

**PSY 697 – Special Topics: Cognitive Aging**  
Spring 2015 -- Online Course

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**Office Hours:** Virtual on Mondays from 10-12 and 1-4 pm; please see eCollege about how to correspond with me virtually

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**Required Book for Purchase:** Powell, D. H. (2011). *The Aging Intellect*. New York: Routledge

*Note:* Other assigned readings (i.e., peer-reviewed articles and chapters) are located in eCollege in Docsharing.

**Course Description:**

This is a special topics course on cognitive aging. We will discuss cognitive processes such as processing speed, attention, different forms of memory, and decision making, and how these processes change with age. Keep in mind that the average life expectancy has increased, but individuals do not merely want to live longer; instead they want to optimally age, which includes physical, mental, and cognitive aspects. Given the emphasis on “optimal aging,” we will consider factors that are associated with higher cognitive performance in late adulthood.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Contrast different research approaches when studying adult aging
2. Identify trends in cognitive performance in late adulthood
3. Summarize factors related to optimal aging versus non-optimal aging, and consider ways in which we can promote optimal aging
4. Evaluate published research on cognitive aging

*Note:* Course Objectives 1-3 are related to the quizzes and discussion postings. Course Objective 4 is assessed via discussion postings, article summary PowerPoint, and the final written report.

**Course Format:**

This is an online course through eCollege. The course is organized into units. In each unit you will read content from the Powell and/or required supplemental readings (i.e., peer-reviewed articles and/or book chapters). There will be a discussion forum assignment for you to discuss the assigned readings. There will also be unit quizzes to help keep you up-to-date with the readings and facilitate the long-term retention of the material (Roediger & Karpicke, 2006). The course will conclude with a final written report that will be in the form of a book review of the Powell text. In order to succeed in this course, it is very important that you note the schedule of the units and the due dates for the assignments for each unit. As specified in the course policies below, I have a very strict late work policy. Therefore, it is important for you to keep up weekly with the assignments as this course will require much reading and completion of assignments.

## Course Philosophy:

In all of my classes my philosophy is that courses should be both educational and interesting to students. Many of you will work with older adults in an applied setting, and the Powell text comes from a perspective of a clinician. Thus, for many of you this course will directly overlap with your professional arena. Furthermore, we are all aging, and we have friends and family that are in the latter half of the adult lifespan. Therefore, the content of this course will be informative in one's everyday personal life. I understand that there are age-related changes in cognition, and I look for ways to incorporate the Selection, Optimization, and Compensation (SOC) Model (Baltes & Baltes, 1990). I take the glass-half-full approach to aging and consider aspects that will facilitate optimal aging. I encourage you to take this approach and see aging as an opportunity for development and action.

## Course Assignments:

- I. Discussion Postings** – Because this is an online course, discussion through written dialogue is critical. This helps students feel engaged in the course, and it also allows for students to enhance their writing skills. Students will participate in online discussions via the Discussion Forum on eCollege. Specific instructions for each week's Discussion Forum will be posted for each week. *All discussion postings must be professionally written (i.e., proofread, grammatically correct, and formal tone) and provide textual evidence to back up claims.* In other words, you must relate the content of your posting to the assigned readings. This will give you practice supporting your views with research-based evidence rather than opinions and/or anecdotes. ***Discussion postings are worth 20% of your grade.***
- II. Quizzes** – Quizzes will be administered to provide an assessment of your knowledge of the assigned chapter reading for the week. These quizzes will be taken without aid (i.e., closed notes, closed book, and no Internet aid). You will have to retrieve from your memory your responses. Each student can drop one quiz grade. ***Quizzes are worth 20% of your course grade.***
- III. Article PowerPoint Presentation** – Groups of two to three students will prepare a brief presentation to summarize and evaluate an assigned article from the “Cognitive Processes Specifics” units of the course (Units 5-7). The instructor will randomly assign students to groups and articles. The article summary PowerPoint Presentation is due the first day of the unit. Specifically, if your group is assigned an article in Unit 5: Memory Trends, your group PowerPoint will be due March 23. If you are assigned an article in Unit 6: Attention and Arousal Trends, your group PowerPoint is due April 6. Finally, if you are assigned an article in Unit 7: Decision Making and Language Trends, your group PowerPoint is due April 20. The group PowerPoints must be posted in DocSharing by 11:59 pm on the due date. ***The article PowerPoint presentation is worth 20%.***
- IV. Written Report – Book Review** –In our profession we must evaluate written information. Formally, this can be achieved by writing article critiques and book reviews, although informally we are constantly evaluating information. In this course you will be required to write a book review on the Powell text. The book review will be in accordance with a

review that would be published in PSYC Critiques or a peer-reviewed article (e.g., Journal of Women and Aging). Information about the format of the book review is located on eCollege. ***The written report is worth 40%.***

