



Ithaca College Fall 2025

GERO 12000: Aging by the Numbers

Mary Ann Erickson, Ph.D.

Professor contact

HOW CAN YOU CONTACT ME?

1. Best way is email: merickson@ithaca.edu
2. If necessary, text me at 607-592-7151.

I won't respond to emails or texts between 8 pm and 8 am and will respond more slowly on weekends.

I prefer to be addressed as “Professor Erickson” and my preferred pronouns are she/her/hers.

Class meetings

WHEN AND HOW ARE WE MEETING?

Class sessions are scheduled for Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 3:00-3:50 pm.

We are meeting in person in Friends 201.

What materials do I need?

There are two main texts. You have access to both as ebooks through the Ithaca College library:

- Joel Best (2012). Damned Lies and Statistics: Untangling Numbers from the Media, Politicians, and Activists. University of California Press.
- Jennifer R. Sasser and Harry R. Moody (2018). Gerontology: The Basics. Routledge.

Other readings will be available through Canvas.

What will I be learning?

The course description and objectives tell you what I hope you will know by the end of the class.

These objectives are shared with the other 100-level Aging Studies classes but we approach the material in different ways.

This class approaches the study of aging through the Quantitative Literacy lens.

Course Description

Using quantitative data, explores aging-related topics such as cultural stereotypes, the demography of aging, and the financing of retirement. Focuses on developing understanding of different research methods and awareness of the promise and limits of quantitative data for understanding people's lives. 3 credits.

Course Objectives

This course will help you to:

1. Understand how age is culturally constructed and how we do research on stereotypes and attitudes.
2. Describe demographic changes occurring in the U.S. and other countries and how these demographic changes are measured and calculated.
3. Describe physical and psychological changes associated with age and how we gather and analyze data about aging.
4. Recognize sources of diversity in the aging experience and how we measure differences within and between groups.
5. Understand and calculate economic factors relating to retirement, on both national and individual levels.

Integrative Core Curriculum (ICC) Designation

This course is does not have a theme designation, but it does have a Quantitative Literacy (QL) designation. According to the college, a QL course “focuses on the measurement of personal, social, and scientific issues. You will develop the ability to investigate and interpret quantitative information, critique it, reflect upon it, and apply it to a given issue. You will be able to provide accurate explanations of information generated or presented mathematically and construct reasoned arguments. You’ll also learn to present quantitative information in an effective format to support your argument.”

How will our class be organized?

Overall Structure

We will begin by developing a critical lens on aging and on statistics using the two textbooks. We will then move into a closer examination of specific areas of gerontology, namely: demography, diversity, physical aging, psychological aging, and retirement financing.

Throughout the semester there will be regular short assignments and open-book Canvas quizzes. These are intended to keep you **consistently engaged with the material**. In addition, there will be a specific project for each unit utilizing and/or reflecting on quantitative data. The end-of-semester assignments will include a project working with survey data we have collected and a few reflective essays.

During the semester you will do 2 brief and informal presentations. For one, find a news item relating to aging involving quantitative information and put the link into the Canvas discussion. When you present to the class, describe the source of the information, the main issues, the arguments and the use of numbers in the arguments and your overall evaluation of the piece. For the second presentation, locate an aging-related advertisement and follow the same steps. No need for Powerpoint, just showing us the news item or ad and briefly discussing is all that's expected.

Please note my **late policy**: I am not assessing grade penalties for late work during the semester. However, the best way to do well in this course and to maximize your learning is to keep up with the assignments. **All work must be turned in by the end of the final exam period, which is Wednesday December 17 at 10 pm.** Absolutely no work will be accepted after this time; this allows me to meet the deadline for grade submission. If you need more time to complete class work, you should discuss with me the possibility of taking an incomplete.

