



LONGEVITY • Winter 2018

Professors: Laura L. Carstensen; Thomas Rando
Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays; 10:30-11:20am
Location: Jordan Hall, Room 041

“Longevity” is an overview course that addresses the implications of increased life expectancy for young people today. The scale of the change underway is so dramatic that it requires deep, open, and sustained conversations about the kinds of societies we want to create and the people we want to be in an era of century-long lives. There is little doubt that longevity will affect virtually all of the fundamental building blocks of society - work, healthcare, financial markets, education, and families. In this course, students will learn about the implications of longer lives for themselves and for societies.

The overarching aim of the course is to provide students with an informed grasp of the conceptual issues, empirical findings and current controversies in the field. By adopting a multi-disciplinary approach, Rando -- a neurologist and stem cell biologist -- and Carstensen -- a psychologist and life-span developmentalist -- help students understand new challenges and opportunities. In addition to providing basic information about biological, social, and cognitive aging, we include a number of guest speakers with deep expertise in related topics to provide students with an appreciation for the “big picture” of longevity.

The course has three central objectives. First, we want students to understand why the population is aging from a biological/biomedical perspective and, relatedly, what we can expect in the coming decades. We explore issues like whether or not current trends will continue, how long future generations can expect to live and how lifestyles, families, and work are likely to change. Second, we want students to gain a more realistic vision of their own futures so they can make more informed life choices and plan accordingly. Third, we aim to educate future generations of citizens who will live out their lives in societies where older people outnumber children and who will have a central hand in shaping the consequences of these unprecedented changes.

Course Schedule

Week One

Monday, January 8 - Lecturer: Professors Laura Carstensen & Thomas Rando

Topic: Introduction to Longevity in the 21st Century (and to the Course)

Wednesday, January 10 - Lecturer: Professor Thomas Rando

Topic: Aging and Longevity

Week Two

Monday, January 15 - Holiday

Wednesday, January 17 - Lecturer: Professor Thomas Rando

Topic: The Biology of Aging

Week Three

Monday, January 22 – Lecturer: Professor Laura Carstensen

Topic: Human Development – Changes in Thinking and Reasoning with Age

Wednesday, January 24 – Lecturer: Professor Laura Carstensen

Topic: Human Development: Social and Emotional Changes with Age

Week Four

Monday, January 29 – Lecturer: Professor Paul Wise, Pediatrics

Topic: Trajectories from Childhood to Old Age: Is Your Fate Set in Youth?

Wednesday, January 31 - Lecturer: Professor Christopher Gardner, Prevention Research Center

Topic: Optimizing Wellness through Nutrition

Week Five

Monday, February 5 – Lecturer: Adam Nash, Adjunct Lecturer, Computer Science

Topic: Understanding Personal Finance

Wednesday, February 7 - Lecturer: Professor Jay Bhattacharya, Primary Care Outcomes Research

Topic: The Economics of Population Aging

Week Six

Monday, February 12 - Lecturer: Professor John Shoven, Economics

Topic: Financing Long Lives

Wednesday, February 14 - Lecturer: Adjunct Professor Anne Friedlander, Human Biology

Topic: Can Exercise Keep You Young?

Week Seven

Monday, February 19 – Holiday

Wednesday, February 21 – Lecturer: Professor Euan Ashley, Medicine

Topic: The Promise of Improving Health with Technology

Week Eight

Monday, February 26 - Lecturer: Professor Jack Rowe, Columbia School of Public Health

Topic: Aging societies

Wednesday, February 28 – Lecturer: Marc Freedman, CEO Encore.org

Topic: What are you going to do with a very long life?

Week Nine

Monday, March 5 - Mae O'Malley, Founder, Paragon Legal, Pat Milligan, CEO Mercer, Philip Pizzo, Professor of Pediatrics and Founder of the Distinguished Career Institute

Topic: New models of work and education

Wednesday, March 7 – Lecturer: Professor Jeremy Bailenson, Communication

Topic: Virtual reality and well-being

Week Ten

Monday, March 12 – Lecturer: Professor James Hallenbeck, Medicine & Palo Alto Veterans Administration Hospital

Topic: Death and Dying

Wednesday, March 14 - Lecturer: Professors Laura Carstensen and Thomas Rando

Topic: Wrap up