



# Graduate Student Handbook 2021 - 2022

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## **Gerontology Institute Georgia State University**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Gerontology Institute is responsible for the development and coordination of instruction, research, and community service activities in Gerontology for Georgia State University. The Institute is a unit of the College of Arts and Sciences and collaborates with colleges, schools, departments, and institutes across the university to carry out its multidisciplinary academic and research programs.

The Institute's origins at GSU date back to 1973, when the Department of Sociology created a master's degree track in Social Gerontology. In 1977, Sociology began offering a certificate in Gerontology to students in any graduate degree program. In 1978, the Gerontology Center was established to coordinate that credential. The Center added an undergraduate certificate in Gerontology in 1980 and an undergraduate minor in 1997. Both certificates are designed for those planning a career in aging, for those already employed in the field, and for those seeking a greater understanding of the aging process and gerontological theory and research.

Since 1995, full-time Gerontology faculty have pursued an active program of research, both on their own and in conjunction with affiliate faculty in other departments. In 2003, the Gerontology Center was renamed the "Gerontology Institute" to allow for the creation of a master's degree program in Gerontology, which was initiated Fall, 2004.

The Gerontology Institute is comprised of 1) core faculty members, who are full-time in the Institute; 2) joint-appointed faculty members (who serve two units in some way); 3) affiliate faculty members, whose primary appointments are in their home departments, but who share responsibility with the core faculty for the Institute's programs; and 3) an administrative staff to organize and manage Institute work or to manage externally funded research projects.

The Gerontology Institute has a long and proud history at Georgia State and has contributed to the career training of many of the leaders of the field of aging in Georgia and beyond. We welcome you to the Institute and celebrate you on your decision to join us! Be assured that every member of the faculty and staff of the Gerontology Institute is dedicated to your success, both during your academic studies and in your later careers.

# CORE FACULTY AND STAFF

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## AFFILIATE FACULTY

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# NEXT STEPS FOR NEWLY ADMITTED STUDENTS

New students should contact the Director of Graduate Studies for advisement and information regarding orientation and course registration (Wendy Simonds, [wsimonds@gsu.edu](mailto:wsimonds@gsu.edu).)

All new students must set up a student email account and access their network account. Visit the College of Arts and Sciences website, <https://cas.gsu.edu/graduate-admissions/newly-admitted-next-steps/> for information and instructions. Please read this entire page carefully and be sure to update your emergency contact information, submit your immunization record, and obtain a PantherCard.

All student services are listed on the [GSU Graduate School](#) website in the drop-down menu under “New/Current Students.”

## Registration, Tuition, and Fees

Visit <http://registrar.gsu.edu/registration/registration-guide/> for information on course registration.

For current tuition and fees, see: <https://sfs.gsu.edu/resources/tuition/tuition-breakdown/>, and select “Graduate.” For information on financial aid, see: <https://sfs.gsu.edu> (more on this below). **Be sure to check your financial account and resolve any issues well in advance of the fee payment deadline.**

**Students should be aware that each course is offered once a year, typically in the same semester (excluding Special Topics courses).** Classes that require authorization will be noted on the Schedule of Classes. Special authorization, including overflows, can usually be obtained for a course from the instructor or an advisor in the Gerontology Institute. If a class you wish to take is closed, contact the instructor via email to determine whether an overflow is possible. **Students with graduate assistantships (GAs) must register for 12 credit hours each Fall and Spring semester, and 9 hours in Summer terms. Failure to maintain 12 credit hours for GRA’s (9 in Summer) will result in a loss of funding. GAs should register for a minimum of 3 or more hours of “Research Practicum” in order to reach a total of 12 hours a semester (and 9 in Summer).**

## Student Email and Listserv

The primary means of communication between GSU and all students is through GSU student email and the listserv. All registration information and other important announcements from the Institute and the Graduate Office will be sent via GSU email accounts and the listserv. **It is mandatory and so, so important that you join the listserv and check your GSU email frequently.**

## PantherCard

The PantherCard is the official Georgia State University identification card. It is also used as a library card, an access card to some campus facilities, and a debit card (PantherCash and PantherMeals). Additional information about the PantherCard program is available at <https://services.gsu.edu/panthercard/>.

### **Immunization**

All students must meet immunization requirements and provide a record of immunization to the Health Services Office before registering for classes. You may view immunization requirements and obtain the immunization certificate forms on the Health Services website, <https://health.gsu.edu>. Information on free COVID-19 vaccines can be found here: <https://ahead.gsu.edu/covid-19-resources/covid-19-vaccine/>.

### **Campus Map Link:**

<https://georgiastateuniversity.myuvm.com/map-parking/>.

### **Parking and Transportation**

Georgia State University offers three options for traveling to and from campus: driving to campus and parking on-site, driving to an off-site parking area and taking a shuttle to campus, and discounted monthly MARTA cards. A limited number of monthly passes are available for a fee for on-campus parking. Daily passes at reduced rates also can be purchased for on-campus parking. Shuttle services transport students from off-campus parking at Turner Field (Atlanta Braves stadium) to the campus at no charge. All parking at the University main campus and at university-controlled off-campus lots requires the pre-registration of all vehicles. A valid university parking permit must be displayed at all times. Students should register their vehicles at <https://parking.gsu.edu>. A valid PantherCard is required for all parking transactions.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE**

The Office of Student Financial Services provides assistance to Georgia State University students through scholarships, grants, and loans. To learn more or to fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, visit the website: <https://sfs.gsu.edu>. In addition, the Gerontology Institute awards scholarships and graduate research assistantships (GRAs) on a competitive basis to students enrolled in graduate gerontology programs.

### **Gerontology Institute Scholarships**

The Gerontology Institute awards several scholarships annually to outstanding students. Information about applying is available on the Institute website and additional information about scholarships at GSU can be found at <https://gerontology.gsu.edu/scholarships-awards/>. Gerontology Institute Scholarship competitions will be announced in the first few weeks of each Spring Semester. Please watch for notifications regarding scholarship applications from the Institute.



