

Psychology of Aging

PSYC 114

Fall 2026 Section 01 In Person 3 Unit(s) 08/19/2026 to 12/07/2026 Modified 08/18/2026

Contact Information

Instructor	Ángel Villicaña, M.S.
Email/Contact	Angel.villicana@sjsu.edu
Office Hours	Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30pm -2:30pm or by appointment (DMH #230 or request a Zoom link). First office hours begin on Week 2.

Course Information

Class	Date/Time	Location
PSYC 114-01 (lecture)	Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:00pm - 4:15pm	DMH 165

Course Canvas Page: <https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1629961>

Course Description and Requisites

Psychological development of middle-aged and older adults emphasizing normative (typical) development in the context of cognitive, socioemotional, biological, and cultural processes. Course content also includes age-related health problems and their prevention.

Prerequisite: PSYC 001.

Letter Graded

Classroom Protocols

Communication

Please reach out whenever you have questions, concerns, or curiosities! Meeting after lecture or during office hours is a great way to get to know your instructors, ask questions about the field, and share any course-related concerns. For in-person interactions, please speak directly and follow-up via email or Canvas messages when possible.

You may contact me via email (angel.villicana@sjsu.edu) or Canvas messaging. Please include the class and section number in the subject line. I aim to respond within 1–2 business days. Messages sent over the weekend may not receive a response until Monday. Out of respect for your own time, I do not expect a response outside of these hours as well.

I encourage you all to reach out often and early. Your presence and contributions to this class matter. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help improve your learning experience.

Office Hours

My regular office hours are Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30pm - 2:30pm in DMH #230. I am also available by appointment, either in person or via Zoom (depending on your schedules). I encourage you to use office hours to discuss course material, assignments, or any questions about your progress in the class.

Respectful Learning Environment

We strive for a classroom where all students feel safe, supported, and heard. This class may cover some sensitive topics or shared personal experiences. Please:

- Listen when others are speaking and contribute constructively.
- Respect diverse perspectives and shared experiences.
- Treat the class like a community and collaborative space.

These guidelines are not final and are subject to student feedback and shared input.

Accessibility & Accommodations

San José State University is committed to providing equitable access to learning for all students. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/aec/index.php>) will notify me of students with documented accommodations. However, it is your responsibility to meet with me if you would like to discuss how your accommodations may apply in this course, especially since there are no traditional exams.

With that said: This class does not require formal documentation in order for your learning needs to be met. Students may have pending AEC approval or experience unexpected emergencies. Please reach out early in the semester so we can plan together and ensure your academic success.

AI Policy

Generative artificial intelligence tools—software that creates new text, images, computer code, audio, video, and other content—are widely available. Well-known examples include ChatGPT (text) and DALL·E (images). This policy governs all such tools, including those released during our semester together. AI tools

are generally not allowed but may be approved for specific tasks or activities with prior instructor consent.

Conditions and Contexts:

- *Who and When* - Students may feel compelled to use AI tools when their academic needs are not being met. This may be due to unexpected time constraints, translation or language barriers, or lack of instructional support. In this class, you will have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning growth. Perfectionism is not expected from you, but *learning* is.
- *Specific Tools* - Students may use only the following AI tools: Grammarly, Hemingway Editor, Antidote, or Litmaps (best paired with Zotero). The use of unapproved tools is prohibited (e.g., ChatGPT, Claude, Thesify, Scite, Quillbot, etc.).
- *Process* - Students must disclose their use of AI tools in all submitted work. If you use AI on assignments, you must document and credit the tool. Cite the tool using APA format (as software), and include a brief (25–100 word) description of how you used it. Add this paragraph at the end of your text, before the References list; it is not included in the word count.

