” Hannah Zeilig examined the many dimensions of dementia as a cultural metaphor which impact is not to be underestimated. She writes:

The popular metaphorical framing of dementia then seems to operate on two levels. It is generalized as a vast, natural or monstrous force that we must fight, and it is also located as a very specific condition that affects individuals in extreme ways. In both cases, the effect is to make us feel both terrified and powerless. (Zeilig 2014: 261)

To get away from the stigma attached to dementia, since the mid 1990s, the personhood movement in dementia research has resorted to other philosophical models for subjectivity, engaging with ideas such as the phenomenological notion of the body-subject and symbolic interactionist conceptualizations of the relational subject. It has reclaimed the person in dementia by drawing attention to the idea that, apart from being minds, people are also bodies, and they depend on their relations with other human beings. How would you paraphrase the following quote by Julian Hughes, Stephen Louw, and Steven Sabat from the second reading?

At the level of the person, the emphasis on the world is a corrective to the hypercognitivism that tends to reduce the notion of personhood to inner goings-on. Instead, we need to see the person as a situated human being, who engages with the world in a mental and bodily way in agent-like activities, showing (amongst other things) desires, choices, drives, emotions, needs, and attachments. (2006: 35)

Readings

Hughes, J.C., Louw, S.J., and Sabat, S.R. (2006). "Seeing Whole." In: J.C. Hughes, S.J. Louw, S.R. Sabat (Eds.), *Dementia: Mind, Meaning, and the Person* (pp. 1-39). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zeilig, H. (2014). "Dementia as a Cultural Metaphor." *The Gerontologist*, 54(2): 258-267.

ASSIGNMENT 6: NEW VISIBILITIES OF AGING IN POPULAR CULTURE



Dove Pro Age Campaign

Advertising

Are you familiar with the Dove Pro Age Campaign that was launched in 2007? Could you envision which products it tries to sell and to whom? What would you say is characteristic of this image of a woman over 60 from the campaign? What images of aging and old age emerge from advertisements? Do you think these images correspond with how potential older consumers view themselves?



Isa Austen

Fashion

Take a look at the picture of Isa Austen that was published on the blog Advanced Style (<http://www.advanced.style/>) by Ari Seth Cohen. This blog not only aims to make the street fashion of the most stylish people over 60 visible in the public sphere but also to testify to their confidence and beauty. How do you think design directors of major retail companies envision the lifestyle and fashion preferences of older customers? How do you plan to dress when you get older?



Clint Eastwood in *Gran Torino* (2008)

Film

The current proliferation of films about later life points to an adjustment of the underrepresentation of people over 60 in film compared to their proportion in the population. The question remains, however, how age ideologies are articulated through moving pictures. Reflect on the portrayal of the aging male, for instance the characters played by Clint Eastwood in *Unforgiven* (1992) and *Gran Torino* (2008). What does it take for an older male character to reclaim and sustain his masculinity?



Madonna at the Grammys 2015

Popular music

One of the aging celebrities systematically criticized for her public appearance is Madonna. Read below what she had to say in *Rolling Stone* (25 February 2015) about the negative comments on the outfit that she chose to wear at the Grammys 2015. Can you think of other pop stars that are aging in the public eye? What strategies could they develop to negotiate the weight of expectations regarding aging, on the one hand, and to develop their art further, on the other?

“It’s still the one area where you can totally discriminate against somebody,” she says, “and talk shit. Because of their age. Only females, though. Not males. So in that respect we still live in a very sexist society.” “No one would dare to say a degrading remark about being black or dare to say a degrading remark on Instagram about someone being gay,” Madonna continues. “But my age – anybody and everybody would say something degrading to me. And I always think to myself, why is that accepted? What’s the difference between that and racism, or any discrimination? They’re judging me by my age. I don’t understand. I’m trying to get my head around it. Because women, generally, when they reach a certain age, have accepted that they’re not allowed to behave a certain way. But I don’t follow the rules. I never did, and I’m not going to start.” And if you’re wondering if there was a message behind showing off her bare butt on the Grammys’ red carpet: “This is what a 56-year-old ass looks like, motherfuckers!” she says. And to the suggestion that her awe-inspiring physique isn’t exactly average, she retorts, “You know what? It could be the average some day! That’s the thing.” (retrieved from <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/madonna-fights-back-inside-rolling-stones-new-issue-20150225>)

