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## Creating and Conducting Intergenerational Learning in Higher Education

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# Creating and Conducting Intergenerational Learning in Higher Education:

Revising the curriculum for Intergenerational Aging and Saging class,  
based on assistant teaching two semesters.

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## Authors Note:

Andrea Holt (second year nursing Major undergraduate student)  
is a volunteer teaching assistant for Jane Toot, PhD who is a  
Grand Valley State University Honors Professor starting in the fall of 2017.  
We collaborated on the first class of its kind in this country; an intergenerational  
learning experience in Higher Education.

### Central Focus

My senior project is centered on the creation, conduction, and revision of intergenerational learning in higher education through the restructuring of the curriculum of the Aging and Saging

## **Honors College Proposal- Introduction**

### Rationale

This project is extremely unique, it has yet to be done at any other University in the USA. No one is offering an intergenerational course for higher education except for the Honors College at Grand Valley State University. The elders and traditional students learned so much from one another, I would love to see more people have the opportunity to learn about others who are not like them. “The growing pool of elderly people stresses formal care structures to their limits, but the simultaneously decreasing pool of young people makes it more difficult to alleviate these pressures through the use of young volunteers. These difficulties are further compounded by the fact that many young people have negative stereotypic views of elderly people, which increases their anxiety in dealing with members of this particular group” (Leeuwen, 2014). “The coming half century will see a dramatic rise in population of aging people, which means a higher proportion of the population in elderly age groups” (Cohen, 2003). Many (if not all) students in the Fredrick Meijer Honors College will be dealing with the aging population either personally or professionally in their lives. The elders have “enormous potential as agents of social change in creating an age-sensitive society and in thus improving the relations between age groups,” (Neugarten, 1974). By having a course such as the Intergenerational Aging and Saging class,

students are given the opportunity to recognize biases and misconceptions many have about the elderly. Misconceptions such as “in our culture (the) emphasis on youth and speed, old people are expected to play a decreasingly active role in our social and industrial life” (Lorge, 1953). This could not be farther from the truth. This negative stigma changes “The way seniors are perceived by others (which) significantly affects the manner in which they are treated” (Lucacel, 2014). Our traditional students aren’t the only ones who are learning. The elders also have many negative opinions about college age students based on how the media portrays youth. By revising the curriculum for this course I hope to be able to include the most pertinent information for both audiences as well as maintaining the co-curricular aspect so the traditional students and elders have the chance to work on a project together in small groups. This co-curricular aspect has been proven in “studies show(ing) that students who leave college prematurely are less engaged than their counterparts who persist” (George D. Kuh, 2008). By giving the students a chance to be engaged in something larger than themselves I hope they feel they can continue to push through the difficulties presented upon entering college. I believe the format of the class worked fairly well and should remain as a freshman level Live Learn Lead course. This is backed by research by “Murphy Russell et al.(1986) who found that attitudinal change (more positive towards elderly) was greatest for those who had direct contact with elderly persons in the initial stages of a training program” (Pearl M. Mosher-Ashley, 1999). I want to help push freshman honors students to step out of their comfort zone and better their understanding of the elderly, while also giving the elderly a chance to continue their lifelong learning and a space to share their wisdom. This class is the perfect arena for those two goals to come to fruition.

### Proof of Concept

This class had its inaugural run in the fall of 2017 at the Fredrick Meijer Honors College at Grand Valley State University, Allendale, MI. Overall, the class ran smoothly and this project is focused on the revisions necessary for improvement. There has never been a class like this one run in America; however there is a similar course offered at Dublin City University. Overall, the class has run very well and "...the students found that they gained knowledge, competences and skills which contributed to both their personal and professional development. Secondly the process proved to be an excellent means to foster intercultural and intergenerational solidarity. Conclusions and Recommendations: Intergenerational learning is an excellent methodology for enabling transformative education. The research confirms that people learn from one another through such processes as observational learning, imitation, and modelling. It argues that the development of intergenerational programs creates significant learning opportunities and a transformation in attitudes between generations" (Corrigan, 2013). It is because of our first run of the class and the twin course offered at Dublin City University as well as the extensive research done on the benefit of intergenerational, interdisciplinary co-curricular courses, I am extremely confident this course will not only survive at Grand Valley State University, it will thrive and expand.

### Methodology

The preliminary work on the creation of this course began in late spring of 2017 to create a class unlike any other offered in the United States of America, regarding intergenerational learning. A partnership was secured with Porter Hills Retirement Communities who agreed to work with the Fredrick Meijer Honors College and Grand Valley State providing financial and programmatic insights as well as with their most important contribution, participants. The student teaching assistant was afforded the opportunity to assist a faculty member not only in the preliminary

planning for the class but also in execution. She was able to take notes of all interactions between the traditional students and the elders, as well as document the experiences of the inaugural course, culminating in a 9 page document of my reflections on each class period, as well as the course as a whole. Porter Hills approached Grand Valley faculty with a proposition of offering a condensed version of the class at their facilities for residents who were unable to be transferred to GVSU due to sensory issues (mostly caused by the bus). GVSU faculty and Grand Valley undergraduate teaching assistant again collaborated in the conduction of this condensed course. This senior project is focused on the combination of notes from both classes and a revised curriculum.

### Culmination

At the end of the semester all daily notes taken during the course of both semesters the teaching assistant was present for (Fall 2017. Summer 2018), 2 course overview documents (the notes compiled into an annotated booklet), and 1 revised course syllabus will be handed in to be used going forward with the course.

### Schedule

Weekly meetings will occur at Porter Hills to teach the course and take notes on what was covered during the spring semester of 2018. After each class period I will have a set of notes, these will be combined at the end of the semester and edited into one easy to read course overview packet explaining what occurred during each meeting throughout the class. Upon completion of the course, in the summer 2018 semester, I will begin working to combine my notes and create the course overview packet. This course overview packet will be given to the faculty member no later than the last week of the summer semester. The combination of both

course overview packets and all notes I compiled through two semesters will be used to revise the curriculum and syllabus for the intergenerational Aging and Saging course. These meeting times have yet to be determined but will be at the convenience of both parties. This curriculum and revised syllabus will be turned in no later than December of 2018.