Important considerations: AI tools are trained on limited, pre-existing datasets that may be out-of-date or include copyrighted material. Reliance on AI can result in plagiarism, copyright violations, or inaccurate content. You are responsible for ensuring that all submitted work reflects your own understanding, is accurate, and maintains academic integrity. Unauthorized or improper use of AI will be addressed under the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy. Consequences for a first offense may range in severity; repeated offenses may result in more serious academic review.

Consequences: If you use generative AI tools to complete assignments in this course in ways that I have not explicitly authorized, your grade on the assignment will be a zero, and I will report the violation to the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development (SCED). For repeated violations, your grade on the assignment will be a zero, you may be given a deduction of an entire letter grade in the course, and each violation will be reported to SCED. Depending on the specific circumstances, the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development (SCED) will determine the ultimate outcome of the academic integrity violation and whether further investigation is necessary

Attendance

According to University Policy F15-12, "Students are expected to attend all meetings for the courses in which they are enrolled as they are responsible for material discussed therein and active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit to all class members. In some cases, attendance is fundamental to course objectives; for example, students may be required to interact with others in the class. Attendance is the responsibility of the student. Participation may be used as a criterion for grading when the parameters and their evaluation are clearly defined in the course syllabus and the percentage of the overall grade is stated." Please see the assignments section in the syllabus to see how participation is scored in this class.

Credit Hour Definition

To be successful in courses at SJSU, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (a 3-unit class would be approximately 9 hours per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, and completing assignments. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>).

Program Information

Program learning outcomes (PLOs) are skills and knowledge that students will have achieved upon completion of the Psychology BA degree. Each course in our curriculum contributes to one or more of these PLOs. The PLOs for the Psychology BA degree are:

1. **Knowledge Base of Psychology.** Students will be able to demonstrate familiarity with the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings, and historical trends in psychology.
 2. **Research Methods in Psychology.** Students will be able to design, implement, and communicate basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and interpretations.
 3. **Critical Thinking Skills.** Students will be able to use critical and creative thinking, skeptical inquiry, and a scientific approach to address issues related to behavior and mental processes.
 4. **Applications of Psychology.** Students will be able to apply psychological principles to individual, interpersonal, group, and societal issues.
- Values in Psychology. Students will value empirical evidence, tolerate ambiguity, act ethically, and recognize their role and responsibility as a member of society.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **CLO 1:** Explain and identify changes in the structure of our population with regards to the changing demographic of older adults in the U.S. and internationally.
2. **CLO 2:** Explain and identify the biological/physical processes that occur during the aging process.
3. **CLO 3:** Be able to identify and discuss typical research designs used in the study of aging.
4. **CLO 4:** Identify lifespan changes in cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, personality, and social relationships, including which components of these domains do not change substantially with age.
5. **CLO 5:** Identify components of and explain theoretical models (psychological and biological) relevant to aging (socioemotional selectivity theory, continuity theory, random error theories, etc.).
6. **CLO 6:** Report on the aging process through the perspective of an older adult through completion of interviews and experiential exercises; integrate these experiences with theoretical models presented in class.
7. **CLO 7:** Discuss different viewpoints on the aging process gleaned from interactions with your peers.
8. **CLO 8:** Identify social determinants of optimal aging, such as socioeconomic status, healthcare accessibility, cultural responsiveness, and end-of-life-care.

This course addresses all five of the Psychology Department's Program Learning Outcomes (PLO). The relationship between each of the Program Learning Outcomes and the course are explained below.