Readings

- Calasanti, T., Sorensen, A., and King, N. (2012). “Anti-ageing Advertisements and Perceptions of Ageing.” In Ylänne, V. (Ed.), *Representing Ageing: Images and Identities* (pp. 19-35). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Twigg, J. (2012). “Adjusting the Cut: Fashion, the Body and Age in the UK High Street.” *Ageing and Society*, 32, 1030-54.
- Chivers, S. (2011). “Yes, We Still Can: Paul Newman, Clint Eastwood, Aging Masculinity, and the American Dream.” In: *The Silvering Screen: Old Age and Disability in Cinema* (pp. 99-120). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Watson, P., and Railton, D. (2012). “Rebel without a Pause: The Continuity of Controversy in Madonna’s Contemporary Music Videos.” In: Jennings, R., and Gardner, A. (Eds.), *‘Rock On’: Women, Ageing and Popular Music* (pp. 139-154). Farnham: Ashgate.

ASSIGNMENT 7: THE HISTORY OF OLD AGE IN “WESTERN” CULTURES

Take a close look at and compare the paintings “The End of Skein” and “The Clergyman’s Visit” below; both are from the Victorian area and subject of investigation in the reading by Lauren Palmor (2016).

- What do these paintings tell us about the way older people lived more than a century ago?
- How do they differ from the way that you imagine older people are living today?
- What sources would you consult to find information about personal experiences of aging and later life from the past?



“The End of the Skein,” Walter Dendy Sadler (1854-1923) “The Clergyman’s Visit,” Frederick Daniel Hardy (1827-1911)

It is often presumed that older people were better off in pre-industrial societies. This so-called “golden past” went lost, supposedly, under influence of modernization which brought a weakening of family bonds and the medicalization and isolation of older people.

However, the negative impact of modernization on the social status and daily lives of older people has been criticized by cultural historians of aging. They have revealed the complexity of attitudes towards aging and the diversity in experiences of older age through the ages.

Readings

Kampf, A. (2015). “Historians of Ageing and the ‘Cultural Turn.’” In: Twigg, J. and Martin, W., *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 45-52). New York: Routledge.

Thane, P. (2010). “The History of Aging and Old Age in ‘Western’ Cultures.” In: Cole, T.R., Ray, R.E. and Kastenbaum, R. (Eds.), *A Guide to Humanistic Studies in Aging: What Does it Mean to Grow Old?* (pp. 33-56). Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Palmor, L. (2015). “Exploding the Hearth: Considering Victorian Age.” *Age, Culture, Humanities*, 2. <http://ageculturehumanities.org/WP/exploding-the-hearth-considering-victorian-aging/>

ASSIGNMENT 8: AGING AND GLOBALIZATION

Please, read the following news item retrieved from

<http://www.zmescience.com/other/offbeat-other/nuclear-waste-japan-elderly-22072011/>. The text refers to the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, initiated primarily by the tsunami following the Tōhoku earthquake in Japan on 11 March 2011. Ask yourself who the narrator of the text (who makes the “humanity at its finest”-comment) could be.



Humanity at Its Finest: Japanese Elderly Offer to Clean Up Nuclear Waste

Yasuteru Yamada is a man just like any other, except he isn't just like any other. "Let the young rebuild Japan, and let old clean up the most difficult mess," he says. Arguing that the elders have a smaller chance of developing cancer in their lifetime, the 72-year-old former engineer is recruiting other retirees to replace the younger workers who are currently handling the radiation exposure at the Japan affected nuclear plants. "I am 72 and on average I probably have 13 to 15 years left to live," he says. "Even if I were exposed to radiation, cancer could take 20 or 30 years or longer to develop. Therefore us older ones have less chance of getting cancer." I have to say, this is hands down one of the most impressive gestures I have seen; it's humanity at its finest! Also, Yamada isn't alone in his quest to spare the younger of potential cancer – he has already rallied 200 other retired Japanese, mostly engineers, but also singers, cooks, school teachers, etc. They will face the long and difficult road ahead of them, and will try to clean up the mess that the massive earthquake and the tsunamis caused.

