Course Expectation Resource Sheet - GER 200

"What can students expect if they choose this course?"

Course: GER 200 - Aging Identities in Art & Media
Department: Sociology, Anthropology, & Gerontology
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisite: None
Catalog Description: This course fosters an understanding of how our identities develop as we age, based on biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors. Through exposure to a range of depictions of aging in painting, photography, film, television, literature, and music, students examine how aging identities are represented and the influence these representations have on identity development over the life course. This allows students to gain a well-rounded perspective of possible identities in later life and to promote positive, realistic, and diverse representations of aging adults in art and media. Cannot be taken Pass/Not Pass.
Catalog: 2025-2026 *Last Updated:* 9/19/2026

Gen Ed Course: Yes
Gen Ed Area: HUMAN CULTURES
Gen Ed Requirement: Humanities (GEC 111)

CORE-42 Course: No
CORE-42 Area:
MOTR Code - MOTR Title: -

Is credit also available through:

Advanced Placement (AP)?: No
College Level Exam Program (CLEP)?: No
International Baccalaureate (IB)?: No
(click link for more information and required scores)

Responses and Advice from Department Representatives
Last Updated: 2/17/2026

The following responses apply to: Both seated and online courses

What expectations do you have for students in this course?
Complete all assigned viewing and reading
Participate actively and thoughtfully in discussions
Approach media portrayals of aging with curiosity and a willingness to question assumptions
Be willing to reflect on your own future aging and how exposure to media has shaped it
Engage respectfully when discussing identity, representation, and generational differences
Apply course concepts to creative work
In seated sections, contribute meaningfully to community-engaged components of the course

What types of study skills do you expect students to use in this course?
Close reading and visual analysis skills, alongside broader analytical thinking and media literacy
Ability to identify themes and patterns across different artistic forms
Application of gerontological concepts to creative material
Careful notetaking
Long-term planning and time management for multi-step creative/applied final project

What study techniques seem to work best for students who do well in this course?
Taking notes while watching or reading, noting recurring stereotypes, narrative arcs, identity themes
Connecting media examples directly to key course concepts in own words
Revisiting course materials when working on major assignments
Starting the long-term project early and breaking it into manageable steps
Engaging in class dialogue rather than passively observing
Reflecting on how personal experiences with aging influence interpretation of media

What behaviors or habits seem to cause students to struggle in this course?
Watching films or reading materials casually without analytical engagement
Waiting until the last minute to begin larger projects
Treating discussions as opinion-based, rather than concept-driven
Not carefully following assignment descriptions or grading criteria
Falling behind on weekly materials and trying to catch up all at once

What types of struggles do you see most often? What recommendations do you give to students who struggle in this course? What other advice do you offer to students for success in this course?
Difficulty applying theory/academic concepts to art and media – Keep a running list of key concepts and practice intentionally asking, "Where do I see this concept in this portrayal?"
Underestimating the time needed for the creative project – Break the project into stages and set personal deadlines before the official due date
Providing summary rather than analysis – Move beyond describing what is happening in the art/media and focus on what it communicates about aging identities and why that matters
General advice – stay engaged weekly, take notes during media exposure, and consistently connect artistic examples back to gerontological frameworks

How do you describe the course to students when they ask "What is this class about?" (without using the catalog description)?
In this course, we learn about how aging and older adulthood are portrayed in art and media and how those portrayals shape how we see ourselves and others as we age. We analyze films, television, literature, photography, and visual art to better understand what messages they send about aging and older adulthood, paying special attention to storytelling choices, character arcs, symbolism, and whose voices are centered or excluded. You will learn to apply media literacy and gerontological concepts to determine whether the representations are realistic, diverse, and constructive, or stereotypical and limiting. In seated sections, you will also engage in community-based experiences, such as supporting an art exhibition featuring older adult artists and collaborating across generations to promote age-positive narratives.

Beyond meeting a General Education requirement, what benefits can students realize from choosing this course?
Increased media literacy related to aging representation
Greater awareness of how stereotypes influence physical, psychological, and social aspects of aging
Understanding how negative portrayals and cultural narratives about aging can contribute to fear of aging, perpetuate internalized ageism, and shape identity development over time
Skills to advocate for more accurate and diverse depictions of older adults
Improved ability to engage in thoughtful conversations about identity across generations

Other than your major/minor/certificate students, what groups of students could find this course relevant to their degree program or career path?
Because media influences public perception across all sectors, students in many disciplines benefit from understanding how identity narratives are constructed and how they can contribute to more inclusive representations. This may include students in communication, media, film, journalism, art, design, creative writing, education, marketing and advertising, psychology and counseling, social work and human services, public health, and diversity and inclusion-related fields.