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## **COURSE NOTES PACKETS FROM FALL OF 2017 AND SUMMER 2018**

### **FALL 2017**

Over the course of the semester, the teaching assistant and the faculty member had the privilege of working on and teaching a course that is completely unique to not only Grand Valley State University, but all of America. Live Learn Lead courses at Grand Valley State University Fredrick Meijer Honors College are designed to help first year honors college students with their writing, communication, and critical thinking skills in and out of the classroom. Per the Honors College web page, the Live Learn Lead course is focused on the “rapidly growing population, the Aged. This powerful influence presents as significant contributors or needy consumers. The dilemma is maximizing the former while attending to the latter. This course will examine this possible paradox through reflection on theoretical concerns and practical service applications in real life settings.” (Dr. Jane Toot) In the fall of 2017, an idea for a twist on the typical course became a reality, the class was run as the first intergenerational course to be offered at a University in America. The following is a condensed version of notes on the major topics/themes of each intergenerational class period taken by the undergraduate teaching assistant

\*Classes on Tuesdays were solely traditional students and Thursdays were intergenerational. The notes that follow are only from Thursdays. \*

**DAY 1-** On the first day of the course students and elders alike were asked “what/who are the elderly and how do we define them?” At first they were very confused and timid to answer; with a little prompting, we were able to set up groups that we define elders by: Physical, Psychological, Socio-Cultural, Developmental, and Spiritual. We then turned the question to the other end of our classroom “What/whom are the young and how do we define them? The students used the same 5 categories for this cohort.

As a brief synopsis our class determined that the elderly were more cultured, patient, and prepared than their youthful counterparts. Elders tend to be good

listeners and confidants. When answering the question about the young our answers were; energetic, fast paced, and low attention spans. The elderly students in the class shared they felt most of the younger generation were horrible with eye contact and communication because of our access to technology. They also shared that they felt many elderly have negative thoughts about youth due to the way we are portrayed on TV or in the news.

**DAY 2-** On the second day of the course students were introduced to the Newman Model which takes a person or situation and the 5 categories discussed in the first class period (Physical, Psychological, Socio-Cultural, Developmental, and Spiritual) and uses them to begin to solve the issue or better the situation. The students were given a mock situation “Mrs. Brown” with limited information about her life and situation and then were asked to look at the 5 categories as well as factors that affect/protect Mrs. Brown (money, her physician, her community, her family and friends, her composure, and her spirituality). The students than took this information about Mrs. Brown and had to decide what was necessary to be done immediately (secondary), in the near future (primary), as well as long term (tertiary).

**DAY 3-** On the third day of class our traditional students began teaching the elders about what they had learned about the Tao on the Tuesday before. We than began a discussion about how eastern and western medicine differ such as the following

- Religion vs. Spirituality separation
- Yin and Yang- opposites necessary to be in balance to be healthy
- Chi = Body Energy
- Meridian System only found in the Eastern Medical system  
(Acupressure points to normalize body energy)
- Tai Chi and Chi Gong
- Learn to play
- accept that you do not know everything
- Take in whatever you can and use it to the best of your ability

We have started to adopt some of these thoughts

- The medical side of Taoism
- Some of the meridian system- (Acupressure, Herbalism, etc.)
- Tai Chi and Chi Gong

We also dove into the Tao for the first time today. Students and elders were mixed into intergenerational groups to read and discuss the passages, they were asked to share with the

class what they learned, who they know who embodies these characteristics, where it can be used, and how it can make a difference. Major Themes of the Tao today included

- Live with Compassion and surprise
- Wisdom comes through experience
- Values shift with age
- Change is good
- Stop Generalization based on age
- Energy cannot be created or destroyed; only transformed.

**DAY 4-** Today we asked the elders to speak first about physical issues they personally have to deal with or elderly they know have. We asked the traditional students to do the same regarding their personal physical issues and their friends. To the whole classes surprise many issues overlapped. Asthma, knee and back pain, and lack of sleep were all stressed by both age groups. We explained that these physical limitations affect creativity since all people, regardless of age learn to work through/with their issues or find alternative ways to accomplish what they must do.

Our class had the chance to work with a business/engineering student at Grand Valley to help design a fridge that would be more beneficial for the aged population. This was a chance for them to work in their intergenerational teams and stretch their creativity. Some of the best ideas our class came up with were as follows.

- a. Revolving/Shelves
- b. Grip Bar/Grip mats in fridge
- c. Door instead of drawer (maybe elevated)
- d. Voice Alert/automatic shut
- e. Set up like a vending machine
- f. Mirror in back; wider instead of taller (for wheelchairs)
- g. Barcode Scan for vision loss, what is the item is it expired
- h. Relocate the grill making it easier to clean
- i. Better Temp gauge
- j. Automatic stopping spot for the doors that swing open and have them swing slower

The students also read a few more verses of the Tao and shared their findings once again with the class. Major themes were

1. There is always room for improvement
2. Retirement isn't the end it's the beginning of a new phase
3. Self-Respect
4. The importance of giving back

## 5. Being open to change

**DAY 5-** Today our focus was on the psychological concerns for the aged. Many of our elders shared their own concerns or concerns that their friends and family may have. Things such as depression, loneliness, regret, fear, and paranoia. Two important quotes from this class period from our elderly students were “Wisdom comes with age. Things will get better if you let them” and “The roles switch, the caregiver becomes the caretaker” (Speaking about her daughter taking over her care). We then discussed ways that we could combat these psychological concerns the following were solutions that our class came up with.