## Graduate Assistantships

A limited number of Graduate Assistantships (GAs) are available to qualified gerontology degree students. Under faculty supervision, graduate assistants help gerontology faculty members with research projects (GRAs) or with teaching duties (GTAs). The expected workload is eight hours per week during the semester. GAs are usually awarded as an annual appointment for the academic year plus summer term and are limited to two years. **Tuition is waived for GAs, but students are still responsible for paying student fees.** GAs receive a 10% discount on books at the University Bookstore.

Gerontology graduate students who have research skills or strong interest and knowledge in other fields are also eligible to seek GRAs in other departments and units in the University. Additional GRAs may be available through funded research projects and may involve different hours.

## Student Travel Policy

Whenever our budget allows, we offer travel allowances for students to attend professional conferences. Each year some of the Institute's faculty and students attend one or more of the following conferences:

- Gerontological Society of America (GSA) <https://www.geron.org>
- Georgia Gerontology Society (GGS) <https://georgiagerontologysociety.org>
- Southern Gerontological Society (SGS) <https://southerngerontologicalsociety.org>

These conferences provide students with the opportunities to network with professionals in their field of study and educate themselves about the current issues in the field. They also give students a chance to present their own work before a professional audience of peers and faculty.

Although the Institute would like to have the resources available to pay all travel expenses for all students for these trips, our budget is limited and amounts may vary depending on the location of the conference and amount of funds available. Students are encouraged to seek financial support offered by any conference they wish to attend by participating in scholarship and paper competitions, volunteering to assist with conference activities, sharing lodging with other students, etc.

In distributing Gerontology Institute travel funds, preference will be given to:

- Students who are on a conference program (e.g., co-author/presenter of a paper or poster).
- Students who have not previously attended and received funds for a conference during that academic year.

Unfortunately, the University cannot provide funds in advance for student travel costs. As a result students will need to make their travel arrangements on their own

and pay for the costs via credit or debit card. At least one month before traveling, students must submit a Travel Authorization form to the Department Specialist. An accounting of expenses and required receipts MUST be submitted to the Department Specialist within one month of the end of the conference, or reimbursement cannot be paid.

Any questions regarding this policy should be addressed to the Institute's Business Manager.

## **Academic Integrity**

**Students are responsible for knowing and adhering to GSU's policies on academic conduct. Violations of this policy, such as plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or double-submission, may result in expulsion from the program. See: <https://codeofconduct.gsu.edu>.**

**All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean's Office.** More than one instance may result in expulsion. Students should utilize University-provided software (Turnitin) to ensure that they have not plagiarized.

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

## Master of Arts in Gerontology

(All courses are 3 semester hours)

**Prerequisite required of students without previous coursework in statistics.**

SOCI 3010 Social Statistics or another approved statistics course

### 1. Core courses (15 semester hours)

○ **Two required courses (6 hours):**

GERO 8000 Seminar in Gerontology

GERO 8100 Research Methods in Gerontology

*(Both of these are typically offered Fall semesters.)*

○ **Choose three courses (9 hours):**

GERO 7110 Aging Policy and Services

GERO 7200 Health and the Older Adult

GERO 8116 Sociology of Aging

GERO 8124 Diversity and Aging

GERO 8320 Psychology of Aging

### 2. Concentration requirements (3 courses or 9 hours) in one of the two concentrations below.

#### A. Administration Concentration

GERO 8200 Aging Program Administration (*typically offered Fall semesters*)

GERO 8850 Capstone Seminar (*typically offered Spring semesters*)

GERO 8910 Gerontology Internship

#### B. Research Concentration

An approved advanced methods course (Such as GERO 8110; GERO 8115; HIST 6920; PH 7521; PT 8500; SOCI 8342)

GERO 8999 Thesis Research (6 hours)

A thesis approved by the student's thesis committee and the Director of the Gerontology Institute

### 3. Four elective courses (12 hours)

GERO 6475 Communication and Aging

GERO 7110 Aging Policy Services (if not taken in the core)

GERO 7200 Health and the Older Adult (if not taken in the core)

GERO 7260 Aging Practice, Policy, and Research (if not required)

GERO 8102 Life Course Sociology

GERO 8110 Evaluation Research in Gerontology (if not taken as a requirement)

GERO 8115 Qualitative Gerontology (if not taken as a requirement)

GERO 8116 Sociology of Aging (if not taken in the core)

GERO 8119	Global Aging and Social Policies
GERO 8122	Death, Dying, and Loss
GERO 8124	Diversity and Aging (if not taken in the core)
GERO 8130	Intimate Ties in Later Life
GERO 8200	Aging Program Administration (if not required in concentration)
GERO 8320	Psychology of Aging (if not taken in the core)
GERO 8330	Mental Health and Aging
GERO 8340	Dementia
GERO 8700	Special Topics in Gerontology
GERO 8800	Directed Reading in Gerontology (requires special permission)
GERO 8910	Gerontology Internship (if not required in concentration)
NUTR 7105	Geriatric Nutrition

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS\*

## Master of Arts in Gerontology

Administration Concentration (36 Credit Hours)

Student Name:

Faculty Mentor:

Entry Semester:

Catalog Semester:

**GRA (yes or no):**

(If yes, GRAs are required to register for at least 12 credit hours per semester in FA & SP, 9 in SU)

Course Number	Course Name	Credit Hours	Semester/Year Completed
Core Courses (15 credit hours)			
Required:			
GERO 8000	Seminar in Gerontology	3	
GERO 8100	Research Methods	3	
And choose <b>three</b> of the following:			
GERO 7110	Aging Policy Services	3	
GERO 7200	Health and the Older Adult	3	
GERO 8116	Sociology of Aging	3	
GERO 8124	Diversity and Aging	3	
GERO 8320	Psychology of Aging	3	
Administration Concentration Requirements (9 credit hours)			
GERO 8200	Aging Program Administration	3	
GERO 8850	Capstone Seminar	3	
GERO 8910	Gerontology Internship	3	
Elective Requirements (12 credit hours)			
		3	
		3	
		3	
		3	

Please submit all [milestone completions](#) and [course substitutions](#) to the Office of Graduate Services.

