Summer 2012
Discipline: Anthropology
ANTH 3559: Anthropology of Aging
Division: Upper Division
Faculty Name: Dr. Joel Savishinsky
Pre-requisites: None

- **IBERIA: SPAIN AND PORTUGAL**: Elders, policy & power. Heirs & leadership. Intergenerational bonds.
- **ITALY**: Aging & emotion. Family dynamics. Interdependency.
- **GREECE**: Widowhood & faith. Late life & gender. Successful aging.
- **MOROCCO & NORTH AFRICA**: Anti-aging & argan oil. Demographic changes. Poetry and elders

SEMESTER AT SEA, SUMMER 2012 VOYAGE

ANTHROPOLOGY OF AGING

DR. JOEL SAVISHINSKY, DEPT. OF ANTHROPOLOGY, ITHACA COLLEGE

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“Old age is not a disease -- it’s a triumph.”
-- Maggie Kuhn, Founder of The Gray Panthers

“Why ‘stay young’ when adventure lies in change and growth.” growth.”
-- May Sarton, American writer

“Genius is childhood recaptured.” -- Charles Baudelaire, French Poet

“At first we want life to be romantic; later, to be bearable; finally, to be understandable.” -- Louise Bogan, American poet

“Growing old is not so bad when you consider the alternative.”
-- Mark Twain, American writer

SPECIAL COURSE FIELD LAB: “ELDERS OF SPAIN AND EUROPE: POLICIES, PERILS AND PROMISES OF AN AGING WORLD,”
Barcelona, Spain Saturday, June 30th

Course Description
Aging is a universal human experience, but human longevity, the rhythms of the life-course, and the qualities of later life. Vary enormously from one culture to another. This course explores that diversity through readings, field trips, debates, films and exercises focused on the peoples of North Africa, the Middle East, Southern and Eastern Europe, and the Caribbean. We will consider the “graying” of national and global populations in the Bahamas and the modern world; the traditional power of older men and women in Spain and Italy; rites of passage over the lifespan in the USA and other countries; the nature of widowhood in Greece; the idea of a “good death” in Ireland; factors enhancing life expectancy and health in Croatia and Abkhasia; the place of spirituality and authority among elders in Turkey and the Near East; the role of poetry and creativity among older people in Egypt, Europe and Asia; the impact of modernization on the aged, their families and government policies in North Africa, Uganda, the Americas, and Southeast Asia; and the promises and perils of retirement, pension systems, and caregiving in developing and post-industrial societies. In light of our cultural encounters in the Mediterranean, students will also be asked to reflect on their own families’ experiences with aging and the
elderly; to envision their own ideal later life; and to contemplate the social and policy changes that could help or hinder their realization of “a good old age.”

Course Objectives
1. To help students understand their own culture’s assumptions about the aging process and later life.
2. To explore the sources and the kinds of power, authority, and respect accorded older people in various Mediterranean, non-Western and Western societies.
3. To understand the impact of modernization, industrialization, and social policy on the cultural treatment of the elderly in global perspective.
4. To examine cultural differences in inter-generational relations and in the way older people themselves experience and feel about later life.

METHODS OF EVALUATION
(1) Three exams (45%)
(2) Participation in class discussions, debates and exercises (35%)
(3) Field lab, experiential projects and write-ups (20%)