- Volunteering-> Fixes the issue of missing work
- Meeting with Nutritionist
- Caregivers/Caregiving
- Movie and Dinners with friends
- Being involved with a Church
- Traveling (on own, or through ever green)
- Elder Hostile -> Road Scholar
- Getting more into hobbies, things you didn't have time for while working
- Playing games with friends
- Going back to school
- Strong Relationships
- Visiting with family
- Time with spouses
- Finding who you will be in the last years of your life (or college years for us)

**DAY 6-** Today we focused on the sociocultural issues that the aged face. One of the first things brought up by the elderly students was that our society has become far more diverse so they have had to change their approach to many things. They also said that technology has been a blessing and a curse, much of it is helpful once they understand how to use it but the learning curve is difficult and many were confused by the updates that come with little to no warning. Another issue they expressed was that many younger people speak too quickly and do not enunciate. Stores put things on too high of shelves and there is a lack of automatic door or an excess of doors that are much too heavy. They have noticed that overall our (youth) generation has a lot of respect for elders and those who need help and will take the extra time out of their day to lend a helping hand. We also spoke about retirement and how many people are choosing to work as long as physically possible as people are living longer and simply cannot afford to retire. They shared about experiences with mass lay-offs and forced retirements and well as the benefits that come from retiring. Things such as reclaiming friendships, increased creativity, finding “new self”. Many expressed concerns that they had about losing their income

or the feeling they had of needing to feel wanted or needed. Our day continued by speaking about living arrangements post retirement such as moving in with their children, a retirement community, or aging in place. Many times we heard the elders were “ready to go home, home was not ready for them”. A lot of the elders expressed that they wanted to make only one move and they wanted to do it on their own accord. We discussed that sometimes home isn’t the best decision even if that is the wishes of the elder. In home care is very expensive and not very well monitored (no licensing which can cause trust issues). We stressed the importance of utilizing the local Area Agencies on Aging. We also discussed how transportation is a major problem for the elderly which in turn can increase loneliness. Suggested ways to help were an elder run Uber for elderly. The church or religious place often plays a large role in the elderly’s lives.

-One of the elders brought up calling 211 which is like a google on the phone.

#### IMPORTANT POINTS FROM THE TAO

“The power of silence brings incredible and meaningful thoughts”

“Less worry when you are older, noting has to be perfect; don’t agree, you don’t stop trying when you are older....Still feel youthful what is life without ambition and something to learn”

“Get involved with yourself and others, share what you have with the world.”

**DAY 7-** Today the traditional students had the chance to ask the elders questions. For full list see Day 7 Notes, the following were the ones I felt were most important

- Getting older leading to sadness and loneliness can this be combated? Yes, related to exposure of death, pay more attention to self (reflection), choose to either go out or stay in in your elder years.
- The Sage must travel light- becoming liberated over time, relieving stress new sense of freedom in age.
- Arthritis and Joint pain, how to stay active- very important to keep moving, the days you don’t work out are the days that you hurt worse. Taking anti-inflammatories. Taking supplements that help joints
- Liberation- Service to others out of pleasure instead of accepting help from others
- Fear of death over the course of age- There is no fear of death, through their experiences and friends and family dying; they don’t think about it much they still feel young.

- Liberation- Ready to receive, no longer have to worry or fret, freedom to enjoy
- Encore-Wisdom to know the difference, a simple smile can change the world, helping one person can help another, you never know what someone else is going through

**DAY 8-** The elderly students and the traditional students worked together today to work through a case with the Newman Model (Modeled after the Teaching Assistant's Grandparents). The following is what our class took away and suggested be done to help the elderly couple.

Positives

Part of a Church

Family in the State

Stubborn

Secondary- Immediate

Find a new doctor or medical team

Life alert of sorts- due to isolation

Primary- Preventative

Start looking at selling farm and their next move

Renting out some of the farm lands to pay for renovations

Tertiary- Long term

Conversations with the family

Make sure all legal documents are in order

On this day we also asked our traditional students to determine if the elders in this class were sages, and if so how they knew?

-They are because they have wisdom and compassion, they are optimistic about the future, they are well traveled, worldly, and they are obviously still wanting to learn as well as teach and share their experiences.

Point brought up that young women need to speak up and enunciate, in order to be a leader and eventually a sage you must be able to communicate and the younger generations are beginning to struggle with this due to the increased technology around us.

**DAY 9-** Today our class met about the master plan for making Grand Rapids and elder friendly city.

Top 3 things noted were-

- Transport, housing social participation, respect and social inclusion, civic participation, communication and importation, community health
- Need to improve housing, transport
- we are good with health

After much discussion we decided the following would be the most helpful ways to make this city for elder friendly and livable for all.

- spent a lot of time on transportation
- Parking for handicap vans with lifts for scooters
- access lane for drop off of handicap
- ArtPrize/Festival not available to all-→ No printed copy of art
- Need to have multiple tours printed, car, walking, Segway, etc.
- If we have Parks we need a reason to go to them
  - Adult size playgrounds
- Multiple outlets for communication (old school and new school)
- Respect and Inclusion (It is a 2 way street, need to learn how to talk to one another)
- Variety of housing because we are all different with different wants and needs
- Preventative care!! Affordable!

**DAY 10-** Today our class discussed our trip to Porter Hills Village and found out we would be hearing the Grand Rapids elder friendly pitch again, this time in the presence of elders who are both in our class and those who are not involved. We discussed guardianship of the elderly and realized we all needed to look into the laws for Michigan (Takeover Article). We then went on to ask the elders what they would like to ask Porter Hills and asked the traditional students what they would like to know about assisted living/retirement homes. The following is direct from my notes from the class period as I feel it was very important to have an accurate account of what our participants felt they wanted voiced.

- Initially they do a great job with exercise and classes, they also help with social events, activities are provided (if wanted)
- What happens if someone dies in Independent living? (No checkups?)
- Do you want a checkup?
- Cost of Porter Hills

- Investment in lower cost apt.
- Neighborhood Watch
  - How safe?
  - What does the staff do to check-up?
- Legal Services provided from the staff?
  - on site medical, dental, nutritional, etc.
- Volunteer opportunities out in the community?
  - Do you want them?
  - More off-site?
- Meet up between staff and residence
  - board meets monthly
  - Chats (Weekly)
- Financial Concerns?
  - Do they have a plan if they run out of money?
  - They determine when you can no longer live where you are at?
- Nursing homes security?
  - Cameras?
  - Security force in and out
- Long Hallways
  - used for exercise
  - Identification
- Menu/Diet
  - Monthly (No choice)
  - 4 meals/week
  - 3 or 5 days per week?
- Get out of housing contract if you want?
  - Up to 5 years ---- 20%/Year
  - What questions do you have to ask upon entering? (Licensing, housing options, etc.)
  