***\*This is the form we use to keep track of your progress. Please use it to keep track of your progress, too. It is important to keep track, because you must declare your intent to graduate two semesters in advance.***

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS\*

**Master of Arts in Gerontology**  
Research Concentration (36 Credit Hours)

**Student Name:**

**Faculty Mentor:**

**Entry Semester:**

**Catalog Semester:**

**GRA (yes or no):**

(If yes, GRAs are required to register for at least 12 credit hours per semester in FA & SP, 9 in SU)

Course Number	Course Name	Credit Hours	Semester/Year Completed
Core Courses (15 credit hours)			
Required:			
GERO 8000	Seminar in Gerontology	3	
GERO 8100	Research Methods	3	
And choose <b>three</b> of the following:			
GERO 7110	Aging Policy Services	3	
GERO 7200	Health and the Older Adult	3	
GERO 8116	Sociology of Aging	3	
GERO 8124	Diversity and Aging	3	
GERO 8320	Psychology of Aging	3	
Research Concentration Requirements (9 credit hours)			
	Approved Advanced Methods	3	
GERO 8999	Thesis Research Hours	6	
A thesis approved by the student's thesis committee (note details below)			
Elective Requirements (12 credit hours)			
		3	
		3	
		3	
		3	

Please submit all [milestone completions](#) and [course substitutions](#) to the Office of Graduate Services.

Thesis Details

Title:

Thesis Committee Chair & Members:

Proposal Defended Date:

Completion Date/Graduation Semester:

***\*This is the form we use to keep track of your progress. Please use it to keep track of your progress, too. It is important to keep track, because you must declare your intent to graduate two semesters in advance.***

# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

## Graduate Certificate in Gerontology

(18 credit hours. All courses are 3 semester hours)

### 1. Core courses (9 hours)

- Select **three** of the following courses:

GERO 7110	Aging Policy and Services
GERO 7200	Health and the Older Adult
GERO 7260	Aging Practice, Policy, and Research
GERO 8116	Sociology of Aging
GERO 8320	Psychology of Aging

### 2. Elective courses (6 hours)

- Select two of the following courses:

GERO 6475	Communication and Aging
GERO 7110	Aging Policy Services (if not taken in the core)
GERO 7200	Health and the Older Adult (if not taken in the core)
GERO 7260	Aging Practice, Policy, and Research (if not taken in the core)
GERO 8000	Seminar in Gerontology
GERO 8102	Life Course Sociology
GERO 8116	Sociology of Aging (if not taken in the core)
GERO 8119	Global Aging and Social Policies
GERO 8122	Death, Dying, and Loss
GERO 8124	Diversity and Aging
GERO 8130	Intimate Ties in Later Life
GERO 8200	Aging Program Administration
GERO 8320	Psychology of Aging (if not taken in the core)
GERO 8330	Mental Health and Aging
GERO 8340	Dementia
GERO 8700	Special Topics in Gerontology
GERO 8800	Directed Reading in Gerontology (requires special permission)

### 3. Internship (3 hours)

GERO 8910	Gerontology Internship or an approved alternate internship course
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# PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS\*

## Graduate Certificate in Gerontology

18 Credit Hours

**Student Name:**

**Entry Semester:**

**Catalog Semester:**

Course Number	Course Name	Credit Hours	Semester/Year Completed
Core Courses (9 credit hours)			
Choose <u>three</u> of the following:			
GERO 7110	Aging Policy Services	3	
GERO 7200	Health and the Older Adult	3	
GERO 7290	Aging Practice, Policy, and Research		
GERO 8116	Sociology of Aging	3	
GERO 8320	Psychology of Aging	3	
Elective Requirements (6 credit hours)			
		3	
		3	
		3	
Internship (3 credit hours)			
GERO 8910	Gerontology Internship (or an approved alternative internship course)	3	

Please submit all [milestone completions](#) and [course substitutions](#) to the Office of Graduate Services.

***\*This is the form we use to keep track of your progress. Please use it to keep track of your progress, too.***



## **Graduate Certificate for those with a Concentration in Religion and Aging:**

In addition to their MA degree requirements in Religious Studies, students seeking a Concentration in Religion and Aging and a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology must fulfill the following requirements:

### **Two of the following Core courses:**

- [GERO 7110 - Aging Policy and Services](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 7200 - Health and the Older Adult](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 7260 - Aging Practice, Policy, and Research](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 8116 - Sociology of Aging](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 8320 - Psychology of Aging](#) 3 Credit Hours

### **One of the following electives:**

- [GERO 6475 - Communication and Aging](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 8000 - Seminar in Gerontology](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 8124 - Diversity and Aging](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 8200 - Aging Program Administration](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [GERO 8330 - Mental Health and Aging](#) 3 Credit Hours
- Or an alternate 7000 or 8000-level course approved by the Director of Graduate Studies in [Religious Studies](#)

### **One of the following electives:**

- [RELS 6240 - Death and the Afterlife](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [RELS 6225 - Psychology and Religion](#) 3 Credit Hours
- [RELS 6080 - Religious Dimensions in Human Experience](#) 3 Credit Hours
- Or an alternate 6000- or 8000- level course approved by the Director of Graduate Studies

### **One semester Internship**

In the internship placement agreement, the student and advisors must articulate the placement's relevance to the Concentration in Religion and Aging.

