ENVIRONMENTS FOR ELDERS
Housing & Design for an Aging Population

DEA 472  http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/dea472/  Nancy M. Wells
Fall 2005  Tuesday 1:25 – 4:25 pm in MVR E405  nmw2 254-6330, MVR E220

OBJECTIVES

- Break your own stereotypes of "the elderly"
- Become familiar with the physical and sensory challenges of late life
- Become acquainted with some elders in our community
- Gain insight & sensitivity regarding appropriate design solutions for older adults
- Learn about the various housing options for late life
- Apply gerontology and environment-aging theory to real people & settings
- Envision new models of physical environments for elders of the future

OVERVIEW
Rooted in the fields of environmental psychology, human factors/ergonomics, and gerontology, this course provides an opportunity to learn about both older adults and their housing needs & options. Through discussion, lecture, readings, site visits, guest panels and speakers, and personal contact with elders, you will learn about the social, cognitive, and physiological needs of older adults, as well as the design implications of those needs. You will gain knowledge about the range of housing types available to older adults and begin to envision the future of elder housing. Service learning is a particularly important component of the course.

REQUIREMENTS  -- The course requirements are outlined below:

#1  Elder-Friendly Design Evaluation  
    CHOOSE:
    A) Restaurant Evaluation OR B) Grocery Store Evaluation  
    due Monday Oct 3rd @ 5pm  (presentations Tues Oct 4)  20%
    Evaluate either TWO restaurants OR TWO grocery stores in terms of design for older adults. Both options will allow you to interact with elders and apply your knowledge of sensory and physiological changes and human factors/ergonomics to an environment for elders. You may need to read ahead. (see handout).

#2  Project #2 TBA  due November  20%

#3  Discussion Leadership & Class Participation  throughout semester  10%
In addition to reading and preparing for class, students will periodically summarize articles, lead the discussion, and present information to the class. Because this is a small class that meets only once per week, your participation and involvement is critical.

#4  Three Site Visit Reports  (~3 pages each)  due dates noted in syllabus @ 5pm  15%
Please write site visit reports for three of the facilities that we visit. You may choose the three. Each report should be about 3 pages long. Include: 1.) Your reactions and impressions of the place  2.) A critique of the physical environment including pros and cons and apply three themes or concepts from readings / lecture, etc.

#5  Final Paper  due Friday Dec 4 @ 5pm  20%
Your final paper (10 pages) is an opportunity to explore a topic that interested you during the semester. Start early to think about a topic that might interest you (1-page w/ references-- preliminary topic idea(s) due Fri Oct 14). You should include at least 8 research articles (i.e., articles from research journals, not websites).

#6  Service Learning  - throughout semester  journal & paper due Friday Dec 11th  15%
A minimum 20 hours of community service with elders is required. You may choose to join weekly trips to Lakeside Nursing Home though Cornell’s Public Service Center, participate in local gardening with elders, be matched to visit a local elder through the Office for the Aging, volunteer at Hospicare, or avail yourself of another opportunity. Be sure to keep a journal of your activities as well as your reflections or insights.
throughout the semester. I will ask you to periodically hand-in your journal. Finally, summarize your experiences in a brief paper (3-5 pages). Hand-in both your log and the paper.

**Service Learning**
Below are some possible avenues to help you plan your community service involvement. The community service panel will take place in class on September 6.

Through the Tompkins County Office for the Aging, you can be matched with an elder in the community to visit weekly, provide respite for a caregiver, help with light housekeeping, or assist with errands. Typically, a visitor commits to 1-2 hours per week. Contact Trina Schickel for more information. You will need to meet with her and provide one reference.

**Bridges of Cornell Heights**, Theresa Nix, 257-5777, TNix@bridgescornellheights.com
Bridges is an innovative, upscale, relatively small scale facility in a residential setting. Located at 403 Wyckoff Road, Bridges is very walkable from the Cornell Campus. In Fall 2005, they will be completing a second home next to the original “Bridges” house. Contact Theresa Nix to identify ways that you might contribute to the quality of life of Bridges’ residents by visiting during meals, reading to residents, joining group outings, etc.

**Cornell Elderly Partnership (CEP)**, Public Service Center (PSC) pscelderly@cornell.edu
The CEP typically coordinates weekly trips to visit elders in local nursing homes. In the past, the CEP has most often visited residents of Lakeside Nursing Home where they visit, read, garden, or create crafts and projects.