- What information do they explain to you? What do they show you?
  - SHOULD NEVER SMELL URINE
- Other places:
  - house keeper-wed.
  - Laundry-Thrs.
  - Friday-pill check
  - Constant Check-ups*
  - Low quality care givers- CNAs normally
- Outside Resources?
  - What are available free to customer, paid for by institutions?)
    - Tours
    - Meals
    - Reading to take
    - Follow ups

We also continued our discussion/conversation about the Tao

- 31: Younger everything is competition, sages let go and just enjoy the process
- 32: Meditation, find what works for you- Dancing to Driving to Studying
- 33: Accepting death and living in the moment
- 34: Looking back on what was important when we were young, look back with wisdom
- 35: About Hope, Optimism and Reality
- 36: Letting go of fear and worry as well as possessions

**Day 11-** Today our class had group meeting time to work on their portions of the booklet. It was stressed that the GVSU Traditional students were the ones taking the lead with the elderly being a support system or an advisor.

We all met back up for the last few minutes of class and discussed the Tao; here were our findings from this day:

- 37: Simplifying your needs
- 38: Same as above and dive deeper into your life
- 39: Value is not materialistic upon becoming a sage, experience matters more.
- 40: Detachment as you become a sage.
- 41: 3 Personalities; embrace time, follow the path but reverts, avoids the path
- 42: In the end everything ties together and love is what matters in the end, the will needs to be in order.

**The remainder of the course was dedicated to the traditional GVSU students sharing their edits for the booklet through PowerPoint presentations. These documents are in possession of the faculty member and her teaching assistant.**

**FINAL CLASS PERIOD-** The elders and the Traditional students met for the last time today and were asked what they enjoyed as well as what they didn't, and what changes they would like to see in the future.

- Enjoyed collaborating with youth (energizing and simulating)
- Helpful to collaborate with Tandem 365 (outside speakers)
- Looking deeper into where elders live regardless of their socioeconomic status
- Include a success story and a failure story from the elders
- Have elders choose their favorite Tao and show how they relate
- Very interesting and inspiring

- Potential projects for next class
  - Looking at different models for living (volunteer based)
  - Possible restaurant/cafe start up aimed at elders work intergenerational
  - Education of aging (the positives)
  - Start small and work up
  - Need to look into self-sustainable
  - Project creating a place that people experience different time periods
- Wants to hear more about what the young people would like to do
- Mix up seating? Get to know others better!
- Being Mortal book, go over?
- Grand Valley State Village- multi-use facility (intergenerational)
- More projects like the Fridge- Pitch an idea as a project

## **SUMMER 2018**

This summer, Porter Hills Village, asked us to run an abridged version of our course on their campus for elders who wanted to take our course but were unable to due to the transportation provided out to GVSU (the bus). Our summer class consisted of seven elders, a faculty member, and her two student assistants. While we did not have the intergenerational aspect on the student side we did include the younger population with having two traditional college student teaching assistants. This course was offered once a week for an hour and fifteen minutes over an eight week span. The following is a condensed version of the notes on the major topics/themes of each class period.

\*Please note- the next several pages are in outline form, taken from class notes from the summer\*

## **Summer 2018**

**DAY 1-** We began the course with introductions to who we are and why we are here. Dr. Toot explained briefly how our course ran this past fall for the first time at GVSU and how we all learned so much from one another. She then went on to explain how this course is a stepping stone for us on a much larger path that will eventually lead to an intergenerational institute (Adult Daycare) that would provide internship opportunities for GVSU students and many services to the elderly population. One of the elders asked the two college students to explain why we felt that this sort of class was necessary and our answers were quiet simple; for me, this course is a way to open the dialogue between generations, and bridge the gaps between us. Both age groups have so many misconceptions of the other. We would like to the world to see elders as a resource instead of a problem.

We went on to ask the same opening questions we asked on our first day of the fall class. Who are the elderly and how do we define them? Who are the youth and how do we define them?

Some misconceptions young people have about the elderly:

- They like to sleep all day
- They have no hobbies
- They don't know what is best for them any more
- They are closed minded

Some misconceptions the elderly have about the youth

- Absorbed in their phones.
- Rude and Lazy
- No interpersonal communication skills
- Tech savvy

**The elderly we think we know, is not who they really are.**

They want to teach, learn, and share

**The youth we think we know, is not who they really are.**

They want to listen, learn, and share as well.

\*This is why this kind of course is so incredibly important it opens up the conversation between generations that normally would not have any contact. \*

We then went on to discuss Taoism and Tai Chi:

The importance of exercise in the daily lives of the Chinese

How there are very few places like Porter Hills (assisted living facilities) in China

(They take care of their elderly)

China is a very supportive environment for the elderly

They are engaged in their lives practices much longer than their American Counterparts.

A mix of east and west medicine in China (China- Japan Friendship Hospital)

Chinese carry their own medical records in a magazine sized envelope.

Chinese engage in an open discussion with their medical providers. They do not sit simply to listen and be told (one-way monologue) like their American counterparts.

We then received the question; what is Saging?

It is the gathering wisdom from the people who came before you.

The idea of elders being looked at as a resource not a burden.

Veneration of elders common in Eastern Culture (even Native Americans here).

Elders are the wisdom keepers of society.

Towards the end of the first day of the summer course we discussed how there are many more similarities between college students and the elderly than you might think. We live in similar style housing with those who are around our age. Both ages are at a place in life where they have to make a ton of choice; college students, who they want to be in the coming years and elderly, who they want to be now.