Time Expectations: This course is a three-credit lecture course with substantial classroom discussion. This semester, you will spend your time as follows:

- Instructional time in class: 150 minutes per week (3 hours of instructional time)
- Supplementary work time: 6 hours per week on average, recognizing that some weeks may require more hours and other weeks may require fewer. You will spend your time each week on:
 - •completing required reading assignments ahead of class meetings
 - •taking online quizzes on the readings and doing several short assignments
 - •preparing five projects
 - •working on a summary of our class survey
- Total time: 45 in class + 90 supplementary = 135 hours
- Final exam week: During our final exam scheduled time, you will hand in your class survey project and final reflective essays. This time counts towards the total instructional time for the semester.

Other key policies

The most important thing if you have questions or a problem is to COMMUNICATE with me!

ACADEMIC

INTEGRITY: Appendix II of the Ithaca College Student Handbook outlines the College policies regarding standards of academic conduct. Any evidence of academic misconduct **will** be referred to the College judicial system and will be assessed a significant grade penalty. This includes quoting without attribution (i.e., plagiarism).

ATTENDANCE: It is expected that you will attend class. If you are absent it is your responsibility to make up missed work and to be aware of any schedule changes or assignments that were made in the class(es) you missed. Refer to the Attendance Policy in the Student Handbook.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case by case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the college before any academic adjustment will be provided.

How will I be graded?

In this class, I am using **specifications grading**. This means that your work will be graded as either “satisfactory” (=meeting specifications) or “not yet satisfactory” (=not meeting specifications). For all of the longer assignments, you may turn in revisions until you have met the specifications. Your course grade will be determined by how many assignments you complete.

Why use specifications grading?

- Each assignment has a clear set of expectations.
- There is a real opportunity for learning when you are allowed to revise.
- You have flexibility to decide which components of the course you want to complete because you’ll know the requirements for each letter grade.
- It allows me to specify the most important assignments.
- I as the instructor put in extra time clarifying assignment specifications and less time grading!

Details of all assignments and projects will be available on Canvas.

The next page shows you what is required for different final grades

Assignment	Attempts allowed	Deadline flexibility	D	C	B	A
Projects						
Demography presentation	Unlimited	End of semester	Complete 3	Complete 4	Complete 5	Complete all 6
Diversity reflection						
Retirement financing project						
Physical aging infographic						
Brain games paper						
Class survey project						
Final reflective essays	2	End of semester	75-99% on both	Complete both		
Reading quizzes (9 total; open book)	1	2 weeks after due date		Minimum of 6 quizzes scoring at least 70%.	Minimum of 7 quizzes scoring at least 70%.	Minimum of 8-9 quizzes scoring at least 70%.
Short assignments (including news share)	1	2 weeks after due date	Less than 70%	70% or more	80% or more	90% or more
Attendance	--	--			70% or less = B- 70-79% = B 80% or more = B+	Less than 80% = A- 80% or more = A

Course/Academic Policies

Current Ithaca College Attendance Policy:

Students at Ithaca College are expected to attend all classes, and they are responsible for work missed during any absence from class. At the beginning of each semester, instructors must provide the students in their courses with written guidelines regarding possible penalties for failure to attend class. These guidelines may vary from course to course but are subject to the following conditions:

- In accordance with Federal Law, students with a disability documented through Student Accessibility Services (SAS) may require reasonable accommodations to ensure equitable access. A student with an attendance accommodation, who misses a scheduled course time due to a documented disability, must be provided an equivalent opportunity to make up missed time and/or coursework within a reasonable time-frame. An accommodation that affects attendance is not an attendance waiver and no accommodation can fundamentally alter a course requirement. If a faculty member thinks an attendance-related accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration, concerns and potential alternatives should be discussed with SAS.
- In accordance with New York State law, students who miss class due to their religious beliefs shall be excused from class or examinations on that day. The faculty member is responsible for providing the student with an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirement that the student may have missed. Any such work is to be completed within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the faculty member.
- Any student who misses class due to a family or individual health emergency or to a required appearance in a court of law shall be excused. If the emergency is prolonged or if the student is incapacitated, the student or a family member/legal guardian should report the absence to the Dean of Students or the Dean of the academic school where the student's program is housed. Students may consider a leave of absence, medical leave of absence, selected course withdrawals, etc., if they miss a significant portion of classwork.
- A student may be excused to participate in local, state, or federal elections. The student is responsible to make up any work that is missed due to the absence. Any such work is to be completed within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the faculty member.