1. **PLO 1 – Knowledge Base of Psychology:** You will develop an understanding of the roots of human culture by studying both the universals and individual differences observed in aging and the older adult experience across cultures, and will learn new ways to think about the interplay between culture and the natural world. You will learn more about how aging is not just something that happens to us, but that we can play an active role in.
2. **PLO 2 – Research Methods in Psychology:** During this course you will engage in assignments that help you to develop a better understanding of how research with older adults requires additional design considerations, how research with older adults is conducted, and how data can be interpreted to better inform our understanding of aging across cultures.
3. **PLO 3 – Critical Thinking Skills in Psychology:** A key goal of this course is to enhance your critical thinking skills by encouraging you to question how conclusions are drawn and to improve your understanding of how data can provide insight into important interpersonal and societal issues related to older adults.
4. **PLO 4 – Application of Psychology:** Psychology of Aging requires you to synthesize all the fields of psychology together, from neurons to neighborhoods, with attention to other themes from myriad disciplines (e.g., physiology, philosophy, genetics, economics, public policy, art, sociology, legal system) to understand how all aspects of our society impact the aging process and older adults.
5. **PLO 5 – Values in Psychology:** We will consider aging through multiple lenses, including such issues as social justice, poverty, and disabilities, with the goal of giving you new ways to think about both your own and our society's responsibilities towards older adults, as well as how you can impact your own aging.

Course Materials

Required Readings and Class Materials

Textbook

No textbook purchase is required for this class. Instead, we will be using an Open-source textbook for this course, made available on Canvas as a PDF and direct link:

Computer Access

Students will need access to the internet and the online Canvas site to submit assignments:

<https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1629961>

Submission of assignments may occur during class periods with an electronic device that can access the Canvas site (phone, tablet, or laptop). Courses with lab sections will have access to a desktop computer lab room during class time. If you do not have a laptop but would like one, you may borrow one from the [Student Computing Center in the SJSU library \(https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services\)](https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services).

Recommended Texts

These are not required for you to purchase, but will be useful throughout the course. Specific excerpts and resources will be linked and posted on Canvas regularly. If you have a resource you'd like to share and add to the class, please message me privately and ensure it is in a shareable format (e.g., not a private file or a broken link).

- APA Style website: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>
- APA Style Tutorial at <https://extras.apa.org/apastyle/basics-7e/>
- Purdue Owl APA Style Resource at <https://owl.purdue.edu/>
- American Psychological Association (2020). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Ed.).
- Condensed version of the American Psychological Association (2020). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Ed.)

Additional Readings and Materials

Supplemental articles, podcasts, and videos will be provided on Canvas as part of our learning materials. Please read all materials before the given lecture time. Documentaries or overly lengthy webinars will be implemented into class time.

University Resources for Students - Library Liaison

The SJSU library has a librarian who specializes in psychology (and other social sciences), and this librarian can serve as a very valuable resource for helping you to develop research ideas and locating appropriate research materials. The library also has an abundance of resources for doing psychology research. Psychology Librarian:

Christa Bailey: christa.bailey@sjsu.edu | 408-808-2422

Additional Course & Student Wellbeing Resources

Additional resources for student wellbeing as well as general writing resources are both available in their respective modules in Canvas. These can be found under the modules tab, at the very top. Please let me know if there is a resource or link that is broken or out of date.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Your grade in this course reflects steady engagement, skill development, and demonstrating your ability to apply research methods in psychology. Individually, you will be asked to design and progressively draft key components of the final paper. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are submitted via Canvas. Assignments will be evaluated based on responsiveness to prompts, accurate application of research methods, writing quality, and proper use of APA style when applicable. Detailed rubrics for each assignment are provided on Canvas.

Participation (20%)

Active participation is essential for your learning and for completing your final project. Participation will be assessed based on completion of in-class Canvas activities and active collaboration during peer-based tasks (100 points for the semester). Given the nature of these activities, you must be present in class to earn participation credit.

Submission: Activities are completed in-lecture with final responses uploaded to Canvas by the end of the week (Fridays, 11:59 PM).

Grading basis: Participation assignments are graded on effort, engagement, and completion.

Quizzes (10%)

Each quiz will consist of 10 multiple-choice questions. Each quiz will cover roughly three-four weeks of the material in the course, both class material and material covered in the text and readings for a total of 5 quizzes. You are allowed to reference your personal notes and reading materials, but you may not use other websites or AI tools to complete answers. Your responses are saved and there is no time limit to complete these. For instance, you may take a break during the quiz and complete as a later time, just as long as your final response is recorded before the deadline.