We wrapped up class with a few verses from the Tao and here are a few of the comments we received.

- Aging is a Passive Process and Saging is an Active Process
- Don't just go through the processes (around the wagon wheel) be active in your life.
- Try to integrate knowledge instead of it being nuggets of knowledge.

**Day 2-** The second day of the course was dedicated to the discussion of critical thinking and mindfulness.

- Bringing two generations together but also pushing the ideas of critical thinking and mindfulness.
- Older generations were not coddled, they took care of themselves and could ask for help but were very independent.
- Younger generations are many times coddled and had a lot done for them; they want a right answer (memorize and recite/regurgitate)

- Many youth cannot handle thinking on their feet, because they have never been forced to do so.
- Mindfulness is like a vitamin pill for your brain, make you more flexible and able to obtain whatever you want to (with or without help).
- Critical Thinking and Problem solving are two of the things that youth and elders share. (Both need to actively engage in both)
  - Critical thinking and problem solving help college students entering the work force and helps elders stay independent longer.

#### Critical Thinking Model and Neuman Model

- Isomorphic- able to be used anywhere, in any setting, by anyone
- Makes a seemingly impossible problem, able to be solved.
- Recipe Card to carry in head, doesn't give you the answer but helps you find it.
- Interdisciplinary- able to bring people together from different settings (doctor, nurse, financial, etc.)

#### The 5 Variables

1. Physical
  - Age, Assistive Devices Needed, Non-Mobile, Diabetes, Mental Disorders or Diseases, Where they live, how they get around
2. Psychological
  - Attitude, Mind-set, how they feel and interact
3. Sociocultural
  - Career, Money, Hometown, Current Neighborhood
4. Developmental
  - New situation and different environment
5. Spiritual
  - Not religious (external)
  - Internal beliefs, feelings, and desires
  - Known by what you do not necessarily what you give (monetarily)

Lastly, after labeling parts of their lives into each of these categories, sort them by what protects this person and what could be a potential harm/stress them?

Interventions:

- Primary- Preventative

- Secondary- Immediate
- Tertiary- Rehab

Two case studies were given for the elders to read over and apply the Neumann model to that we would cover later in the course.

We finished once again with readings from The Tao:

- elders are viewed as a problem and are set aside (where they can't be seen or heard or interact with them).
- Other cultures venerate the elderly (The Asian, Latin American, and some European)
- Stop separating things into categories; put everything back together as a whole.
- Getting older put an emphasis on more important things and values change and evolve.
- Earned the right to enjoy every single moment of life that they feel are important
- We are not dying only changing
- Spirit is always renewed even if body is failing
- Feel free to say no at older age, felt guilty when younger.

### **Day 3-**

On the third day of the course, the college student took over teaching on the subject of technology. We ran a PowerPoint about the strengths and weaknesses of elders using technology and then opened up the floor for questioning from our elder students. We were able to help multiple people fix things on their phones and tablets to make them easier to use.

After our portion of the class was complete the faculty member stepped back in the discus using the Neumann model on the case studies she had handed out the week prior. This case study was about a woman named Mrs. Brown and the following is a list of the strengths and stressors to her life that our class came up with.

Strengths-

First hospitalization

Intelligent and Alert  
Stubborn  
Proud/private  
Lots of friends  
Have planned for the future

Stressors-

Diabetic  
Osteoporosis/vertebral collapse  
85 years old  
Broken Hip  
Blind 90 year old husband  
Gets confused  
Inflexible  
Physician is pushy in treatment  
Not too open

We then went on to the next step of the Neuman model which are treatments that are primary (preventative), secondary (immediate), and tertiary (rehab). The following is what our class came up with as treatment options for Mrs. Brown.

Primary-

Having an regular appointment with a PT and OT  
Public Transport to appointments

Secondary-

Have Mr. Brown join a PACE program to help him live a better life as a blind man, and giving his wife a break

Elder proof the apartment so it is safe for them to live in

Give Mrs. Brown a walker or some sort of assistive device

Tai Chi class

Transportation to and from appointments

Social worker/friends to approach them about planning the next steps of their lives

Tertiary-

Keep going to Tai Chi

Keep OT and PT appointments

Maintain Pace

Look at potential next places.

#### **DAY 4**

During our 4<sup>th</sup> class period we went over aging in place vs. nursing homes vs. assisted living centers. We also wanted to ask our students (all residents of Porter Hills Village) what they think their retirement community does well and what they think needs improvement. The following are my notes from what they discussed.

What does Porter Hills do well?

- engaging opportunities to go to
- good transportation
- lots of volunteer opportunities
- work with the day care
- Tandem Partnership (Life ambulance)

What would you like to see improved?

- no good space to hold these events (Need hearing loop in a sort of theatre)
- longer cheaper day care with sniffles program (daycare for sick children)
- career ladder for CNA, to a 2 year nursing program

-tutoring one on one with young students (retired teachers) this would be a symbiotic relationship kids learn school knowledge and youth can help teach elders about technology

We then went on to cover another case study where we could apply the Neumann model to help the lives of a patient. In this case study we discussed Mr. Jones.

-Can live by self but will need some help

-Social Worker/Volunteer?

-Church/Neighbors help?

-Non-active family

Strengths-

Religion

Resilient and successful

Church support groups

Has skills and is proud

Stressors-

Distrustful of women

Needs male intervention can be talked to through church does not need assistive living yet, maybe weight watchers? Keep track of physically and mentally (watch diabetes). Need a holistic approach

To conclude our 4<sup>th</sup> class we read and discussed more from the Tao.

#21- From a young person's point of view

You don't always have to have a comment or an opinion

Elderly Point of View

Silence can speak louder than words and you can "just be" during that silence

Nice to feel like you don't have to prove yourself all the time

#22- From a young person's point of view

Not everyone has to be in charge and power hungry, sometimes you need to take a step back and look at the whole picture

Elderly Point of View

Make sure you are constantly learning, once you stop learning you are dead.

