

Have You Seen This Major?

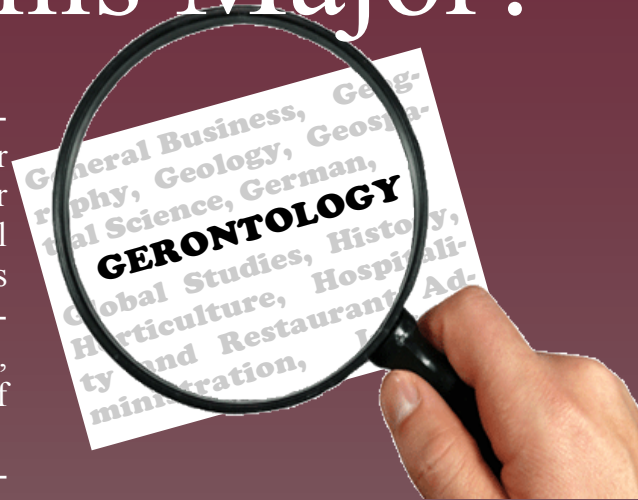
GERONTOLOGY

Gerontology is the scientific study of aging and aging processes, offering insight into the perceptions and realities of our elderly population. Gerontology is a multidisciplinary major that prepares students to work in the community as professional gerontologists. The academic training with the applied focus is well-suited for students who wish to use the Bachelor of Science as a terminal degree and seek employment opportunities, or for those who want to pursue graduate degrees in a variety of disciplines.

Students pursuing this major should have an interest in studying the aging process and working with older adults.

Specific skills that will help students excel in this major are a passion for learning, self-motivation, discipline, good interpersonal skills, ability to express ideas in writing, empathy for diverse populations, and a willingness to work with a caring advisor and other students in the program.

Students will receive personalized advisement by faculty who will be accessible and interested in their progress throughout their academic career at MSU with special attention to the student's future career goals. The student will receive an excellent education through challenging classes and, at the same time, receive support from other gerontology students and the gerontology faculty. MSU is the only university in Missouri offering a Bachelor of Science in Gerontology approved by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education which has been recognized as a Program of Merit by the national Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. Cited strengths include a well-developed curriculum, applied experience offered to students through the practicum placement and other service-learning opportunities, the scholarship of the gerontology faculty, academic performance of students, employment of students after graduation, and the ongoing commitment to community service by students and faculty.



WORDS FROM GERONTOLOGY GRADUATES



Diana Liermann

As a graduate of the Gerontology Program of MSU, I have found my niche in senior living facilities. To work (i.e. be invited to spend my days in the home of many grandpas and grandmas) is a wonderful experience. In addition to hopefully improving their lives with my knowledge in the field of aging, I get the privilege of learning new things on a daily basis as I am taught life lessons from those who have already experienced everything before me. Gerontology is fast becoming THE field of study. The information studied during the degree process is applicable to EVERY walk of life as we have more and more Baby Boomers complementing our Senior population.



Vera Trogdon

My career in gerontology has been an extremely satisfying one, and I feel fortunate that my dream job became a reality with my first job following graduation with a B.S. degree in gerontology. During classes at MSU, I learned what an Area Agency on Aging (AAA) is and that it functions in a manner which addresses the aging person as a whole, including physical, psychological, emotional—the full spectrum of aging. That was for me! I knew that was how I wanted to grow my future in the aging field. When hired by the AAA for southwest Missouri, it was for a part-time, temporary position. Fast forward 17 years; currently, I am grateful for these years of a full-time position dotted with opportunities for advancement, growth and feeling fulfilled.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE DEGREE

Does this major require a minor? What minors work well with this major?

This is a comprehensive major which means that no minor is required. However, most students pick up one or even two minors. Since the Gerontology Program is housed in Psychology and utilizes several psychology courses, nearly all majors complete a Psychology minor as part of the broader comprehensive major. However, some other possible minors would include Communication, Sociology, General Business, Gender Studies, and should be selected based on areas of interest of the student with the assistance of his or her advisor.

Does this major require a practicum or internship?

Yes, a practicum is required for this major. This is a 540 hour (12 credit hour) practicum completed in the last year of a student's academic experience. Gerontology is an applied field of study, so one of the benefits for students during the practicum experience is putting what they have learned in the classroom to good use in the real world. Here are some of the advantages of participating in a practicum:

- Provides students with a unique opportunity to develop professional skills and make a difference in the lives of older adults.
- Increases marketability since the student can list the practicum experience on a resume. During job interviews, the student will have the advantage of saying that he or she has work experience.
- Helps students build professional networks that can lead to job opportunities.
- Professional success during a practicum is likely to be rewarded with letters of reference which can be used in the years ahead whether for future job or school-related goals.
- Affords students the chance to interact extensively with older adults and help to clarify and confirm career goals.

What courses should a student take to explore this major?

In order to get a "taste" of gerontology, students could enroll in several courses including: GER 310/SOC 375: Social Forces and Aging, PSY 309: Identity and Aging in Literature and Film, GER 365: Families in Later Life, and PSY 363: Death and Human Behavior. The GER 310/SOC 375 is the course that most students take for an introduction into the major.

What are the admission requirements to the major?

There are no admission requirements for this major other than those mandated by the University. It is best if students come into the program as soon as possible to maximize the use of credit hours and their time at Missouri State.

AFTER THE DEGREE

How would you describe the demand for graduates with this major?

The baby boomers are now turning 65 and this segment of the population will continue to climb over the next twenty five years. Careers in this field are increasing as the aging population rapidly expands. Currently and in the near future, many professionals will be needed to meet the demands of this growing older adult population, and that will take quality education and training

What are some typical jobs for graduates with this major?

The jobs vary greatly, but students typically work in one of four areas: administration, social services, recreation and leisure, or business. Graduates of the program are currently working at the Southwest Missouri Office on Aging, at hospitals running offices that focus on services to older adults, independent living facilities as administrators and directors of social services, for parks and recreation to develop specialized activities for older adults in the community, assisted living facilities as assistant administrators and activity coordinators, long-term care ombudsmen for the Council of Churches of the Ozarks, long-term care facilities as administrators, social service directors, and activity coordinators, and in businesses as sales personnel for pharmaceutical companies, independent housing communities, and tourism.

Do careers in this field require or prefer graduate study?

A graduate degree is not required. One of the benefits of the Bachelor of Science degree in gerontology is that students are trained to become professional gerontologists and are "work ready" upon graduation. Students also receive a certification of completion since they have graduated from an institution with the Program of Merit designation from the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education. Most graduates of the program do not pursue graduate degrees, but approximately 25-35% do pursue advanced degrees. The point here is that a student can go out and get a good job with a living wage with just the B.S. degree in gerontology (Both graduates profiled stopped with the B.S. degree and obtained their present positions).

INTERESTED STUDENTS SHOULD CONTACT

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