Meeting Time and Location
Wednesdays, 8:50am - 10:45am
Social Sciences 6112

Professor
Lindsay Jacobs, lpjacobs@lafollette.wisc.edu

Office Hours and Location
Mondays, 1pm - 3pm
305 Observatory Hill Office Building

Canvas Course Website
https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/86574

Course Description
This seminar-style course focuses on public policy related to aging and older populations. We will study major social insurance programs as well as trends and policies related to a variety of topics, including health and work at older ages, living arrangements and intergenerational transfers, and the demography of aging. While the course will primarily cover current U.S. policies and trends, we will also discuss some historical aspects and compare to policies and conventions found elsewhere.

Prerequisites
This course is open to all La Follette students and interested graduate or special students from elsewhere on campus. While there are no other formal requirements, students should be familiar with public policy formulation and analysis. Some knowledge of analytic and statistical techniques found throughout the readings will be useful.
Reading Materials
All required reading will be available online through the course Canvas site or, in some cases, the UW Library. Required readings are tentative and will be finalized at least two weeks prior to the relevant class. Please check Canvas for the most up-to-date reading list.

Assignments and Evaluation
Evaluation will be based on performance in the following areas, with grades being based on an earned total out of 100 points.

Attendance and Participation 10 points
To receive full credit, students must attend class regularly and be active participants in class discussions.

Topic Responses 20 points
Before each class, beginning in Week 2, students will write a brief comment on that week’s content. This can be either a response to one of the readings (less than 250 words), or a longer post on a closely related topic supplemented by another academic, policy, or news article (less than 500 words). This will be submitted through Canvas the evening prior to class (by 10pm) to receive credit.

Class Topic Lead 20 points
For one class during the semester, each student will choose a week for which they would like to lead an informal 30-minute discussion. This could include, for example, presenting materials related to that week’s topic and posing questions for the class.

Policy Research Paper Proposal 10 points
A research paper proposal of no more than two pages will be due before Spring Break. It will be an opportunity for gathering sources, outlining goals for the finished product, and getting instructor feedback.

Policy Research Paper & Presentation 40 points
Throughout the semester, students will be guided in composing a policy-relevant research paper on an aging issue. The finished product should be 15-20 pages of analytical writing, which may be either empirically or qualitatively focused. The work will be presented to the class at the end of the semester.

Learning Outcomes
Through this course, students will demonstrate an understanding of public policies covering older-age populations and will have gained skills in analyzing these policies through knowledge of the social, demographic, economic, and political contexts against which policies are made. Critical thinking skills will be exhibited and strengthened throughout the course in a research paper and presentation, through regular written and oral discussion of class readings, and leading portions of class discussions.
Course Credit Information and Instructional Mode:
This is a 3-credit course. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities. This will include—in addition to the scheduled course meeting time—readings, online topic responses, and the development and execution of a research project. For more information on University credit hour policy, please see here: https://kb.wisc.edu/vesta/page.php?id=24558.

University and Course Policies
University on accommodations for students with disabilities:
https://mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/faculty/syllabus.php
Academic integrity:
https://conduct.students.wisc.edu/academic-integrity/
Technology in class:
As the class is largely discussion based, the use of laptops or tablets in class is discouraged.

Course Content by Week

Week 1, January 24:  
Introductions and overview of class, background material on aging policy.

Week 2, January 31:  
The Demography and Political Economy of Aging  
Readings:  

Week 3, February 7:  
Health at Older Ages  
Readings:  
- "Decision-making, Markets and Cognitive Decline" (2016), M. Keane and S. Thorp, Handbook of the Economics of Population Aging, Ch. 5.  

Week 4, February 14:
Living Arrangements and Consumption at Older Ages

Readings:
- "Providing more home-delivered meals is one way to keep older adults with low care needs out of nursing homes" (2013), K. Thomas and V. Mor, *Health Affairs*.

Week 5, February 21:
Medical Insurance and Medicare
Readings:

Week 6, February 28:
End-of-life Care and Family Caregivers Policy
Readings:
- TBD

Week 7, March 7:
Data
Readings:

Week 8, March 14:
Income Support and Planning for Retirement
Readings:
- TBD

Week 9, March 21:
Pension Systems and Social Security
Readings:
- "Historical background and development of Social Security", Social Security Administration.

Week 10, March 28:
No class. Have a nice break!
Week 11, April 4:

**Disability and SSDI**

**Readings:**
- "Workforce Infrastructure in Support of People with Disabilities: Matching Human Resources to Service Needs" (2010), National Council on Disability.
- TBD

Week 12, April 11:

**Work at Older Ages**

**Readings:**
- "Rethinking Retirement" (2011), M. Hardy, *Handbook of Sociology of Aging*, Ch. 13

Week 13, April 18:

**Intergenerational Transfers and Social Networks**

**Readings:**

Week 14, April 25:

**[Topic TBD]**

Week 15, May 2:

**Student presentations of policy research paper**

Policy research paper due by May 11th (final day of exams)