- [RELS 6789 - Applied Religious Studies: Internships, Projects, & Papers](#) 3 Credit Hours

### **Graduate Level Research & Writing**

Students must submit one paper/project representative of high-quality graduate level research and writing. The final project review is a formal process involving faculty advisors from both units and final approval by the [Religious Studies](#) Curriculum Committee and the Director of Graduate Studies. See the [catalog](#) for more details.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS**

### **GERO 6475. Communication and Aging. (3)**

This course provides a broad overview of the ways in which communication affects, and is affected by, the aging process and introduces students to the theory and research in the area of communication and aging.

### **GERO 7110. Aging Policy and Services. (3)**

Aging policy, services, and programs, emphasizing legislation, funding, planning, the aging network, and the long-term care system.

### **GERO 7200. Health and the Older Adult. (3)**

This course provides an introduction to physiological aging and the health status of older people and is designed for non-health professionals who work with older adults. Normal aging processes, age-related changes, and associated health promotion activities will be discussed. Information on assessment and implications of alterations in functional health states, drug use, and referral sources are included.

### **GERO 7260. Aging Practice, Policy, and Research. (3)**

This course is designed to provide basic knowledge and beginning skills appropriate for social work practice with older persons. Emphasizes biological, sociological, and psychological of the aging process with special attention to the cultural, social, political, and economic factors affecting the delivery of social services to the aging.

### **GERO 8000. Seminar in Gerontology. (3)**

An introduction to the field of aging and the profession of gerontology for beginning master's students. Focuses on socialization to the student role, identification with the field, integration into the Dept., and preparation for employment.

### **GERO 8100. Research Methods in Gerontology. (3)**

An introduction to the process of scientific research with particular emphasis on the common research methods and statistics used in gerontology, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Students will develop a proposal for a feasible research project.

### **GERO 8110 or PH 7521. Evaluation Research in Gerontology. (3)**

Principles and techniques for applied research in gerontology, including program evaluation, interventions with older people, and measurement of outcomes.

### **GERO 8102. Life Course Sociology. (3)**

Development of the key concepts and processes of life course theories, with application to issues such as: child development and socialization, adolescence, marriage and parenting, work and occupational careers, retirement, illness and institutionalization, and death and bereavement.

### **GERO 8110. Evaluation Research in Gerontology. (3)**

Principles and techniques for applied research in gerontology, including program evaluation, interventions with older people, and measurement of outcomes.

### **GERO 8115. Qualitative Gerontology. (3)**

This course offers an introduction to qualitative methods in gerontology. Topics include: research design, data collection, ethical issues, and data analysis. Students will apply their knowledge by collecting and analyzing qualitative data.

**GERO 8116. Sociology of Aging. (3)**

The study of aging as a social process affecting individuals, societies, and social institutions. Topics include age stereotypes, social roles, socioeconomic status, minority elders, older women, work and retirement, family and community relationships, politics, housing, and health care.

**GERO 8119. Global Aging and Social Policies. (3)**

This course examines issues of aging and social policies in global perspective. Topics include global and comparative studies of demographic changes, aging and social inequality, retirement and social security, intergenerational exchange, and health care and elder care.

**GERO 8122. Death, Dying, and Loss. (3)**

Death and dying; loss; and the cultural processes of grief, mourning, and bereavement.

**GERO 8124. Diversity and Aging. (3)**

A broad overview of aging within the framework of race and ethnicity in American society. Major issues include minority aging research methodology, theories of ethnicity and aging and life course, life-chance and socialization differences among older adults attributable to race, ethnicity, and/or minority status.

**GERO 8130. Family, Sex, Intimacy, and Aging. (3)**

This course examines older adults' family lives and intimate relationship in social, historical, and demographic context. Emphasis is placed on theoretical and methodological understanding in the type, nature, content, and meaning of relationships, empirical research, and on identifying influential factors, including for example, gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and health status.

**GERO 8200. Aging Program Administration. (3)**

This course is designed to provide a detailed understanding of the administration of community-based organizations serving the aging population. The course involves analysis of management problems and operational issues across a wide variety of organization types and forms. Attention is given to effective strategies in managing such organizations.

**GERO 8320. Psychology of Aging. (3)**

Psychological contributions to the understanding, prevention, and treatment of normal and abnormal changes of later life.

**GERO 8330. Mental Health and Aging. (3)**

This course is designed to examine conceptual frameworks and research findings related to the mental health and illness in the elderly. Topics to be covered include common psychological problems of older adults and a variety of assessment and

treatment principles recommended for working with older adults with mental health problems.

**GERO 8340. Dementia. (3)**

This course provides a selective overview of many of the dementias, including dementia of the Alzheimer's type, vascular dementia, frontotemporal dementia and Lewy Body dementia.

**GERO 8700. Special Topics in Gerontology. (3)**

Critical analysis of a selected topic in gerontology, such as widowhood, long-term care, older women, or elder abuse. May be taken more than once if topics are different.

**GERO 8800. Directed Reading in Gerontology. (3)**

Individual reading in a selected area of gerontology, directed by a faculty member.

**GERO 8850. Capstone Seminar. (3)**

The purpose of this seminar is to provide students with an opportunity to explore research modalities pertinent to gerontology and to develop their capstone project design. Students will be encouraged to begin using the knowledge and critical thinking skills to explore and develop their capstone projects. This seminar is open to Administration track MA students. Prerequisite is GERO 8910 with a grade of S.

**GERO 8910. Gerontology Internship. (1-6)**

Requires 140 internship hours (3 semester hours) working in an aging organization or agency and integrative seminars. Provides a field education experience aimed at practical application of knowledge, values, and skills learned in the classroom.

**GERO 8990. Research Practicum. (3-12)**

Research apprenticeship under faculty direction.

Graduate Assistants should register for a minimum of 3 hours/ semester of Research Practicum. Credit hours should total a minimum of 12 hours in Fall and Spring, and 9 in Summer. So, for instance, a Graduate Assistant taking 3 or 4 courses in Fall or Spring would register for 3 hours of Research Practicum. A Graduate Assistant taking 2 courses in Fall or Spring would register for 6 hours of practicum, and in Summer, they would register for 3 hours of Research Practicum.