People from Western countries often idealize the way later life is valued and organized in other cultures. It is, therefore, important that cultural gerontology and humanistic aging studies make a conscious effort to move “beyond its Western view” and adopt approaches that enable comparative research of beliefs and practices surrounding aging across cultures. Phyllis Braudy Harris and Susan Orpett Long (1999), for instance, examined similarities and differences in caregiving experiences of American and Japanese men and the impact of culture on their motivations, expectations, and ideals.

Another aspect to take into account in research into aging and longevity is the impact of globalization. One research strand in this respect concerns the complexities of transnational attachments. For instance, for many years, first-generation migrants in Europe were expected to return to their home countries after retirement. Studies have now shown that, despite their

strong feelings of attachment to and longing for their countries of origin, most migrants remain in the host country and have developed strategies to secure sustainable transnational ties. Another research strand regards the situation of newly immigrated workers who undertake elder home care. In an article on the invisibility of these care workers, Kathleen Woodward (2012) cites a story by Douglas Martin, published in the *New York Times* in August 2009. The story reports the death of Jamaican-born Evelyn Coke at the age of 74:

Year in and year out, Evelyn Coke left her Queens house early to go to the homes of elderly, sick, often dying people. She bathed them, cooked for them, helped them dress and monitored their medications. She sometimes worked three consecutive 24-hour shifts. She loved the work, but she earned only around \$7 an hour and got no overtime pay. For years Ms. Coke, a single mother of five, quietly grumbled, and then, quite uncharacteristically, rebelled.

In a case that reached the Supreme Court in April 2007, Ms. Coke sued to reverse federal labor regulations that exempt home care agencies from having to pay overtime. “I hope they try to help me because I need help bad,” she said in April 2007 after listening to oral arguments. She had stopped working after being hurt in a car accident six years earlier, and by then used a wheelchair. The court unanimously rejected her claims [...] Her health deteriorated until she died of heart failure on July 9 [...]

As a symbol, Evelyn Coke remains alive as both Congress and the Obama administration review regulations that carry out amendments to a 1938 law on wages. In June, 15 senators and 37 house members wrote to Hilda L. Solis, secretary of labor, urging her to eliminate the exemption for home attendants. “Evelyn Coke, who took a case all the way to the Supreme Court, spent two decades working more than 40 hours a week caring for others,” the senators wrote. “Yet, when she suffered from kidney failure, she could not afford a health care worker to take care of her.”

What does this story tell you about the situation of migrant care workers in the “West” and the way elder care is valued?

Readings

Lamb, S. (2015). “Beyond the View of the West: Ageing and Anthropology.” In: Twigg, J. and Martin, W. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 37-43). New York: Routledge.

Harris, P. Braudy, and Long, S. Orpatt (1999). “Husbands and Sons in the United States and Japan: Cultural Expectations and Caregiving Experiences.” *Journal of Aging Studies*, 13(3), 241-267.

Phillipson, C. (2015). “Global and Local Ties and the Reconstruction of Later Life.” In: Twigg, J. and Martin, W. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 389-96). New York: Routledge.

Woodward, K. (2012). “A Public Secret: Assisted Living, Caregivers, Globalization.” *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life*, 7(2), 17-51.

ASSIGNMENT 9: SPACES OF AGING AND THE MEANING OF HOME

Not so long ago, you probably relocated to become a student at Maastricht University. What did you do to make your new place feel like home? If you were asked to make seven pictures of features (e.g., things, people, activities, etc.) that you associate with feelings of being at home with your smart phone, what would you photograph? How would you expect your practice of “homemaking” to change over the years? In this respect, reflect on the quote from Sheile Peace’s chapter “Meanings of Home and Age”:

In reflecting on older people’s housing situations Heywood et al. (2002: 84-5) state: ‘The meaning of home is not qualitatively different in later life. What is difficult about so many moves in old age is that there is a danger they will be seen by others as signifying a loss of status and independence’. This is an important statement that leads to the question, ‘Can the ideology of home be re-created throughout later life and in any place including non-domestic and age-segregated communal settings?’ Comparison between aspects of domestic and institutional life provides a context for the discussion where privacy, familiarity, autonomy and choice are seen alongside degrees of formality, living with strangers and limitations in personal freedom, which is not necessarily a continuum that ranges from positive to negative (Heywood *et al.*, 2002). (Peace 2015: 450)



