Aging

**Description**

Because people are living longer and birthrates have been declining, older adults now account for an increasing proportion of the world’s population. These trends require urgent attention in order to meet the psychosocial and medical needs of aging individuals. The Aging specialization is designed to prepare MSW graduates for social work practice in the field of gerontology to improve the quality of life of older persons in the U.S. and internationally. Through in-depth and focused course work, students will acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the often complex and changing needs of older adults. Gerontological social work spans all levels and areas of practice, from direct services to community development to policy, as well as social work case management to program implementation to evaluation.

As the proportion of older adults continues to increase as part of population aging, the professional expertise of gerontological social workers will be instrumental in meeting the needs of this population. Areas of study include normal age-related changes, as well as disease-related changes in physical, mental, and social processes; investigation of the changes in society resulting from an aging population; and application of this knowledge to programs and policies serving older adults in a variety of settings. The Aging specialization will prepare social workers for a variety of responsibilities, including assessment of needs and functional capacity, intervention regarding physical and mental health issues, case and care management, long-term care services, elder abuse, quality of life issues, and service and advance care planning. Settings for clinical practice, administration, and policy practice include a variety of government, not-for-profit, or private social services, as well as community and residential, and mental and medical health care settings. Students will learn to promote independence, autonomy, and dignity in late life with a population of demographically, socioeconomically, and culturally diverse older adults and their families.

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