*\* The gradebook in eCollege shows the total point and assigned weights per assignment. When I have graded the assignments, I will update the gradebook so that you can access them.*

### **Grade Distribution:**

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	Below 60

### **Course Policies**

**University Codes of Conduct:** Texas A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained. “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment” (*Code of Student Conduct’ from online Student Guide Handbook*)

**Plagiarism:** Texas A&M University-Commerce views plagiarism as a serious offense. Plagiarism occurs when individuals take ideas and/or words from another source and claim these ideas as their own without giving credit to the original author(s). This can include copying words from an Internet website, reading an article and taking the authors ideas without giving them credit, or writing work that is remarkably similar to other written work (e.g., Changing words to synonyms is still plagiarism). If any written work contains ideas that are not your own, you need to give credit to the author(s) by including citations. Instructors are obligated to report instances of plagiarism to university officials. Please refer to the American Psychology Association (APA) manual for instructions on citing materials. When in doubt, ask me. ***Ignorance will not be tolerated as an excuse for plagiarism.*** Acts of plagiarism on any written assignment, including discussion postings, will result in severe consequences, including the possibility of receiving a zero in the course. Acts of plagiarism will be reported to the department head.

**Scholarly Expectations: All works submitted for credit must be original works created by the scholar uniquely for the class.** It is considered inappropriate and unethical to make duplicate submissions of a single work for credit in multiple classes, unless specifically requested by the instructor.

**Late Work: I have a very strict late work policy, and the penalty imposed depends on the course assignment. *Quizzes and discussion postings:*** Quizzes and discussion postings must be completed on time. No late quizzes or posts will be graded. ***Article PowerPoint Presentation and Written Report:*** If the assignment is turned in within 24 hours of the due date, a 10-point penalty will be imposed. If they assignment is turned in between 24-48 hours of the due date, a 20-point penalty will be imposed. If the assignment is submitted more than 48 hours late, it will automatically be scored as a zero (i.e., no

credit granted). **\*\* Please note that computer issues will not be considered as an excuse for failing to submit any assignment on time. It is the student's responsibility to make sure that assignments are turned in on time. Therefore, do not wait until the very end to complete an assignment.** This will help ensure that you turn in the assignment on time if you are having a technology issue (i.e., you can find another computer, call the Help Desk for support, etc.).\*\*

**Netiquette:** Offensive language and aggressive correspondence online will not be tolerated. Students are expected to be respectful of others' opinions when communicating. See University Codes of Conduct section above.

**Technical Support:** This course is supported by Texas A&M University–Commerce through the eCollege course management system. There is a Student Orientation Tutorial in eCollege if you are unfamiliar with it. If you have technology questions please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by clicking the HelpDesk link in the Help pages in eCollege or by sending an email directly to [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org). You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511. If you cannot access the course shell, you should contact the Help Desk.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: **Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Gee Library, Room 132, Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835; Fax (903) 468-8148; [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu).**

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Unit	Week	Dates	Assigned Readings	Assignments
1 Introduction	Weeks 1 & 2	Jan. 20 – Feb. 1	➤ Powell: Introduction & Chapter 1 ➤ Assigned Readings posted in eCollege*	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
2 Physical Aspects of Cognitive Aging	Weeks 3 & 4	Feb. 2 – Feb. 15	➤ Powell: Chapter 2 & Chapter 3 ➤ Assigned Readings posted in eCollege*	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
3 Lifestyle Habits & Actions	Weeks 4 & 5	Feb. 16 – Mar. 1	➤ Powell: Chapter 4 & Chapter 5 ➤ Assigned Readings posted in eCollege*	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
4 Types of Cognitive Agers – Optimal, Normal, & High-Risk	Weeks 6 & 7	Mar. 2 – Mar. 15	➤ Powell: Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
Spring Break	Week 8	Mar. 16 – Mar. 22	➤ None	➤ None
5 Memory Trends <sup>†</sup>	Weeks 9 & 10	Mar. 23 – Apr. 5	➤ Assigned Readings posted in eCollege*	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
6 Attention & Arousal Trends <sup>†</sup>	Weeks 11 & 12	Apr. 6 – Apr. 19	➤ Assigned Readings posted in eCollege*	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
7 Decision Making & Language Trends <sup>†</sup>	Weeks 13 & 14	Apr. 20 – May 3	➤ Assigned Readings posted in eCollege*	➤ Discussion Posting ➤ Quiz over assigned readings
8 Culmination & Critique	Week 15 & Part of Week 16	May 4 – May 12	➤ Optional Reading: Powell Chapter 9	➤ Book Review due by 11:59 pm on May 12

**Overview & Applications**

**Cognitive Processes Specifics**

\* To view the “Assigned Readings posted in eCollege,” please see DocSharing.

† Groups assignments are scheduled for Units 5-7. The instructor will post in eCollege the Article PowerPoint Presentation schedule by the third week of class.