Short Summary: People often consider aging as a decline in cognitive skills, but this may not always be accurate. This class examines memory, creativity, mood regulation, habit learning, balance and brain training in the context of successful aging.

Course Description and Summary:
As we age, we accumulate knowledge and wisdom, but may be more forgetful. Most people think of aging in a negative way, and in terms of declines. However, there are many stereotypes about aging that are not true. While some things may decline in old age, a better description of aging involves changes, and not simply decline. Our attitudes about aging can influence how well we age. People often report feeling younger than their chronological age, and there are many things we can do to stay sharp in older age. This class will cover topics such as happiness, memory, brain training, use of emerging technology, wisdom, humor, habits, retirement, and what constitutes successful/meaningful aging. We will discuss cognitive, social, and emotional changes that happen with age, how people live and learn, focus on what is important, achieve balance, and get better with age. We will also discuss how people with connections to UCLA (such as John Wooden, Jackie Robinson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Carol Burnett, Jared Diamond, Frank Gehry) have influenced what it means to age well, and how to be successful at aging.

Course Structure:
We will discuss topics related to aging based on relevant readings and research. Students will have the opportunity to participate in demonstrations, discussions, quizzes, and think about future questions regarding how humans can and do age well. Students are expected to read one book chapter each week, and come to class with insight, awareness, and participate in discussion. Students will complete 2 in-class tests (5-7 questions short answer format), and 2 short writing assignments (thought-papers 1-2 pages each) about a topic of interest related to successful aging. Each student will also participate in a student-led topic forum and submit an original final paper.

Learning Objectives:
- Students will gain a deeper understanding of the cognitive changes that happen with age
- Students will debate and discuss what is needed to engage in successful aging
- Students will appreciate the diversity of changes associated with cognitive aging
- Students will discuss and develop new perspectives on how we will age in the future

Interested Students:
More people are living longer, and older adults will outnumber younger adults, so it is important to know how we can age well. This class is designed for students interested in Cognitive Psychology, Cognitive Science, Lifespan Development, Gerontology, and related disciplines. The class would be most relevant to people who are interested in pursuing the fields of medicine, basic and applied science, law, gerontology, clinical or social work, and other related fields. We all experience the process of aging, and a better understand can help everyone.

“Whatever you do in life, surround yourself with smart people who will argue with you.”
—John Wooden
Readings:
The weekly readings are from a recent book on successful aging (Castel, 2018), which provides a state-of-the-art review of topics related to successful aging, highlighting key research studies, new findings, and insight from interviews of older people. The readings will allow for the access of knowledge and provide material for discussion. We will read chapters each week from:

Castel, A. D. (2018). Better with Age: The Psychology of Successful Aging. Oxford University Press. (some weeks will have recently published articles to supplement chapter readings)

Class Schedule and Evaluation Dates:
Week 1: Introduction and Models (and Mentors) of Successful Aging
Readings: Chapter 1 (What is Successful Aging?) and Kaplan (2018) “Pessimism about old age may be a risk factor for dementia” Los Angeles Times

Week 2: Emotional Regulation and Cognitive Development
Readings: Chapter 2 (Happiness and Mood Regulation) and Kluger (2018) “Why you can look forward to being happier in old age” Time Magazine

Week 3: Memory and Cognition
Readings: Chapter 3 (Memory Selectivity)

Week 4: Wisdom and Creativity (Test #1)
Readings: Chapter 4 (Wisdom and Creativity) + recent research article

Week 5: Brain Training and Technology (Thought-paper #1 due)
Readings: Chapter 5-6 (Staying Sharp and Brain Training) + recent research article

Week 6: Habits and Rewiring
Readings: Chapter 7-8 (Habits, Hobbies, and Retirement)

Week 7: Revisiting Models of Successful Aging (Test #2)
Readings: Chapter 9 (Start Successful Aging Now)

Week 8: Student-Led Topics and Presentations
Student-led presentations on selected specialized topics (TBD)

Week 9: Student-Led Topics and Presentations (Thought-paper #2 due)
Student-led presentations on selected specialized topics (TBD)

Week 10: Devising a Model and Guide for the Future of Successful Aging
Summary, discussion, and critique of readings and presentation topics

Methods of Evaluation and Learning Opportunities:
2 Tests (approx. 5-7 questions) (15 points each) = 30% (Weeks 4, 7)
2 Thought-papers (1-2 pages) (10 points each) = 20% (Weeks 5, 9)
Presentation (2-3 minutes) (10 points) = 10% (Week 8-10 in class)
Final Paper (4-5 pages) (40 points) = 40% (Due Wed. of Finals Week)
(submit thought-papers and final paper via turnitin)

“I will never be an old man. To me, old age is always 15 years older than I am.”
—Francis Bacon, English philosopher, scientist, and author