#23- From a young person's point of view

More self-focused, drive to peruse what you have always wanted without caring what others think.

Elderly Point of View

Sometimes what we expect to do isn't what the best is for us.

#24- From a young person's point of view

Romantic, family, friends

Elderly Point of View

Care for fellow man, thanking those who serve (love for country), fixing relationships in old age with cousins/extended family, losing friends almost daily (very sobering). Warmth of memories when people have passed on.

#25- From a young person's point of view

Constant change, not a climb of a mountain but a winding of a river

Elderly Point of View

Changing from one degree to another, changing to a stay at home mother, back into a career, back to school at 40 after husband cheated and remarried, life is so unexpected.

#26- From a young person's point of view

Mind keeps you awake because you have too much to think about.

Elderly Point of View

Keeping a good book right next to bed or a journal to keep next to bed. Best time to think (no one interrupts you and it is nice and quiet).

#27- From a young person's point of view

Back to the river quote from number #25, life is constantly changing and you don't want to go up the river or against the stream. Just have to go to the flow.

Elderly Point of View

Change from constantly doing something to a more internal opinion or view, deeper thought. Youth would benefit from introspection. Youth bring elders back to everyday life and Elders give youth a break from the rat race of life.

#28- From a young person's point of view

Look inward and see what you feel is very important to you.

Elderly Point of View

Youth is a time to collect experience and old age is a time to reflect on those experiences.

## Day 5

On day 5 of the summer course we discussed the different kinds of caregiving and how they affect the patient and the caregiver.

### Family Caregiver

- Family isn't always available
  - work
  - Tired after work
  - location/geographically
  - lack of training
    - bed
    - toilet
    - diet
    - mental health

The sandwich generation- Couples with teenage or young adult children and an aging parent, supporting on both sides. Hard to handle (A LOT OF STRESS)

Elders don't want to inconvenience their children by moving in with them

There is a lot of strain on family members who become caregivers

- No one takes care of the caregiver

### Professional Caregiving

- Clear assignments and communication of responsibilities
- Special Diets
- Porter hills- Levels of care (independent, catered, rehab, townhomes, garden apartments.
- Activities when people are at home (Porter Hills)- NOT DONE WELL

- Activities out in the community (outings and events)- WELL DONE
- Can't tell someone what to do (activates) but can encourage engagement
- More interactive activities, homework and then group study
- Do a great job of meeting physical needs

Both kinds of caregivers have higher risk of depression or isolation as well as disability and illness

Pace program at Grand Valley, Training program for most majors while offering help to elders.

The Tao for caregivers (new text out)

One of the elders comments on this lecture- "Caring for someone you love is one of the greatest stresses and privileges of life"

We ended this course with a discussion of the Tao as well. These were the top take away points.

- Fewer people to worry about and overall way less stress
- Youth don't take time to decompress so we are very high strung or spend our time on phones instead of meditation.
- Not running from fear, plant your feet and learn to live with negative feelings and you will find a way through it. Need a break from doing it too though
- Not caring what others think is important in both college and in the older years. Elders have the responsibilities to share their stories but not a bunch of other stuff anymore. But they also have a hard time giving up the things they have always done and create a "new self"

## Day 6

On the 6<sup>th</sup> day of the course the lecture was about the end stage of life.

Hospice and Palliative Care

- The Dying Persons Bill of Rights (handout)
- Children aren't afraid of death, parents are when they are dealing with illness
- Patient not losing control of life- Bronston Cocktail as needed/wanted

-Pain control became the center of Hospice

## Hospice

-Started with Ancient Greeks, common in the crusades

-Weary Travelers saved from fatigue (has to be a valid choice)

-Went underground for a long time

-Came back in the 1800's with patients of TB of the bone (In France)

-Use back down because of antibiotics

-St. Christopher's Hospice in London by Cicely Saunders

- assessed pain

- Pain cycle every 4 hours, cocktail given every 3 hours (never in pain)

- disease process went up need for narcotics went down since the patients have control of self

-Came to USA in 1970's

- Methadone and Narcotic in conjunction

- Now use Morphine sulfate

  - Can be done by injection, patch, suppository, etc.

- Now opioids are in the mix

Loss/Recovery cycle, 5 Stages of dying (recipe card, don't have to go through all of them in that order)

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargain
- Depress
- Accept

Hospice is comfort care, patients decide not to follow curative care any longer

- 6 months or less to live (guidelines)

- control of symptoms

- use of interdisciplinary teams
  - physician (not always the lead)
  - nurse
  - social worker
  - chaplin
  - patient and family care unit
  - hospice Volunteer

(PRN: nutritionist, PT, OT, attorney)

Teams meet at least once a week if not once a day

- use a model (Neuman) to determine what is best for the patient at that time.

Your very own hospice house (hand out)

- Patient and Family determine what will be used and what is important to them.

5 wishes

- Living Will mixed with a Power of Attorney
  - very important to have filled out
  - good way to start a very tough conversation
  - not written in stone, able to change if desired

Palliative Care

- Step between curative care and comfort care
- Comfort care but can still be using chemo or radiation, etc.

1/3 of our medical budget is spent on the last 2 years of life. That is fine if that is what you would like but not necessary if not wanted.

**Hospice is very accessible if desired in our area**

Emmanuel Hospice

- Porter Hills (Presbyterian)
- Clark (Methodist)

-Sunset Manor (Christian Reformed)

-St. Ann's (Catholic)

Holland Home (Holland), Harbor Hospice (Muskegon), and Hospice of North Ottawa (Grand Haven)

Hospice of Michigan

Medical students are taught that curing is success which is not always correct.

Sometimes death is what the patient desires and death is a natural part of the life cycle.

Documents aren't always universal, may vary state to state. That can cause issues with people who reside in two states (Florida and Michigan/snowbirds)

Once you sign up for a hospice they are the only ones who can provide any care

-but you are always welcome to leave

The Tao Readings to conclude class

Hope is always waiting

-the sage sees all of the best in things that normal people would not.