**GERO 8999. Thesis Research. (1-9)**

Thesis research. Students must arrange with faculty advisors before registering for Thesis Research hours.

## **PROGRAM PLANNING AND POLICIES**

### **Student Advisement**

The Gerontology Institute's Director of Graduate Studies plays a key role in student advisement. The Director of Graduate Studies is available to help students understand the expectations and requirements of their graduate programs and to assist in overall program planning and course selection. All students should seek advisement prior to course registration. Students should contact Wendy Simonds at

[wsimonds@gsu.edu](mailto:wsimonds@gsu.edu) whenever questions arise concerning the program, and to arrange video or phone advising appointments.

The Director of Graduate Studies is available to guide students in developing professional goals and directions, but students also are encouraged to consult widely with gerontology faculty for advice and to become acquainted with their interests and research.

Students on the Research track should choose a thesis advisor after completing 12 credit hours. This faculty member will advise them on thesis development, research, and writing.

### **Class Attendance**

The full benefits of a course can only be obtained by coming to class regularly. Therefore students should attend every class. If students find they are unable to attend a class, it is strongly recommended that they contact the instructor, explain the reason for the absence, make arrangements to obtain class materials, and complete any class assignments missed.

### **Course Syllabi**

At the beginning of each semester, faculty will post syllabi in [iCollege](#). A course syllabus outlines the objectives of the course, policies and procedures, readings, assignments, grading structure, and expectations, as well as other pertinent information related to the course and the instructor. Although contents are subject to minor change as the semester unfolds, a syllabus should be thought of as a contract between the instructor and students. ***It is imperative that students take time at the beginning of the semester to closely read each syllabus and continue consulting these documents throughout the semester.*** Out of respect for your instructors, please first consult the syllabus to look for answers to questions you have about the course, expectations, due dates, etc. Instructors are happy to answer questions, but please be certain that the syllabus does not already contain the answers. The same request applies to this Handbook!

### **Grades**

A student must maintain a cumulative grade-point average of “B” (3.0 GPA) or better in order to receive an MA or Graduate Certificate. If a student’s cumulative grade-point average falls below 3.0 at the end of a semester, an academic warning will be issued from the Office of Graduate Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences. If, at the end of the next 12 semester hours of enrollment, a 3.0 cumulative GPA is not achieved, the student will be dismissed from the graduate program at Georgia State University.

Students must receive a grade of “B” or better in all core courses. If a student receives a grade lower than “B” (for example “B-“or “C+”), the student must repeat the course the next time the course is offered to rectify the grade. See the [Repeat to Replace Policy](#). Students may utilize the Repeat to Replace policy twice.

Gerontology faculty use the university's plus (+) and minus (-) grade policy when assigning grades in gerontology courses. Students should be aware that a B- cumulative grade-point average will place the student on academic warning and subsequent dismissal if not rectified (as stated above).

### **Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) Requirements**

Gerontology Master's students must successfully complete 5 hours of discussion-based training in the responsible conduct of research during their first year of enrollment and prior to conducting any research with human or animals using the training programs required by University Research Services Administration.

Students will receive the required five hours of discussion-based RCR education across two mandatory courses during their first year of study: (a) GERO 8100 Research Methods; and (b) GERO 8000 Seminar in Gerontology. In GERO 8100, students are introduced to CITI Online training. The instructor will discuss the RCR requirements during the week dedicated to responsible conduct in research and ethics. All students will be expected to log onto CITI training site and complete the module on RCR during the week dedicated research ethics. Students will be required to show proof of successfully completing this module in order to receive credit for this portion of the class. Both GERO 8000 and 8100 are offered in the FALL semester and are taken during the first year of study. A grade of "B" or better in both classes is a requirement of graduation (please see above).

Course instructors will notify the Graduate Director when students successfully completed these hours. Completion will be noted in each student's file via academic progress reports and is a requirement of the program.

Students can access online RCR trainings here:  
<https://ursa.research.gsu.edu/research-training>.

### **Graduate Student Resources and Milestone Forms**

You can find forms for many procedures, such as establishing a thesis committee, defending your proposal, completing your thesis, and changing your concentration here: <https://cas.gsu.edu/academics-admissions/required-milestones/>.

## **Course Substitutions and Petitions**

Students who wish to request a course course substitution must discuss it with the Graduate Director (via email or in a meeting) and then complete this form:

<https://cas.gsu.edu/request-to-substitute-courses/>.

Petitions that do not concern course substitutions may require the additional approval of the Graduate School. For all other petitions to deviate from the prescribed program, please use the form here: <https://cas.gsu.edu/graduate-student-petition-for-deviation-from-college-requirements/>.

The Graduate Director communicates with our Advisor in Graduate Services to apply all approved substitutions/ deviations from the program.

## **Enrollment in Non-Gerontology Courses**

Students who wish to take a course in another department that is not already an approved elective should email the Director of Graduate Studies (and if she advises, fill out the aforementioned substitution request (<https://cas.gsu.edu/request-to-substitute-courses/>)).

Once permission is granted, students may enroll in non-Gerontology courses. However, students should be advised that they may need to seek permission from instructors from other departments, and if they attempt to add or drop courses across departments or colleges outside of Georgia State University's add/drop period, there can be financial consequences.

## **Time Limits for Completion of Requirements**

All credits presented for the M.A. degree in gerontology must have been earned within seven calendar years of the date of their first enrollment. Deviation from this requirement requires an approved petition (<https://cas.gsu.edu/graduate-student-petition-for-deviation-from-college-requirements/>).

## **Continuous Enrollment Requirements**

Graduate students enrolled in a degree or certificate program must register for a total of six or more semester hours of course work during all consecutive three semester periods (including summers) until graduation. In addition, students must be registered in the program of study during the semester they complete requirements for graduation.