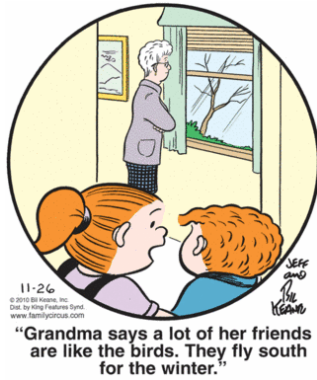
“Institutional life”



“Aging in place”

Take a look at the picture to the left and discuss the cultural associations with living in residential care facilities for older people as opposed to growing old in “one’s own home” (whatever the latter may mean). Then, try to provide the image to the right (retrieved from <http://www.reversereview.com/magazine/spotlight/spotlight-clarifying-aging-in-place.html>), a model of the American National Aging in Place Council (NAIPC), with a narrative. According to their mission statement, NAIPC “spearheads a movement to provide aging Americans with the services, security, support, resources, and comfort to remain in the home of their choice as they grow older.”

In Western countries and beyond, growing old in “one’s own home” is idealized. Moving is constructed as a disruption of this romantic narrative. Nonetheless, voluntary and/or forced moving is a reality for many older people. Paula Vasara (2015) interviewed persons aged 75 or older and living in special types of housing because of (anticipated) age-related care needs. Her interviews reveal how the participants came to terms with their relocation and developed counter narratives to the ideal of “staying in one’s own home.”



Images retrieved from: <http://anglescomic.blogspot.nl/2015/01/jan-9th-family-circus-snow-birds.html>

Stephen Katz (2005), on the other hand, immersed in the world of the elderscapes of Charlotte County, Florida. These are snowbird communities where northern Americans and Canadians spend their winter months. He suggests interpreting these sites as “inventive social spaces where experiential and biographical resources culled from diverse backgrounds are summoned to counter the dominant culture’s marginalization of older persons and denigration of later life transitions” (Katz 2005: 229). What would you consider the benefits and pitfalls of living, either temporarily or permanently, in such communities?

Readings

Peace, S. (2015). “Meanings of Home and Age.” In: Twigg, J. and Martin, W. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Cultural Gerontology* (pp. 447-454). New York: Routledge.

Vasara, P. (2015). “Not Ageing in Place: Negotiating Meanings of Residency in Age-Related Housing.” *Journal of Aging Studies*, 35, 55-64.

Katz, S. (2005). “Spaces of Age, Snowbirds, and the Gerontology of Mobility.” In: *Cultural Aging: Life Course, Life Style, and Senior Worlds* (pp. 202-231). Peterborough: Broadview Press.

ASSIGNMENT 10: PROLONGEVITY AND BIOGERONTOLOGY



The Fountain of Youth (1546), Lucas Cranach the Elder

The painting above is a visualization of one of the many longevity myths that express the human desire to extend the life span. When the people to the left dive into the water of the Fountain of Youth, they come out rejuvenated on the right. Gerald Joseph Gruman (1966) distinguishes between three types of longevity legends: the antediluvian theme (i.e., the idea that people lived significantly longer in the past), the hyperborean theme (i.e., the idea that in other parts of the world, there are people who have unusually long lives) and the fountain theme (i.e., the idea that it is possible to prolong life by means other than ones directly under human control).

That the desire to extend the life span and to reach immortality is not without dangers, is what the story of the Struldbrugs from *Gulliver's Travels* (Jonathan Swift, 1726), for instance, reminds us of. Here follows an excerpt from the description of the Struldbrugs who are born into immortality (part 3, chapter 10, retrieved from <http://classiclitter.about.com/library/bl-etexts/jswift/bl-jswift-gull-3-10.htm>):

[...] they commonly acted like mortals till about thirty years old; after which, by degrees, they grew melancholy and dejected, increasing in both till they came to fourscore [...] When they came to fourscore years, which is reckoned the extremity of living in this country, they had not only all the follies and infirmities of other old men, but many more which arose from the dreadful prospect of never dying. They were not only opinionative, peevish, covetous, morose, vain, talkative, but incapable of friendship, and dead to all natural affection, which never descended below their grandchildren. Envy and impotent desires are their prevailing passions. But those objects against which their envy seems principally directed, are the vices of the younger sort and the deaths of the old. By reflecting on the former, they find themselves cut off from all possibility of pleasure; and whenever they see a funeral, they lament and repine that others have gone to a harbour of rest to which they themselves never can hope to arrive. They have no remembrance of anything but what they learned and observed in their youth and middle-age, and even that is very imperfect; and for the truth or particulars of any fact, it is safer to depend on common tradition, than upon their best recollections. The least miserable among them appear to be those who turn to dotage, and entirely lose their memories; these meet with more pity and assistance, because they want many bad qualities which abound in others [...] As soon as they have completed the term of eighty years, they are looked on as dead in law; their heirs immediately succeed to their estates; only a small pittance is reserved for their support; and the poor ones are maintained at the public charge. After that