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK
AUTHOR: Joel Savishinsky
TITLE: Breaking the Watch: The Meanings of Retirement in America
PUBLISHER: Cornell University Press
ISBN #: 0-8014-8817-6
DATE/EDITION: 2000; paperback
COST: $22.95
FIELD ASSIGNMENTS. [Note: The list of field labs and trips that follows is provisional.]
The required field lab for this course is: **ELDERS OF SPAIN AND EUROPE: POLICIES, PERILS AND PROMISES OF AN AGING WORLD**, which will take place on **Saturday, June 30th, our last day in Barcelona, Catalonia**. This lab will include material on aging programs and policies in Spain. This field lab, other field trips, and independent fieldwork projects you do, will count for 20 percent of the course grade. The projects and trips you choose should focus on one or more of the central themes in this course, including family, community and tribal life; the daily lives of older people; intergenerational relations; medical care and public health as these affect young and old; social and governmental services for different generations; the role of religion over the life course; and the place of historical memory in the lives of elders. Beyond the field lab in Barcelona, your other field experiences can include participant-observation and/or service learning at historical sites, senior centers, medical facilities, religious institutions, social agencies, nursing homes, and other organizations that serve elderly people, their families and communities. A family homestay or visit would also be a very suitable project: this would provide a chance to learn directly about inter-generational relations, and about the status and treatment of elders within households. **Each student is required to participate in and eventually write up the field lab in Barcelona: your paper (5-6 pages) should also include comparisons with what you have learned about aging from your experiences in at least one other country on our voyage.**

Some key issues and questions to investigate in your experiences and travels:
• What cultural attitudes towards older people can you identify? Can you distinguish the real from the ideal, and differences from American society?
• How do members of different generations interact, and in what settings and circumstances do these relationships occur?
• Is there evidence of age segregation or integration?
• What services are being provided for elders and their families, and who is providing, staffing and paying for these?
• How do older people feel about their roles and responsibilities in life?
• How involved are older men and women in religious affairs and institutions?
• How are death and dying handled in these cultures?
• What major events in the countries we are visiting contribute to the historical memory of older people?

Some Suggested Field Labs and Other Experiential Projects and Trips (**)
Family homestays or visits: these would be valuable in any country where this is possible
**SPAIN:** **ELDERS OF SPAIN AND EUROPE: POLICIES, PERILS AND PROMISES OF AN AGING WORLD (required)**
  Montserrat-Benedictine Retreat
  The Autisme La Garriga Project
  In The Footsteps of Orwell: The Spanish Civil War and Catalan Nationalism
ITALY: Roman Ghetto and Jewish Museum
    Unusual Rome and Catacombs
CROATIA: Desa-Dubrovnik (an NGO serving women and families)
GREECE: Issues in Public Health in Greece
    Delphi and Meteora
TURKEY: Women and The Law in Turkey
    Christian Tradition in Turkey
    Gallipoli/Cannakale/Troy
    Jewish Tradition in Istanbul
PORTUGAL: Field labs and other opportunities to be determined
MOROCCO: Evening with a Moroccan Family
    Berber Villages of the High Atlas Mountains
    Evolution of the Moroccan Woman
    Marrakech and Nomad Camp
    Mental Health Issues in Morocco

** Ideas for Independent Projects should be discussed with the instructor first in order to
insure their appropriateness and viability, and to secure approval.
COURSE OUTLINE

PART I. AGING, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

1. INTRODUCTION: THE SCOPE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSE
   Reading: J. Savishinsky: “Education and Moral Reciprocity: Teaching About Aging on An Inter-generational Voyage”  
   DAY #1

2. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND IMMIGRATION: THE ELDERS OF THE BAHAMAS
   Reading: J. Savishinsky: “A New Life for the Old: The Role of the Elderly in the Bahamas”  
   Slides: Cat Island and Its Elders  
   DAY #2

3. AN AGENDA OF AGING ISSUES: GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES
   Readings: T. Fishman: “The Old World” (on global aging)  
   D. Gelman: “Who’s Taking Care of Our Aging Parents?”  
   M. Novak: “Aging At Other Times, In Other Places”  
   Exercise: 5 issues in global aging  
   DAY #3

   W. Oswalt: “Aging and Death”  
   Exercise: Small group presentations on the life course and rites of passage  
   DAYS #4 & 5

PART II: GENDER, POWER AND HEALTH

5. GERONTOCRACY AND KINSHIP IN EUROPE: SPAIN, ITALY AND IRELAND
   Readings: S. Brandes: “Kinship and Care for The Aged in Traditional Rural Iberia”  
   C. Johnson: “Interdependence and Aging in Italian Families”  
   N. Scheper-Hughes: “Deposed Kings: The Demise of The Rural Irish Gerontocracy”  
   Debate: Should Elders Be Leaders?  
   DAYS #6 & 7

EXAM # 1  
DAY #8

{ SPAIN & ITALY }
REQUIRED FIELD LAB (BARCELONA): “ELDERS OF SPAIN AND EUROPE: POLICIES, PERILS & PROMISES OF AN AGING WORLD” (June 30).