Ready to receive

-Freedom comes with saging, hand gripping at sand

Forever limitless

-Passion and desire get confused in youth

Sink Deep

-able to dig deeper and enjoy things that in youth are missed because they are being tossed around by stress.

All the Beauty of the world is yours.

-Finally at peace, not caring about all of the materialistic things.

Ready to depart and arrive

-Wanderer, ready for every step of the way

Light coming home

-Everyone will die but it will be like coming home

A weaving made of life

-everything will blend together to reveal itself as love of life.

Success is an inside job

-no longer external, internal success

## Day 7

This week was all about Spirituality.

- Spirituality does not equate to religion; it can but it doesn't have to
- Religion is external and spirituality is more internal (some direction could have come from religion but we make it our own from our experiences.)
- Large C creative -> Public Outward Creation (Singing, Art, etc.)
- Small C creative -> Serving Thanksgiving Dinner, A book of recipes, group of letters, box of pictures (labeled).
- The 5 M's taken from Maggie Kuhn former director of Grey Panthers -> A sage that is in touch with spirituality
  - Mentor
  - Mediator
  - Monitor
  - Mobilizer (get people to get stuff done)
  - Motivator
- Ex-Navy Admiral William McRaven
  - Use of interdisciplinary teams
  - Finish a task first thing in the morning everyday (make your bed)
  - Never Quit, you will get knocked down and make mistakes but don't give up
  - Rise to the occasion
  - Role of Heart, not everyone can be a leader in their field or recognized as one
  - Giving Hope, pat your grandkid on the back and "I Know you can do it"
  - Life is not fair
  - Learn from your mistakes
  - Dare to win, winning is a good thing but use it to the advantage of others.
  - Fight bullies
- Religion can be a framework for spirituality but it is not as concrete
  - Reading Poetry can provide framework of spirituality
  - Be outside in nature to feel at peace
  - Driving a car

- Talking with my grandma or petting my dog
- We all have to potential to be spiritual yet
  - We don't think about it
  - We don't pursue it
  - We do it and don't think about it.
- Need to learn how to provide spirituality to others
  - Meeting with a grandchild or youth

Tao top things to take away-

Confront your fear, there is always hope

Blessing of dying

The Tao is comforting

### **Day 8-**

On the final day of the summer course we took some time to discuss how the class will run this fall at Grand Valley and invited the elders who took the summer class to join us this fall. We explained the structure of the course as well as our goals for the fall of 2018 and beyond.

Give out packet of reading materials the Thursday before it will be discussed (1 week to prepare)

Go over the packets with traditional students Tuesday, they will come up with questions to ask the elders

Elders answer questions on Thursday have an open discussion and go over Tao

Give survey first week and last week of class to obtain some hard data about how the course is doing.

Discussion about the goals for fall and beyond

-starting with the conduction and reorganization of the course (this senior project)

-explaining our teams and how they work (2/3 elders, 4/5 traditional students)

-All teams work with City of Grand Rapids running focus groups on how to make Grand Rapids an elder friendly city.

-Goal of creating an adult daycare (like Tandem 365) across from GVSU on Lake Michigan Drive

-Goal of Interdisciplinary intergenerational institute (training for students and daycare for elders)

-Going to Meijer for Money as well as GV and Porter Hills.

### **What is Next?**

Changes were made to the course for the fall of 2018 after collecting raw data (the notes previously shared) that include the following: the inclusion of more versions of the Tao and deeper examination of the short poems, a midterm will be given in order to evaluate students understanding, the students will be participating in an initial and final survey in order to have data to prove that our course is working, the decision was made to disregard the book by Cohen and instead have the students read articles out a booklet she put together. We also changed the dynamics of the class by offering to have elders from different communities join for this semester. The syllabus has also been modified slightly and will be included at the end of this document.

This course is one the first steps on a long road to bridge the gap that exists between generations. The end goal is to bring intergenerational housing, an intergenerational institute, as well as an undergrad certificate or minor in Gerontology to Grand Valley State University! In order to prove that this course has been effective we decided a survey would be given to all students in the fall of 2018 at the beginning and completion of the semester. Once we have this data from the students we can start to look for partnerships and opportunities to continue on our path. We will be asking the University as well as a community partner to allow us to begin an intergenerational housing experience, in which a few college students would get free room and board at an assisted living center in exchange for a set number of volunteer hours that they would give back. We will continue to show the University that our intergenerational opportunities are beneficial through surveys and data collections. This collected information will give us a proof of concept to continue to expand our intergenerational projects in the future.

### **Reflection**

Upon entering Grand Valley State University and the Fredrick Meijer Honors College in the fall of 2016 I was told I would have to take a class called a "Live, Learn, Lead". I had no idea what this course would be about or that it would lead me to create a bond with a professor and a

passion for gerontology. Dr. Jane Toot taught my “Live, Learn, Lead” and it was about Aging and Saging in society. I felt that it would be a beneficial topic for me to learn about as I had the intentions of going into medicine. I could have never predicted that this class would not only be beneficial my freshman year but would continue to help me throughout my time at Grand Valley. When Dr. Toot spoke with me about the possibility of making her Aging and Saging course intergenerational I was super excited, I was even more thrilled when she offered me the chance to work with her to create this course. We worked side by side to set up this course for the fall of 2017. I had the chance to help Dr. Toot as a teaching assistant on Thursdays when we had both our traditional students and our elders. Watching the two generations interact was such a privilege. Porter Hills Village (our community partner for the fall of 2017) asked Dr. Toot and I to come to their campus and teach an abridged version of Aging and Saging on their campus for those who could not make the trip to Grand Valley, we happily obliged. It was at this point I asked Dr. Toot if I was able to use what we had been doing with the intergenerational course as my Honors Senior Project. I chose this project because I feel strongly that making connections and building bridges between generations is so important for all people. We can learn a lot from one another if we just take the time to listen to one another. I have learned so much about myself as a student and a critical thinker. I know that the answer will not always be right in front of me anymore, I will have to solve problems using “recipe cards” Dr. Toot has taught me (such as the Neuman Model). I have also learned how to speak with elders more clearly and how to accommodate their changing needs and desires. I know that this project will help me as I enter the workforce as a Nurse because I have had the chance to interact with the elderly in a way many people have not. My career field (and all career fields for that matter) will be working with more aging people than ever before, which is why understanding what they are going through and also how similar we all are is so important. I feel so privileged to have the opportunity to be a part of this evolving project.