Students who do not comply with continuous enrollment requirements will be made inactive and ineligible to register for subsequent semesters. To resume their programs, they are required to follow the reentry procedure. Reacceptance into the program is not guaranteed. Reentering students are subject to the regulations of the Graduate Catalog of the program current at the time of reentry. Time limits for all academic requirements will remain unchanged.

## **Transfer Credits**

A maximum of six semester hours of graduate gerontology course credit from other accredited institutions may be accepted toward the master's degree or graduate

certificate. Courses must have been taken no more than seven years prior to graduation from GSU's Master's or certificate program. Transfer credit must be approved by the curriculum committee of the gerontology faculty. It is the student's responsibility to petition the committee in writing and provide course syllabi of courses they want considered.

After transfer credit has been approved by the Graduate Director, the student is responsible for submitting the [Request for Transfer of Graduate Course Credit form](#) to the Office of Graduate Services, with specified supporting materials.

Any student who has taken graduate courses at Georgia State University while enrolled in the Gerontology Certificate program may apply all their course credits toward the M.A. in Gerontology, providing the courses were taken within seven of student's M.A. graduation date.

### **Directed Reading Courses**

GERO 8800 is not a regular course. Rather, Directed Reading in Gerontology is designed to enable a student to study a subject area in which the Institute does not currently offer a graduate course or to study a special topic in greater depth than is dealt with in an existing graduate course. Usually, it is an extension of on-going collaboration with a Gerontology faculty member, and is an intensive experience in which the student is expected to take a great deal of responsibility for organizing the course. A student may take no more than 3 credit hours of Gerontology 8800 (for both the graduate certificate and master's program).

Directed Reading courses must be directed by a willing member of the Gerontology faculty, and require approval from the Institute Director. Students wishing to take a directed reading course with a particular instructor must obtain permission first from the faculty member with whom they wish to work prior to enrollment and arrange authorization before registering.

[The Directed Reading Form](#) must be completed by the student and signed by the professor facilitating the course. Students may register for the course only if they have been granted permission by the professor. In consultation with the supervising professor, a student will design a course syllabus that specifies the list of readings, reading schedule, and evaluation criteria and deadlines. Students should submit the syllabus to the Graduate Director ([wsimonds@gsu.edu](mailto:wsimonds@gsu.edu)).

### **Internships**

The graduate gerontology programs place heavy emphasis on the development of skills in addition to the acquisition of knowledge. Each student in the Administration track completes an internship appropriate to their specialization or area of interest and career goals, such as agencies and community organizations that plan or administer aging programs. Research Concentration students may take the internship as an elective, and typically work with a faculty mentor on a research project. Graduate certificate students usually participate in a service-oriented internship in an agency or organization that provides aging programs and services. Certificate students who are enrolled in advanced degree programs may pursue a research internship.



Students apply in advance for the internship course. In order to be eligible, students must have completed at least 3 Gerontology courses (9 credit hours) and be in good academic standing (Gerontology GPA of at least 3.0). The internship class is offered during the Spring and Summer semesters. Internship applications are typically due on October 15 for those wishing to enroll in the spring semester and on March 15 for summer semester. For more information on applying, see the [Internship Manual](#).

We now allow the course Careers in Aging to count as the internship requirement because we could not make field placements during the first year of the pandemic. This course remains an allowable substitution for the Internship. Students who take Careers in Aging in place of the Internship should fill out a [Request to Substitute Courses form](#). (If you take it as an elective, you do not need to fill out the form.)

## **Capstone Seminar and Projects**

**The Requirement:** All Master's degree students in the Administration concentration are required to take the Capstone Seminar and complete a capstone project. Normally, this is the final requirement before graduation. The Capstone Seminar (offered each Spring) is a culminating and highly-interactive experience for students which will allow for the synthesis and application of core gerontological and management competencies. Competencies will be reinforced including communication, leadership, management, team-building, systems thinking, evidence-based thinking, critical thinking, program planning and theory grant writing, and job seeking skills. Students will be required to complete a capstone project tailored to their interests and career goals.

**The Content:** Capstone projects can be completed on a variety of topics related to substantive or methodological coursework completed or Gerontological interest. While formats can vary, the content should include the significance of the project (why it is worth doing), the methodology (the procedures and strategy behind the process that was chosen), the results or outcomes (what you found through your methodology whether a small research project, a quality improvement process or the result of an activity) and implications (why and for whom does it matter).

**The Topic:** Topics must be approved by the professor instructing the Capstone Seminar by the midpoint of the course. Ideally, this topic not only aligns with the student's Gerontological course of study to date but also tracks to his or her career interests in Gerontology.

**Documentation:** Upon successful completion of the capstone class and project, students must submit a "Non-Thesis Master's Project Approval Form," found here: <https://cas.gsu.edu/academics-admissions/required-milestones/>.

## **Thesis Guidelines**

**The Requirement:** All Master's degree students in Gerontology in the Research concentration must write a master's thesis. Normally, this is the final requirement before graduation and serves as the ultimate test of how well research concentration students have learned the basic concepts, methods, and skills required to work as

professional, especially academics and those conducting research in the field of gerontology.

**The Content:** A thesis in gerontology is an original written work that seeks to discover new knowledge about the aging process of later life, or to apply existing knowledge to the solution of a practical problem in the field of aging. A thesis can involve 1) the collection and analysis of primary data, 2) a novel analysis of secondary data, 3) an analysis of a significant theoretical or policy issue, 4) a comprehensive design for a service or administrative intervention, including a plan for evaluation that can be applied in an actual setting where older people are served.