6. LONGEVITY, HEALTH AND SUPPORT: CROATIA, YUGOSLAVIA AND ABKHASIA
Readings: S. Benet: “Why They Live to Be 100, or Even Older, in Abkhasia”
A. Simic: “Aging, World-View, and Intergenerational Relations in America and Yugoslavia”
Film: Medicine at the Crossroads: Life Support (India, United States, Ireland)
Debate: I’d Rather Grow Old In….

DAYS #9 & 10

{ CROATIA }

7. WOMEN AND WIDOWS, MEN AND POWER, CURSES AND CURES: AGING AND GENDER IN GREECE AND TURKEY
Readings: M. Dimen-Schein: “Only on Sundays: Women’s Place in Greece”
J. Dubisch: “Greek Women: Sacred or Profane”
D. Sunbar: “Attitudes of Turkish Students Toward Elderly Relatives”
Film: Kypseli: Women and Men Apart, A Divided Reality (Greece)
Exercise: Do women or men age more successfully?

DAYS #11 & 12

{ GREECE & TURKEY }

PART III. RELIGION, MODERNIZATION AND RETIREMENT

8. MODERNIZATION AND THE POSITIVE PLACE OF OLDER WOMEN AND MEN: EGYPT, UGANDA, ASIA AND THE AMERICAS
Reading: S. Mydans: “A Tribunal To Get Neglected Parents Smiling Again” (Singapore)
Film: Portraits of Age (United Nations film on aging in Egypt, Uganda, Argentina, USA & Cambodia)

EXAM # 2

DAY #14
9. RELIGION, EXPECTATION AND AGING:
THE MIDDLE EAST, THE MEDITERRANEAN AND NATIVE AMERICA
Readings: L. Cool & J. McCabe: “‘The Scheming Hag’ and The ‘Dear Old Thing’:
  The Anthropology of Aging Women” (Lebanon, Corsica)
L. Guemple: “Growing Old in Inuit Society” (the Arctic)
D. Guttman: “Alternatives to Disengagement: The Old Men of
  The Highland Druze” (Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria)
Film: J. Bronowski: Harvest of The Seasons
  (Part I on the Bakhtiari of Iran/Persia)
Role Play: A Cultural Conversation About Life and Death
  DAYS #15 & 16

10. AN INTERLUDE OF POETRY AND PERFUME:
THE EXPRESSIVE LIVES OF OLDER PEOPLE IN
MOROCCO, EGYPT, GREECE, ENGLAND, WALES
AND CHINA
Readings: poems from Greece, England, Wales, Egypt and China (handout)
  T. Fowler & M. McNamara: “Aging Trends: Morocco”
Exercise: Look up Moroccan “Argan Oil” on the web. Purchase some while in Morocco.
  Why do people market and use this product?
  DAYS #17 & 18

{ MOROCCO }

11. RETIREMENT: PASSION AND PURPOSE IN LATER LIFE,
   AS SEEN FROM THE USA, AFRICA, INDIA, THE CARIBBEAN AND THE
   MEDITERRANEAN
Reading: J. Savishinsky: Breaking The Watch: The Meanings of Retirement in America
Exercise: Imagining the Ideal Retirement
Film: Roam Sweet Home (on elderly RV nomads in North America)  DAYS #19 & 20

{ PORTUGAL }

12. THE FUTURE OF AGING
Reading: M. Dove: “Dreams from His Mother”
Exercise: Lifeline Analysis  DAYS # 21, 22 & 23

EXAM #3  DAY #24
ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS
Sula Benet
“Why They Live to Be 100, or Even Older, in Abkhasia”
The New York Times Magazine
December 26, 1971
Pages 3, 28, 29, 31-34