A student may be excused for participation in College-authorized co-curricular and extracurricular activities if, in the instructor's judgment, this does not

impair the specific student's or the other students' ability to succeed in the course.

For all absences except those due to religious beliefs, the course instructor has the right to determine if the number of absences has been excessive in view of the nature of the class that was missed and the stated attendance policy.

Students should notify their instructors as soon as possible of any anticipated absences.

Accommodations for Students via Student Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified students with documented disabilities through an interactive process. Students seeking accommodations must register with Student Accessibility Services and provide appropriate documentation before accommodations can be provided. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, so timely contact with Student Accessibility Services is encouraged. To discuss accommodations or the accommodation process, students should schedule to meet with a SAS specialist. 607-274-1005 | sas@ithaca.edu.

Students may register with SAS at the following link:

<https://elbert.accessiblelearning.com/Ithaca/ApplicationStudent.aspx>

Ithaca College Standards of Academic Conduct

The Ithaca College Policy Manual describes the Standards of Academic Content embedded in the Student Code of Conduct. It is the responsibility of every student and faculty member to be familiar with, and comply with, these expectations for rigor, authenticity, trust, and honesty in academic work. You may find the full policy at the following web link:

<https://www.ithaca.edu/policy-manual/volume-vii-students/71-general-student-policies/714-standards-academic-conduct>

We will discuss this policy more thoroughly in our course. As the Policy Manual states, "Because Ithaca College is an academic community, ignorance of the accepted standards of academic honesty in no way affects the responsibility of students who violate standards of conduct in courses and other academic activities."

Additional Policies and Resources

Mental Health and Stress Management Support via CAPS:

The Ithaca College Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) promotes and fosters the academic, personal, and interpersonal development of Ithaca College students by providing short-term individual, group, and relationship counseling, crisis intervention, educational programs to the campus community, and consultation for faculty, staff, parents, and students. Their team of licensed and licensed-eligible professionals value inclusivity, and they are dedicated to creating a diverse, accessible, and welcoming environment that is safe and comfortable for all those they serve and with whom they interact. CAPS sees students in-person at their offices in the Hammond Health building, but Telehealth meetings through Zoom can be arranged in some circumstances.

Staff in the office will answer questions by phone at 607-274-3136; please leave a voicemail if you do not reach a live person. You can also reach the office via email at counseling@ithaca.edu. CAPS hours remain Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After-hours connections to a live counselor are available by calling the CAPS number and following the prompts.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, expect that I will express to you my concerns. It is not my intent to know the details of what might be troubling you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available. Remember, getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do.

Title IX

Please note that if you disclose an experience related to sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking, sexual harassment or sex-based discrimination, your professor can inform the Title IX Coordinator, lkoenig@ithaca.edu, of all relevant information, including your name. The college will take initial steps to address the incident(s), protect, and, support those directly affected, and enhance the safety of our community. The Title IX Coordinator will work with you to determine the best way to proceed.

Information shared in class assignments, class discussions, and at public events do not constitute an official disclosure, and faculty and staff do not have to report these to the Title IX Coordinator. Faculty and staff should be sure that access to campus and community resources related to sexual misconduct are available to students in the case these subjects do arise. Any other disclosure to faculty and staff needs to be reported to the Title IX Coordinator. For more information: <https://www.ithaca.edu/share>.

Academic Advising Availability

Students are asked to consult with their faculty advisor, or the advising contact within their school, for all advising matters. Faculty advisors will be able to assist students with most advising questions, or they may collaborate with the dean's office for more complicated matters.

Students can find the name of their assigned faculty advisor in Homer or in Degree Works. Additionally, below is a list of advising contacts in deans' offices.