**The Committee:** The thesis will be supervised by a faculty committee composed of at least 3 members, 2 of whom must be members of the Gerontology Faculty. The chair of the committee must be a member of the Graduate Faculty of the Gerontology Institute. Students may have one member from outside the university, such as a practitioner knowledgeable about the thesis topic. Students may not form a thesis committee until they have completed 15 semester hours of coursework, but full-time students should begin thinking about their committee before the end of spring semester of the first year and must have a committee in place before completing 21 semester hours of coursework. It is the student's responsibility to submit an "Appointment of Master's Thesis Committee Form" here: <https://cas.gsu.edu/academics-admissions/required-milestones/>.

**The Topic:** Research concentration students are expected to undertake original research—either by testing theory or hypotheses, seeking to answer research questions, or evaluating a program or policy. Research may be either analytical or descriptive. Research concentration students who hold GRA appointments are encouraged to select a thesis topic related to their assigned research work. Non-GRA research students should seek a topic consistent with their research practicum.

**The Proposal:** The first step in writing a thesis is submission of an acceptable proposal that clearly specifies the topic or problem, its significance, the methods to be used, the expected findings or outcomes, a timetable of work, and a dissemination plan. Proposals normally do not exceed 25-30 pages. The chair of the supervisory committee will schedule an oral defense of the proposal when he/she deems the proposal is ready and will provide a copy of the proposal to the Institute director at least one week prior to the defense. The chair is responsible for inviting all Gerontology faculty and students to the proposal defense. The student will not be considered to have an approved thesis topic until he/she submits to the graduate director a *Thesis Proposal Approval Form*, also here: <https://cas.gsu.edu/academics-admissions/required-milestones/>.

**IRB Approval:** All research at Georgia State (including that of students) that involves collecting data from human subjects must be reviewed and approved in accordance with federal law and GSU policy. GSU's Institutional Review Board is charged with overseeing compliance with these federal regulations. The goal of these regulations is to ensure the safety, respect, and dignity of human subjects who volunteer to participate in scientific research and to provide public accountability for the trust the public places in institutions conducting such research.

It is the student's responsibility to become informed about all necessary procedures and to follow them before beginning data collection. While most projects in gerontology are not controversial and will receive approval, no student is exempt from submitting his/her proposal for review, and students are advised that the process can take longer than anticipated, so submission should occur well in advance of the desired start date. Complete rules for this process are posted on the website of GSU's University Research Services and Administration: <https://ursa.research.gsu.edu>.

**Style:** Theses must be written and crafted to meet the highest standards of scholarship. **Each student must assume full responsibility for the correct form of the document.** Students should become familiar with the *College of Arts and Sciences Guide for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation and Submission*, which specifies the general format and composition of the document. This guide can be found on the College of Arts & Science website: <https://cas.gsu.edu/thesis-dissertation-formatting/>.

All matters of style not covered by this *Guide*, as well as bibliographic citation, must conform to the rules of the American Psychological Association as set forth in the *APA Publication Manual* (7<sup>th</sup> edition). While no minimum or maximum length is specified, a thesis is normally longer than a paper that might be written for a class or submitted for publication. Examples of acceptable theses may be found in the Institute conference room, but the Graduate Office of the College of Arts and Sciences is the final authority on proper format, and their approval constitutes the official clearance of the document.

**Credit Hours:** Students must be enrolled for at least 1 semester hour of thesis research (GERO 8999) while working on the thesis under faculty supervision and must be enrolled in the semester the student expects to graduate. Thesis research hours will be graded by the committee chair as either "S" (Satisfactory progress is being made) or "U" (progress is Unsatisfactory). To complete the thesis requirement students must take at least 6 semester hours of thesis research with a grade of S *and* make a successful oral defense of the thesis before the supervisory committee.

**Oral Defense:** After the committee agrees that the thesis is complete, the student must schedule an oral defense before her/his faculty committee, during which the student will make a formal presentation of the results. The defense may be scheduled no sooner than one week after a final draft of the thesis has been submitted to the Institute director by the thesis committee chair. It will be the responsibility of the committee chair to notify the entire Gerontology Faculty and other graduate students of the place and time of the defense. At the defense the committee members will sign the Master's Thesis Approval form: <https://cas.gsu.edu/academics-admissions/required-milestones/>.

**Submission and Deadlines:** Meeting deadlines is one of the most important and troublesome tasks students writing a thesis will encounter. Students should be aware that the final copy of the thesis must be submitted in electronic form only (see

the *Guide for Thesis and Dissertation Preparation and Submission* for explicit instructions: <https://cas.gsu.edu/graduation-calendar-deadlines/>.

Prior to final submission and before the posted review deadline, the student must submit a preliminary electronic copy of the thesis for the Graduate Office Director's review for proper formatting. This submission for acceptance may occur no earlier than the beginning of the semester in which the student will graduate and no later than the appropriate thesis deadline for the semester of graduation, as listed on the College of Arts & Sciences Graduate Office website.

**Students are reminded to allow ample time for committee review and their own revision of several drafts of the thesis. The university norm is to allow each professor at least two weeks to read and return comments on a draft.**

**Faculty members will not write letters of reference for students in the research concentration who are applying to continue their graduate educations (at GSU or elsewhere) until after a successful thesis proposal defense.**

**Dissemination:** Every thesis must include a dissemination plan for publishing or otherwise sharing the results with a wider professional audience. Agreement should be reached between the student and her/his committee chair regarding authorship of any papers or publications that may result from the thesis research.

*ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University:* Once completed, all theses, including those authored by Gerontology students must be uploaded to ScholarWorks (please see <https://scholarworks.gsu.edu>). All theses will be indexed and available through the library website: [https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/gerontology\\_theses/](https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/gerontology_theses/).

**Embargoing and Thesis Publication:** Students are given the option of placing an embargo delaying the publication of their thesis for up to two years or by limiting access exclusively to the GSU community (rather than the public) through Scholarworks ETD. Doing so will eliminate any concerns raised by journal editors regarding prior publication if thesis findings are prepared submitted for peer reviewed publication. The Gerontology Institute advises students to embargo by delaying the time of publication, but doing so is not mandatory. Please consult with your thesis committee chair and members.