Submission: Completed on canvas, Quizzes open at the start of the week and are due by the end of the same week.

Grading basis: Quizzes are graded on accuracy and completion. There are 3 total attempts per quiz, highest score is kept. Reach out if you suspect an error or typo.

Activities (20%)

You will be asked to complete five activities throughout the semester (20 points each). These activities are designed to stimulate class discussion and to illustrate a point made in the readings and in class.

Submission: Upload your complete responses and interview materials (if applicable) to Canvas by the assigned due dates.

Grading basis: Lab activities are graded on accuracy, application of developmental theory, clarity of writing, and APA style. Detailed rubrics are posted on Canvas.

Final Project - Digital Story (50%)

This course satisfies the SJSU *culminating experience* requirement through an individual written paper, known as the Digital Story. The project will involve creating a digital audio story with an adult (middle-aged or older adult) with respect to issues of aging covered in the course. You will select a specific area(s) of interest (e.g., cognitive changes, friendship changes, health, transition into parenthood, work, life review) and explore with the interviewee these issues in their life. These digital stories are modeled after Storycorps (<http://storycorps.org> (<http://storycorps.org>)). Examine this website for a beginning list of questions you want to explore with your interviewee (<http://storycorps.org/record-your-story/great-questions/list/> (<http://storycorps.org/record-your-story/great-questions/list/>)). More details on the digital story and paper (including detailed rubrics) can be found in the document Digital Story under Assignments.

Four drafts will guide your project from a proposed idea to creating the components to a final edited paper (50 points each).

The fifth, and final milestone submission represents the finalized project written fully in APA 7th format (50 points). The finalized report is an 8-10 page APA-style paper (approx. 2,000–2,500 words, not including references and appendices) that integrates completely individual work, revises earlier drafts, and demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of aging development.

Submission: “ Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment.” The final exam/evaluation for this course is your final project, as noted above.

Complete by the hard deadline of Friday, December 11, 2026 by 5:15pm on Canvas. Please note the **earlier deadline** time, as this is the official final time set by registrar; No submissions will be accepted 24 hours after the original final deadline.

Grading: The final report will be evaluated on completeness, integration of feedback, writing quality, application of developmental theories, and adherence to APA style. Detailed rubrics are posted on Canvas.

✓ Grading Information

You will be assessed across four criteria in the course, culminating to a final research paper (participation, activities, quizzes, and the final paper components). Please read the information below to understand the late work policy, extra credit opportunities, as well as grading scale & breakdown.

Late Work & Grace Period

Individual writing assignments, such as the milestone drafts and lab activities, may be submitted up to 48 hours after the deadline with no penalty. After 48 hours, a 10% deduction per day applies; Canvas assignment closes after 10 days (not first 48-hour grace period). This **does not apply** to the final research paper.

Please reach out early or as soon as possible if you anticipate difficulty meeting a deadline. Communication before the due date can often prevent penalties and allow for extensions when needed.

Revisions: I highly recommend discussing the option of revising and improving your written work. A reminder of this will be shared periodically in lecture and noted in the assignments grades. You may resubmit a revised version of your written assignments for additional points; Submit any revised work within 1 week of receiving grades (Canvas sends notifications to your inbox when assignments are graded). This **does not apply** to the final research paper.