**\*The following is an edited syllabus for the fall class of 2018\***

**Title:** Live, Learn, Lead

**Books listed on page 2.**

Saging and Aging: Maximize the Interaction

**Schedule:** HON 148, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:30-3:45pm

**Credits:** 3 (or certificate of completion)

**Prerequisite:** Acceptance into the Honors Program/Augmentation of class through permission of professor

- BE MORE CURIOUS – BE LESS CERTAIN
- CELLPHONES AND HATS OFF!
- COMPUTERS NOT ENCOURAGED – ASK INSTRUCTOR FOR PERMISSION

**Description:** A rapidly growing population are the aged. This powerful group presents as significant contributors as well as needy consumers. The dilemma is how to maximize the former while attending to the latter. This course will examine this possible paradox through reflection on theoretical issues and practical service applications in real-life settings. It is believed that an intergenerational approach would bring about the most useful body of information on this subject.

**Objective:** Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Reflect upon, and incorporate the variables of aging into discussion and decision-making using an intergenerational approach.
2. Identify and utilize the possible interaction of saging and aging, and how these can be integrated into life decisions.
3. Utilize aspects of saging in determination of activities for the aged as appropriate.
4. Identify and engage in practical examples of saging/aging through co-curricular activities, which are designed by intergenerational teams.

**Course Grading and Expectations:**

1. Assignments are to be read before class.
2. Attendance is expected – being too busy, tired, or un-organized are not considered to be valid reasons for not attending.  
\*If you cannot attend class – please notify instructor PRIOR to class.
3. Assignments are due the days indicated.
4. **Students who require assistance in class, exam periods, or in co-curricular assignments will be accommodated. However, the instructor must be informed of these needs by the end of the second week of class.**
5. The final exam will be given during exam week as scheduled and will be open book/open note.

**Grade Percentages:**

1) Attendance; participation in discussion; grades on unannounced quizzes	50%
2) Midterm	10%
3) Projects	20%
4) Final	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Office hours:** by appointment only (134 HNR)

**Work phone:** 616-331-3219

**Home phone (not after 9pm):** 616-384-3258

**Email:** tootj@gvsu.edu

**Required Texts:** Students are responsible for acquiring required books. I can help with this.

1) *The Sage's Tao Te Ching* (need to have)

William Martin, 2000

2) ***Distributed or assigned readings*** (These will be provided at no charge to students. There will be unannounced quizzes on these)

**Suggested Ancillary Reading:**

- 1) ***When I Am an Old Woman*** Jenny Joseph, 1995
- 2) ***The Age of Dignity*** Ai-Jen Poo, 2015
- 3) ***Being Mortal*** Gawande, 2014

**Schedule:**

Aug 28	Tues	Traditional Students	Introductions Syllabus Conduction of course Form questions
Aug 30	Thurs	Both Students and Elders (Neuman Model) (Survey Given)	Introductions Answer questions on conduct of class Mindfulness, critical thinking
Sept 4	Tues	Holiday-NO CLASS	Labor Day Recess (No Class)
Sept 6	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring model to class Neuman Model	Students teach model to elders (5 Variables)
Sept 11	Tues	Traditional Students Bring model to class	Finish model Case studies Develop questions
Sept 13	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring Model to class (Hand out environments)	Work in intergenerational teams Case studies
Sept 18	Tues	Traditional Students	Environments Develop questions
Sept 20	Thurs	Both Students and Elders	Environments

		Grandly land presentation Ginny Smith	
Sept 25	Tues	Traditional Students Bring model	Questions from Thursday Directories for Sept. 27 (B)
Sept 27	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Meet off-campus – field trip Intergenerational teams	Field trip
Oct 2	Tues	Traditional Students Bring Tao	Develop questions Present
Oct 4	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring Tao	Read, listen to questions, discuss
Oct 9	Tues	Traditional Students Mid-term	10% of grade
Oct 11	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring Tao	Read, discuss Spirituality, values, creativity Retire
Oct 16	Tues	Traditional Students Readings of Tao	Develop questions
Oct 18	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring readings – Tao	Discuss above
Oct 23	Tues	Traditional Students Bring readings – Tao	Personal environment Develop questions
Oct 25	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring readings – Tao	Discuss above
Oct 30	Tues	Traditional Students Bring readings – Tao	Caregivers Develop questions
Nov 1	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring readings – Tao	Discuss above
Nov 6	Tues	Traditional Students Bring readings	Death & dying Develop questions
Nov 8	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring readings	Project 1 Death & dying
Nov 13	Tues	Traditional Students	Politics, ageism Develop questions

Nov 15	Thurs	Both Students and Elders Bring readings	Ageism, politics Discuss projects 2 & 3
Nov 20	Tues	Traditional Students	Technology Develop questions
Nov 22	Thurs	Holiday-NO CLASS	Holiday-NO CLASS
Nov 27	Tues	Traditional Students Bring readings	Entertainment Develop questions
Nov 29	Thurs	Both Students and Elders	Project 4 Discuss questions for technology & entertainment
Dec 4	Tues	Traditional Students	Wrap up the Tao – course Develop questions
Dec 6	Thurs	Both Students and Elders	Projects 5 & 6 Answer questions
Dec 10		Exam week	Finals

In order for this class to run efficiently traditional students and elders alike must be prepared by having read all material assigned prior to each class period. Traditional students will discuss these reading assignments on Tuesdays and formulate questions to ask the elders on Thursday. The best discussions are when elders and traditional students can have open respectful dialogue; these questions are the perfect platform. You all have so much you can learn from one another.