period, they are held incapable of any employment of trust or profit; they cannot purchase lands, or take leases; neither are they allowed to be witnesses in any cause, either civil or criminal, not even for the decision of meers and bounds.

At ninety, they lose their teeth and hair; they have at that age no distinction of taste, but eat and drink whatever they can get, without relish or appetite. The diseases they were subject to still continue, without increasing or diminishing. In talking, they forget the common appellation of things, and the names of persons, even of those who are their nearest friends and relations. For the same reason, they never can amuse themselves with reading, because their memory will not serve to carry them from the beginning of a sentence to the end; and by this defect, they are deprived of the only entertainment whereof they might otherwise be capable.

The language of this country being always upon the flux, the STRULDBRUGS of one age do not understand those of another; neither are they able, after two hundred years, to hold any conversation (farther than by a few general words) with their neighbours the mortals; and thus they lie under the disadvantage of living like foreigners in their own country.

Why is the immortal state of the Struldbugs to be pitied? Do you know other stories that focus on prolongevity and/or eternal youth? What tends to be their message?

Nowadays, biogerontologists look for biomedical technologies to bring aging processes to a halt. One of the most controversial representatives of this type of science is Aubrey De Grey of the SENS Research Foundation. Take a look at “How to End Aging,” one of his many TED Talks available on the Internet: https://www.ted.com/talks/aubrey_de_grey_says_we_can_avoid_aging?language=nl.

John A. Vincent (2008) examined the relation between the rise of this new biomedical science of aging and the anti-aging culture it is embedded in. To what extent do scholars like De Grey reiterate ageist stereotypes? How can we be open to new insights in the biology of aging while being conscious of the negative cultural focus on aging bodies and its effects on people’s lives? What do you think that the public attitudes are towards human life extension by intervening in aging (cf. Lucke, Bartlett, and Hall 2011)?

Readings

Gruman, G.J. (1966). “Prolongevity Legends.” In: *A History of Ideas About the Prolongation of Life* (pp. 20-28). Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society.

Vincent, J.A. (2008). “The Cultural Construction of Old Age as a Biological Phenomenon: Science and Anti-Ageing Technologies.” In: *Journal of Aging Studies*, 22(4), 331-339.

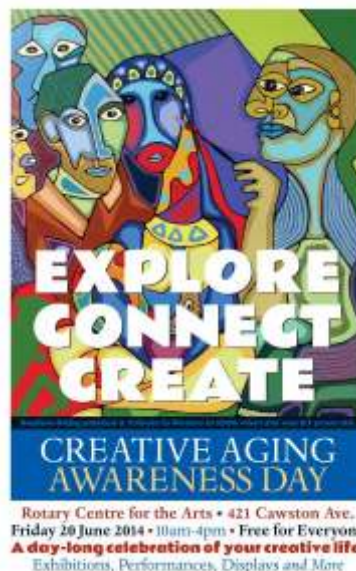
Lucke, J., Bartlett, H., and Hall, W. (2011). “Public Attitudes Towards Human Life Extension by Intervening in Ageing.” *Journal of Aging Studies*, 25, 73-83.

ASSIGNMENT 11: CREATIVITY AND SELF-REALIZATION IN LATER LIFE

We have arrived at the final assignment of this course. Now that it has become evident that “old age ain’t no place for sissy’s,” as the film star Bette Davis once said, the question arises how older people can claim the agency to bend the cultural narratives of “age as decline” and “age defiance” that they are confronted with (cf. Laceulle and Baars 2014).