**Lakeside Nursing Home**, Suzanne Bakert, 273-8072
In addition to visiting Lakeside Nursing Home residents with the Cornell Elderly Partnership, you may choose to independently make arrangements to visit residents. Possible activities include joining weekly baking events, meeting one-on-one with individuals, and watering or weeding the garden while visiting with residents. Contact Suzanne Bakert to identify roles you might fill. Lakeside is at 1229 Trumansburg Road (follow signs to the hospital) on the West side of the Lake. The TCAT bus #21 goes to Lakeside.

**The Reconstruction Home**, Beth Pittman, 273-4166
The Reconstruction Home is another local nursing home that welcomes volunteers. Located at 318 S. Albany Street, The Reconstruction Home is an easy walk from the Ithaca Commons.

**READINGS:**

**On Electronic Reserve:**
Coursepack

[R] **On Reserve in Mann Library & in DEA Resource Room:**


Week 1

(T) August 29: Introduction “Environments” and “Elderly”

Introduction to Environmental Gerontology Theory

Week 2

(T) September 6:

Images, Stereotypes, Stigmas, Demographics of Old Age, and the role of the Medical Model

These readings may sensitize us to some of the images and stereotypes we have of “the elderly” or “old age”. In The Fountain of Age, Betty Friedan describes how our culture and media perpetuate the idea that later life is a “problem” or “plight” to be denied or hidden. Wells discusses how framing old age as a medical problem adds to the stigma and furthermore, restricts the nature and scope of resources we might employ in later life. The Pastalan excerpt further highlights the view of old age as a medical problem, or disease. Harootyan dispenses with some myths of old age and considers design implications. How might design either reinforce or break stereotypes and stigmas of old age? The final reading provides an overview of U.S. demographics regarding the elderly.


Community Service Panel and Orientation 3:00

Guest panelists will introduce you to a few of the many local community service opportunities

Trina Schickel, Tompkins County Office for the Aging
Thalia Segal, Cornell Elderly Partnership (CEP), Public Service Center
Beth Pittman, The Reconstruction Home
Theresa Nix, Bridges at Cornell Heights

Week 3

(T) September 13:

Sensory Changes in Late Life & Design Implications

These readings provide some background regarding changes in sensory function that commonly occur with age. In designing for older adults, it is important to consider factors such as vision and hearing. How might these issues be relevant in architectural and design?

On-line assignment TBA


Optional Readings:

**2:00 GUEST SPEAKER: Finger Lakes Independence Center**

**Demonstration of Low-Tech Assistive Devices**

**Week 4**

**(T) September 20: Physiological Issues: Anthropometrics**

**In-Class Ergonomic Assessment**

These readings describe anthropometric changes that commonly occur with age. How will your height, reach, strength, and mobility change over your life course? How will this affect your ability to function and your expectations of the environment around you?


**Optional Readings:**


**Access, Usability & Universal Design**

These readings introduce you to the concept of “Universal Design” – design which functions easily for everyone. Universal design is elegant, safe, and free of stigmas of disability and old age.


**Optional Readings:**


Week 5

(T) September 27: Site Visits TBA

Progress report: Turn-in Community Service journals

Week 6

(M) October 3rd 5:00 pm: Restaurant or Grocery Evaluations DUE

(T) October 4th: In-Class Presentations

The Role of Familiarity & Personalization

These readings explore the relevance of familiarity and personalization. The Kaplan & Kaplan excerpt describes a tension between preferring the familiar and desiring variety. Note the preferences matrices presented in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. While these concepts might most readily be applied to cognitive mapping and wayfinding, might they also be relevant to environments for elderly more generally? Hunt provides some insight as to how familiarity might ease relocation. How would you characterize the relationship between familiarity and personalization? Do you think the relationship between familiarity and preference changes over the life course? Küller’s research suggests that settings that are more familiar – and more personalized might benefit older adults. Gifford presents an overview of territoriality as well as some implications for environmental design. Consider how are territory and personalization related? How might opportunities for personalization might be provided in a residential setting?


Optional Readings:


(F) October 7th 5:00 pm: DUE Site Visit Report #1

Week 7

(T) October 11th: FALL BREAK – No Class

Weeks 8-14 Details TBA

TOPICS include:

Housing Options – An Overview

Transitions & Relocation in Late Life: Implications & Predictors of Success

The Meaning of “Home,”- Homeliness & Institutionality

Green Spaces & Restoration

Social Interaction & Privacy

Design for People with Alzheimer’s Disease