To make the embargoing process easier to manage, Graduate Services has set up an online form: <https://cas.gsu.edu/embargo-request-form/>. If you wish to restrict access to your thesis using one of the embargo options, you will need to submit an embargo request form prior to uploading your thesis to the Scholarworks ETD. The Office of Graduate Services will ensure that the request also has the support of your program's graduate director, as well as the college's Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies.

### **Change of MA Program Concentration**

Sometimes students enter one concentration and then decide the other would be a better fit. Students should speak to the Graduate Director ([wsimonds@gsu.edu](mailto:wsimonds@gsu.edu)) to discuss program planning and the proper procedure for switching concentrations and seeking approval for the change. Students are strongly encouraged to consider

the implications of switching between concentrations. Each concentration has separate requirements and switching may result in the need to take additional course work, etc. Here is the form you should fill out to change concentrations: <https://cas.gsu.edu/change-of-concentration/>.

## **Application for Graduation**

**MA students must file a formal application for graduation with the GSU Graduation Office at least two semesters in advance of the expected semester of graduation.** Once you register, your name stays on the list for subsequent semesters if you do not graduate in the identified term. Please visit the GSU Graduation office website for more information about graduation:

<https://registrar.gsu.edu/graduation/>. Students must have completed the application for graduation by the established deadline. Students who miss the deadline can complete this form to graduate in the same term:

<https://registrar.gsu.edu/graduation/graduation-change-request/>.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Desk Space and Computer Access**

The Gerontology Institute is sometimes able to provide graduate students with desk space to study, work, and access a computer. Students who desire such space should notify the Department Specialist. Because space is very limited, a waiting list for desks or carrels is sometimes needed, assignments are made on a first-come, first-served basis, and all spaces are shared. Graduate Assistants (GAs) are given priority in these assignments.

Access to computers also is first-come, first-served, and students may use any available common computer at any time. If passwords are necessary for any function, they will be supplied by the student assistant or Business Manager.

***Students should not leave personal files on any computer. Rather, students are encouraged to use removable disk or remote storage for data storage.***

Students should never change passwords, screen savers, formatting, or any other setting of a computer. Also students are prohibited from downloading any software or personal materials to the computers located in the Dept.. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in termination of computer privileges.

### **Printing and Photo Copying**

The Gerontology Institute printers and photocopier are available to students on a limited basis. Students can print and photocopy for their personal use, but are asked to do so only occasionally and sparingly limiting their printing to no more than 10 pages and copies to an article or chapter. All students are required to be familiar and in compliance with GSU's copyright policy. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in termination of printing and photocopying privileges. If the printer or copy machine is not working, please inform the Student Assistant at the front desk.

### **Telephone Usage**

Telephones in the Gerontology Institute are for business and research purposes only. Students may use the telephone on the reception/student assistant's desk for

occasional brief personal calls (1-2 minutes), provided that desk is not occupied. Long distance calls are not permitted unless they are research-related and approved in advance.

### **Change of Address**

Please notify the Gerontology Institute, the Office of Graduate Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences, or the appropriate college if different, and the Registrar of any changes in your contact information including mailing address, telephone numbers, or emergency contacts. Please update your contact information in PAWS.

## **GERONTOLOGY INSTITUTE RESOURCES**

### **Institute Library**

Books and journals in the library are available for student use. Students may borrow books and journals by checking them out at the front desk. (There is a list of titles in the binder at the front desk.)

### **Institute Website**

The official webpage for the Gerontology Institute is <https://gerontology.gsu.edu>. This webpage provides detailed information about the Institute and its programs and policies. In addition, there are links to useful information such as college and university policies and links to aging resources.

### **Gerontology Institute on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube**

For the most current news, information, and events about the Gerontology Institute we encourage you to follow us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#). Stay connected and tuned for information, opportunities, and the latest events!

## **STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN INSTITUTE LIFE**

### **Institute Events**

The Gerontology Institute and hosts a number of events throughout the year, including but not limited to civic engagement opportunities, a brown bag lunch lecture series, and the annual Barbara Pittard Payne Lectureship in Gerontology.

**Gerontology students are encouraged to attend all Gerontology Institute events. Students with Graduate Research Assistantships are expected to attend Institute events.** Not only are these events tremendous learning

opportunities, they also are excellent opportunities to meet others, including potential employers. Student will receive notification of these events via their student email accounts and they also will be advertised on campus and through social media.

### **Student Organizations**

The Gerontology Institute offers many ways for students to serve older adults and become civically engaged in the Atlanta area and beyond. The Institute currently has two active student organizations, **Adopt-a-Grandparent** and **Sigma Phi Omega**. Both organizations are involved in service activities regularly throughout the school year.

**Adopt-A-Grandparent.** The Adopt-a-Grandparent Program at Georgia State University is a unique, exciting student organization. Its mission is to promote intergenerational communication and relationships. In order to do so, the organization engages college students and older adults through weekly visits and monthly events. Student members can "adopt" a grandparent as well are encouraged to attend exciting intergenerational events at local senior centers and residential homes throughout the semester. To learn more or to join, please visit the [Panther Involvement Network](#). Dr. Morgan is the Faculty Advisor for this group.

**Sigma Phi Omega (SPO).** Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) is the National Academic Honor and Professional Society in Gerontology. The society has been promoting scholarship, professionalism, friendship, and service to older persons since 1980. It is the only society of its kind in the nation. GSU's SPO chapter, *Alpha Omega*, is dedicated to helping GSU gerontology students and older adults in Atlanta. SPO is involved in community service for seniors as well as events that help students network with gerontology professionals. In the past, SPO members have participated in activities such as: Be There 4 Seniors rallies at the Capitol, National Careers in Aging Week, and the Barbara Payne Lecture series. There are many benefits to SPO membership. To learn about eligibility and application procedures, please visit the [Panther Involvement Network](#). Dr. Kemp is the Faculty Advisor for this group.