Extra Credit (2%)

Opportunities may be provided for students up to two percent of the total course grade. These may range from one-page literature reviews, video essays, or research event summaries submitted. Submission portals with further instructions are provided on Canvas.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percent
A plus	97 or higher

A	93 to 96.99
A minus	90 to 92.99
B plus	87 to 89.99
B	83 to 86.99
B minus	80 to 82.99
C plus	77 to 79.99
C	73 to 76.99
C minus	70 to 72.99
D plus	67 to 69.99
D	63 to 66.99
D minus	60 to 62.99
F	59 or below

Breakdown

Assignment Category	% of Grade	Points
Participation Activities	20%	100 points (in lecture throughout the semester)
Quizzes	10%	50 points (5 x 10 points each)
Activities	20%	100 points (5 x 20 points each)
Final Project	50%	250 points (across all four drafts + finalized version x 50 points each)

Total	100%	500 points
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University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

This semester, we will be covering multiple theories and research in gerontology and developmental psychology while building on your final project piece by piece. Please see below for the full class schedule (subject to change with Canvas notification). Each assignment is started in class and a finalized response is expected by the end of the week. Most **assignments are due end of week, Fridays, by 11:59pm**, with the Final Project as the only exception. See Canvas for more in detail assignment instructions and rubrics.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignments Due</u>
Week 1 - 08/19	Course introduction	Syllabus	N/A
Week 2 - 08/24 Week 2 - 08/26 Week 3 - 08/31	Unit 1: Introductions to Lifespan Development, Gerontology Theories, and Research Methods	Textbook: 1: Introduction to Lifespan Development and Adulthood 2: Lifespan Development Theories 3: Research in Lifespan Development Articles: posted on Canvas	Weekly participation due each Friday by 11:59pm Activity 1 due end of Week 3 (09/04) Quiz 1 due end of Week 3

Week 4 - Campus Closed 09/07 Week 4 - 09/09 Week 5 - 09/14 Week 5 - 09/16	Unit 2: Health and Aging in Early Adulthood	Textbook: 4: Emerging Adulthood and Early Adulthood 5: Cognitive Development in Early Adulthood6: Psychosocial Development in Emerging and Early Adulthood7: Relationships and Intimacy in Early Adulthood Articles: posted on Canvas	Weekly participation Activity 2 due end of Week 5 Draft 1 due end of Week 5 Quiz 2 due end of Week 5
Week 6- 09/21 Week 6- 09/23 Week 7- 09/28 Week 7- 09/30 Week 8- 10/05 Week 8- 10/07	Unit 3: Middle Adulthood	Textbook: 8: Middle Adulthood 9: Cognition, Social & Emotional Development Among Middle Adulthood 10: Relationships in Middle Adulthood Articles: posted on Canvas	Weekly participation Activity 3 due end of Week 7 Draft 2 due end of Week 8 Quiz 3 due end of Week 8
Week 9- 10/12 Week 9- 10/14 Week 10- 10/19 Week 10- 10/21	Unit 4: Older Adulthood	Textbook: 11: Older Adulthood 12: Physical and Sensory Changes in Older Adulthood 13: Brain Functioning and Sleep in Older Adulthood Articles: posted on Canvas	Weekly participation Activity 4 due end of Week 9 Draft 3 due end of Week 10 Quiz 4 due end of Week 10
Week 11- 10/26 Week 11- 10/28 Week 12- 11/02 Week 12- 11/04 Week 13- 11/09 Week 13- Campus Closed 11/11 Week 14 - 11/16 Week 14- 11/18* Sensitive Topics* Week 15- 11/23 Week 15- Campus Closed 11/25-11/27	Unit 5: Dead. Now What?	Textbook: 14: End-of-Life Decision Making and Care 15: Death, Mourning, and Bereavement Articles: posted on Canvas	Weekly participation Activity 5 due end of Week 11 (10/16) Draft 4 due end of Week 12 and ready for individual check-ins Quiz 5 due end of Week 15

Week 16- 11/30 Week 16- 12/02	Special Lectures	Textbook 15: Death, Mourning, and Bereavement Articles: posted on Canvas	Final revisions and remaining extensions due by end of Week 16
Last Week of Instruction- 12/07	Individual Final Project and Course Check-ins	N/A	Final Project (Draft 5) due Friday, December 11th, by 5:15PM (Registrar's Finals Schedule)