Philosophers of aging have developed a conceptual framework of a moral lifestyle for older people to re-appropriate their own lives. What could such moral lifestyle for later life be? Discuss the following quote from Joep Dohmen’s “My Own Life: Ethics, Ageing, and Lifestyle”:

The moral philosophical debate on the content of a moral lifestyle is partly about what the starting point should be: autonomy or care? Martha Holstein states: ‘I do not see it as a property of isolated individuals but as the product of, and bound up with, relationships’ (2010a, p 634). I definitely agree with the latter half of that remark – autonomy is bound up with relationships. But autonomy is most certainly not just the product of relations. And the caregiver decides for himself/herself whether and when he/she takes care of another or not. Therefore, both these moral values – care and autonomy – are of vital importance in later life. After all, authenticity is quintessential for late modern people, since no lifestyle can be durable if one does not believe, truly and from within, in what one thinks and does. The truth of virtue ethics is that values need practical maintenance, for example, through attention, discipline, patience and respect. Just as it is wrong to vote for either autonomy or care, it is equally dangerous to argue for either an active or a passive lifestyle. An active lifestyle is necessary, but every human life knows its own tragedies, and the only remedy for that is serenity. (2013: 50)



Retrieved from: <http://www.artshealthnetwork.ca/content/kelownas-creative-aging-awareness-day>

It is often stated that older people should rely on their creativity to age well. When put into practice and policies, this implies that older people are encouraged to engage in arts activities to increase their wellbeing and cope with physical and cognitive changes that come with age

(cf. poster above). Creativity is then understood as “psychological” or “small c” creativity, a commodified skill accessible to all, and presented as an answer to the demographic and economic challenges of our time.

Simultaneously, “historical” or “big c” creativity in terms of a professional career in the arts is pushed further to the margins of societies. In The Netherlands, for instance, the budget cuts implemented in 2013 have had a profound impact on the labour market for the creative and cultural sector. The income of arts professionals is decreasing. Also, they have reduced access to health insurance and pensions. From this the question follows how professional artists experience creativity in later life. What master narratives of aging and creativity do they have to mediate (Do you, for instance, associate innovation with youth or old age)? And, what can we learn from them?

Readings

Dohmen, J. (2013). “My Own Life: Ethics, Ageing, and Lifestyle.” In: Baars, J., Dohmen, J., Grenier, A. and Phillipson, C. (eds.), *Ageing, Meaning and Social Structure: Connecting Critical and Humanistic Gerontology* (pp. 31-54). Bristol: Policy Press.

Laceulle, H., and Baars, J. (2014). “Self-realization and cultural narratives about later life.” *Journal of Aging Studies*, 31, 34-44

Swinnen, A. (submitted Feb 25, 2016). “‘Writing to make ageing new’: Dutch poets’ understandings of late-life creativity.” *Ageing and Society*.

APPENDIX 1: ORAL PRESENTATION

Each student is expected to give an oral presentation before a post-discussion. The main aim of the presentation is for you to show that you have understood the compulsory readings by applying them to a case study.

Choose one of the assignments of the course and apply (one of) the readings to a suitable case study of your choice, for instance,

- a blog post,
- a Youtube video,
- a newspaper or magazine article,
- a film,
- a novel or story,
- a play,
- an advertisement or a campaign,
- an image,
- a policy document,
- ...

Instead of summarizing the readings, I expect you to make the secondary literature concrete by examining an example. As such, do not try to give an overview of the theory but select a few concepts or thoughts and illustrate them by means of your case study.

The time limit of the presentation is 10 minutes. Please note that the duration given to your oral presentation excludes 3 minutes for questions and discussion (e.g., a 10-minute talk should be 10 minutes of presentation + 3 minutes of discussion). Try the presentation at home and check the time you need, as an extension of the available 10 minutes will have a negative effect on the grade. If you present a case study in a group of 2, the time limit will be extended to 15 minutes.

You may use PowerPoint or Prezi to support your oral presentation visually. Make sure to send your file to the tutor right after your presentation.

It is advisable to combine the role of chair with the role of presenter. However, this is not obligatory. We will make a schedule with chairs and presenters per assignment during the first tutorial.

APPENDIX 2: FINAL PAPER

For your final paper, you are expected to interview a person over 65 about his or her experiences of aging (note: the focus should be on the here and now of later life rather than on the person's personal past or biography). The word count of the paper (appendix and references excluded) is 4,000 words (the 10% rule applies).

Selecting your interviewee

You may choose any person over 65 to interview. However, I would like to encourage you to show ambition and to choose someone from the public sphere that you expect to have something interesting to contribute (instead of just opting for a close relative, such as your grandmother or grandfather).

