

Our major provides students with a multidisciplinary foundation of core knowledge and skills in aging and older adulthood drawn from the fields of gerontology, psychology, social work, health, political science, communications, and business. Graduates who have a deeper understanding of the issues for adults in mid-to-late life will provide better services to these diverse populations when they enter the workforce. When looking at our curriculum and how we can help bolster WOU students' expertise on aging and increase their marketability, we have developed a 16-credit certificate consisting of three core classes that include an introduction to aging and address the biological, psychological, and social aspects of aging. In addition, we would ask students to select one elective course that can either be our first level (60-hour) practicum course or another course within the major that pertains to their major or career aspirations. We feel that this collection of courses will provide an excellent base for student knowledge and skill development as they seek careers and graduate programs that may interface with aging and older adulthood.

Our rationale for offering the certificate includes the following:

1. A Gerontology Certificate will help students develop an expertise in understanding older adults and aging, providing the basis for understanding the populations that they will largely serve in their chosen career fields. They will increase their expertise in delivering quality information, care, and products to older adults and their family members.
2. Helping Western Oregon University students to become better prepared for the workforce is essential. Jobs focusing on aging and older adult populations are in high demand whether they involve direct service, business and marketing, health and wellness, long-term care communities, and/or advocacy with older adults. We also have data from our comprehensive placement survey (administered to all Gerontology majors between 2012-2018) that graduates with backgrounds in gerontology are being accepted in graduate programs at high rates in such areas as occupational therapy, social work, nursing, and health.
3. Since we have the only undergraduate gerontology bachelor of science and applied baccalaureate programs in the state of Oregon (and Northwest), we feel we have the expertise to offer this certificate and teach it in a way that enhances the major and career pathways for WOU students in majors outside of Gerontology.

The courses in the certificate could apply to a minor in gerontology

Program or Requirement Title(*required*)

Aging and Older Adulthood

Description(*required*)

Aging and Older Adulthood

Mission

With the increase in older adult populations in Oregon and across the globe, trained professionals in a broad array of career fields will need to understand the physical, cognitive, and social changes that occur as we age. Our Gerontology: Aging and Older Adulthood Certificate will help students learn more about aging in context; develop important competencies related to organizations and businesses that serve older adults; and enhance their career and graduate school outcomes.

Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the cognitive, physical, and social changes associated with older adulthood
2. Identify how an understanding of aging complements career paths

Core Courses

- GERO 320: Introduction to Aging **Credits: 4**
- GERO 360: Cognitive and Physical Changes in Aging **Credits: 4**
- GERO 455: Social Ties and Aging **Credits: 4**

Choose One

- GERO 340 Intersectionality: Inequalities & Vulnerabilities in Older Adulthood **Credits: 4**
- GERO 410 Practicum I **Credits: 4**
- GERO 415 Aging in Our Physical and Social Environments **Credits: 4**
- GERO 420 Global Aging **Credits: 4**
- GERO 425 Reminiscence, Life Review, and Aging **Credits: 4**
- GERO 430 Palliative Care and Chronic Illness **Credits: 4**
- GERO 460 Housing and Long-Term Care for Older Adults **Credits: 4**
- GERO 480 Alzheimer’s Disease and Other Dementias Management **Credits: 4**
- GERO 484 Death, Dying and Grief **Credits: 4**

Total Credits: 16

Program Outcomes

| Learning Outcome | Alignment to ULOs |
|--|----------------------|
| 2. Identify how an understanding of aging complements career paths | |
| 1. Explain the cognitive, physical, and social changes associated with older adulthood | Integrative Learning |

Targeted Professions, required coursework and total credits

1. **Targeted Professions:** Any career path that would interface with an older population, in particular nursing, social work, community health, public policy and administration, business, occupational therapy, geriatric medicine, and others. Some of these career paths will require additional graduate work (e.g., occupational therapy) but others (e.g., public policy and administration) require an undergraduate degree and having a focus in gerontology may work well for future careers for this major if they are interested in working with such agencies as Department of Human Services, Social Security Administration, Area Agencies on Aging, etc.

2. Required Coursework and Credits

Core Courses

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- GERO 455: Social Ties and Aging **Credits: 4**

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Total Credits: 16

Programs affected/consulted(*required*)

Please include the name(s) of those contacted, with the date(s) and the result(s) of the consultation/collaboration.

This does not affect other areas although we have consulted with our Psychology colleagues within Behavioral Sciences.