Stanley Brandes
“Kinship and Care for the Aged in Traditional Rural Iberia”
Tamara Hareven (editor): Aging and Generational Relations Over The Life Course: A Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspective
1996. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter
Pages 13-29

Linda Cool and Justine McCabe
“The “Scheming Hag” and The “Dear Old Thing”: The Anthropology of Aging Women”
Beth Hess and Elizabeth Markson (editors): Growing Old in America: Perspectives on Old Age, 3rd edition
Pages 90-112

Richley Crapo
Chapter 4: “The Life Cycle”
Richley Crapo: Cultural Anthropology, 4th edition
1996. Dubuque, Iowa: Brown and Benchmark
Pages 82-105

Muriel Dimen-Schein
“Only on Sundays: Women’s Place in Greece”
James Spradley and David McCurdy (editors): Conformity and Conflict: Readings in Cultural Anthropology, 3rd edition
Pages 244-254

Michael Dove
“Dreams from His Mother”
The New York Times
August 11, 2009
Page A 17

Jill Dubisch
“Greek Women: Sacred or Profane”
Journal of Modern Greek Studies
Volume 1, Number 1  
1983 (May)  
Pages 185-202  
Ted Fishman  
“The Old World”  
The New York Times Sunday Magazine  
October 17, 2010  
Pages M50-M55

Timothy Fowler and Margaret McNamara  
“Aging Trends: Morocco”  
Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology  
Volume 8, Number 2  
1993  
Pages 161-168

David Gelman  
“Who’s Taking Care of Our Aging Parents?”  
Newsweek  
May 6, 1985  
Pages 61-70

Lee Guemple  
“Growing Old in Inuit Society”  
1980. Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside  
Pages 95-101

David Guttman  
“Alternatives to Disengagement: The Old Men of The Highland Druze”  
Robert Levine (editor): Culture and Personality: Contemporary Readings  
1974. Chicago: Aldine  
Pages 232-245

Colleen Johnson  
“Interdependence and Aging in Italian Families”  
Jay Sokolovsky (editor): Growing Old in Different Societies: Cross-Cultural Perspectives  
Pages 92-103

Seth Mydans  
“A Tribunal to Get Neglected Parents Smiling Again”  
The New York Times  
December 27, 1996  
Page A18
Mark Novak  
Chapter 3: “Aging at Other Times, In Other Places”  
Mark Novak: Issues in Aging  
2006. Boston: Allyn and Bacon/Pearson  
Pages 52-75

Wendell Oswalt  
Chapter 5: “Aging and Death”  
Wendell Oswalt: Life Cycles and Lifeways  
Pages 163-182

Joel Savishinsky  
“A New Life for The Old: The Role of The Elderly in The Bahamas”  
The World and I  
Volume 6, Number 3  
1991  
Pages 617-629

Joel Savishinsky  
“Education and Moral Reciprocity” Teaching About Aging on An Intergenerational Voyage”  
Journal of Intergenerational Relationships  
Volume 9, Number 3  
2011  
Pages 307-313

Nancy Scheper-Hughes  
“Deposed Kings: The Demise of The Rural Irish Gerontocracy”  
Jay Sokolovsky (editor): Growing Old in Different Societies: Cross-Cultural Perspectives, new edition  
Pages 130-146

Andrei Simic  
“Aging, World-View, and Intergenerational Relations in America and Yugoslavia”  
Jay Sokolovsky (editor): The Cultural Context of Aging: Worldwide Perspectives  
1990. New York: Bergin and Garvey  
Pages 89-108

Jay Sokolovsky, Zvonko Socic and Gordana Pavlekovic  
“Self-Help Hypertensive Groups and The Elderly in Yugoslavia”  
Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology
Diane Sunar
“Attitudes of Turkish Students Toward Elderly Relatives”
Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology
Volume 3, Number 1
1988
Pages 41-52