Clearing ethics

Make sure that you respect ethical guidelines regarding research that involves human subjects (cf. respect for persons, beneficence, and justice). This implies that you have to inform your interviewee about the aim and approach of the study, the voluntary basis of his or her participation, and possibility to withdraw consent at any time. Explain that participation would benefit the development of a more nuanced approach to aging in academia and beyond. Also, indicate that there is a possibility to anonymize the data so that the interviewee's name will only be known to you (note: do not forget to mention the gender, age, (previous) occupation, and location of your interviewee in the paper).

Interviewing

Never meet with an interviewee in a private setting for your personal safety. You may conduct the interview in your mother tongue. Record the interview with your smartphone (there are many free apps available, for instance iTalk, if you haven't already installed one). In order to prepare well for the interview, develop your questions on the basis of the following topic guide:

Interview topic guide

- Love & sexuality
- Intergenerational contacts & grandparenting
- Identities & social relations
- Meaning & self-realization
- Creativity in later life
- Fitness & physical activity
- Media representations of aging
- Places of aging & "homemaking"
- Care practices
- Tourism & travel
- Consumption & leisure
- Ideas of "aging well" (cf. "successful/positive aging")
- Art & literature
- Death & dying

- Pain & suffering
- Appearance & self-care
- Technology & daily living
- Gender/ethnicity/disability & aging
- Loneliness, isolation & widowhood
- Retirement & change of roles
- Youth culture
- “Senior” lifestyles
- Time & transitions
- ...

Make sure that the questions you prepare are open instead of closed. Choose formulations that do not make too many assumptions about the participant’s experiences, opinions, or concerns. And, avoid leading your interviewee to the answers you want to hear. To help you develop appropriate questions on the basis of the topic guide, two tables will follow from *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method and Research* by Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flowers, and Michael Larkin (2009: 60). The first table distinguishes between different types of appropriate questions (in relation to the topic of “a job”):

Some kinds of questions for in-depth interviews

<i>Descriptive</i>	Please, could you tell me what you do in your job?
<i>Narrative</i>	Can you tell me about how you came to get the job?
<i>Structural</i>	So what are all the stages involved in the process of dispatching orders?
<i>Contrast</i>	What are the main differences between a good day and a bad day at work?
<i>Evaluative</i>	How do you feel after a bad day at work?
<i>Circular</i>	What do you think your boss thinks about how you do your job?
<i>Comparative</i>	How do you think your life would be if you worked somewhere else?
<i>Prompts</i>	Can you tell me a bit more about that?
<i>Probes</i>	What do you mean by unfair?

The second table gives examples of questions that you should refrain from:

Some kinds of questions to try to avoid

<i>Over-emphatic</i>	I can imagine that your job is quite boring – is that right?
<i>Manipulative</i>	You’ve described your job as quite repetitive. Is it even worse than that?
<i>Leading</i>	So I don’t suppose you’d say that your job is rewarding?
<i>Closed</i>	So you’ve been working here for five years then?

Rather than engaging in a dialogue with your interviewee, you and your ideas are supposed to stay in the background. As such, the interview is almost a monologue on the part of the

participant. Encourage your interviewee to expand on a certain topic with questions, such as, Why? How? Can you tell me more about that? Tell me what you were thinking? How did you feel? Typically, your interview will last 90 minutes.

Transcribing

Transcribe the interview. You may do this in your mother tongue if it is Dutch, English, French, German, Swedish, Danish, or Norwegian. Otherwise, you have to translate the interview to English so that the tutor can assess your work properly. The full transcript of the interview should be included at the end of the paper as an appendix. Do not underestimate the time it takes to transcribe the interview.

Analyzing

Read and reread the interview several times and make notes in the margin. On the basis of these notes, try to distinguish between the most important themes and subthemes of the interview. These themes should not be a repetition of the topic guide above. Instead, look for returning aspects that relate to the way the interviewee experiences, understands or gives meaning to certain events. Examples are: self-reinvention through xxx, accepting changes in relation to xxx, conflicting emotions regarding xxx, etc. Once you have identified the themes, present them with examples and connect them to what you have learned during the course (theories, concepts, etc.). Your paper should consist of the analysis of the interview in which you bring the interview into dialogue with the readings of the course and at least three new readings.