Business Katy Hall, Academic Services Coordinator, khall2@ithaca.edu

H&S Jim Riegel, Academic Services Coordinator, hsadvising@ithaca.edu

HSHP Michelle Lang, Academic Services Coordinator, mlang@ithaca.edu

Park Kristin Morse, Academic Services Coordinator, kmorse@ithaca.edu

Music, Theatre & Dance –

Center for Music: Shannon Hills, Academic Services Coordinator,
musicacademicsupport@ithaca.edu

Music, Theatre & Dance –

Center for Theatre & Dance: Mary Scheidegger, Theatre Operations
Coordinator, scheideg@ithaca.edu

Religious Observances

At Ithaca College, we uphold diverse religious and spiritual traditions - each with its own set of beliefs, practices, and observances that are part of our community. If you anticipate needing accommodations for attending class, taking exams, or submitting assignments due to a religious observance, you can work directly with me to accommodate your needs. Please share the potential dates with me by [insert date/process] so we can plan for your success in our class.

The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life is also available to support you as you navigate your religious observances at IC. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at spirituallife@ithaca.edu. More information on religious observances and accommodations at IC is available [here](#).

Bias Impact Reporting Form

[The Bias Impact Reporting Form](#) is intended to provide students, staff, and faculty with a centralized way of accessing resources if they experience or witness a bias incident on campus, via social media, virtually, or at a college-affiliated event. This process is a tool that is being used in addition to formal complaint options. The information submitted is used to identify patterns of behavior and address areas where culture is counter to the College's values of respect, accountability and equity. The reports will help the college to be more strategic when educating and/or preventing acts of bias in the future.

The Bias Impact Reporting Form is not an immediate response service and may take up to three (3) college business days to receive confirmation of submission. The information you provide in this form will be forwarded to members of the Bias Impact Resource Team.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Ithaca College values diversity because it enriches our community and the myriad experiences that characterize an Ithaca College education. Diversity encompasses multiple dimensions, including but not limited to race, culture, nationality, ethnicity, religion, ideas, beliefs, geographic origin, class, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and expression, disability, and age. We are dedicated to addressing current and past injustices and promoting excellence and equity. Ithaca College continually strives to build an inclusive and welcoming community of individuals with diverse talents and skills from a multitude of backgrounds who are committed to civility, mutual respect, social justice, and the free and open exchange of ideas. We commit ourselves to change, growth, and actions that embrace diversity as an integral part of the educational experience and of the community we create.

Please learn more about Ithaca College's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion:

<https://www.ithaca.edu/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-statement>

Basic Needs Awareness

Access to basic needs such as food and safe shelter are vital to your successful academic experience. If you are experiencing challenge affording groceries, accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or finding stable, safe housing, I want you to be aware of resources available to all members of our Ithaca College community. You can learn more about these resources at the following links. You may also reach out to the Dean of Students for support.

Working for Food Security (food resources) <https://www.ithaca.edu/student-affairs-and-campus-life/working-food-security>

Financial Security Support (a range of resources)
<https://www.ithaca.edu/student-affairs-and-campus-life/supporting-financial-security>

Tutoring and Academic Enrichment Services

As a supplement to faculty advising and office hours, Tutoring and Academic Enrichment Services offers exceptional peer resources free of charge. Learning Coaches provide content-specific peer tutoring in a variety of courses. Peer Success Coaches mentor students who wish to develop collegiate-level academic and social engagement skills. To access these courses and for more information, please visit us at <https://www.ithaca.edu/tutoring-services>.

Writing Center

Located in 107 Smiddy Hall, the Writing Center provides students with the opportunity to work on effective strategies for all types of written work including essays, research papers, cover letters, applications, and creative writing. Students in all disciplines — humanities and sciences, business, health sciences and human performance, communications, and music — can bring assignments at any stage in their process, whether prewriting, drafting, or editing, and in one-on-one conferences, they will receive guidance on the writing, revising, and editing process so that they can develop confidence as independent thinkers and writers. The Writing Center is staffed by trained peer tutors as well as Department of Writing faculty. The Writing Center offers Zoom tutoring as well as in-person appointments. More information about the Center's hours, policies, and appointments is available at 607-274-3315, or consult the [Writing Center webpage](#).