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Welcome from AGHE Section Chair

Dear Colleagues:

I hope that you are all enjoying summer during this distinctly different time that we are in the middle of. Much has changed in all realms of our lives, including our work in higher education. I continue to be impressed by how quickly the AGHE community pivoted months ago when the pandemic overwhelmed us. All of you have led the way in your leadership, creative approaches and flexibility in devising approaches for teaching and learning. I believe we have set an example for the larger GSA community. In this newsletter you will find the latest virtual member engagement activities sponsored by AGHE which have been very well received and have attracted non-AGHE participants.



I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Joann Montepare, PhD to her election as AGHE Vice Chair-Elect. She has provided substantial leadership in the Age Friendly University initiative that AGHE has been involved in and I know that she will be a wonderful addition to the leadership team. Congratulations also to our distinguished award winners who are listed in the newsletter. Finally, be sure to read about the course in Mindfulness in Aging that Mary Ann Erickson, PhD, a former AGHE Board member, developed at Ithaca College earlier this year for upper-level undergraduate students and residents of the Longview older adult community. This is another example of how members of the AGHE community lead in our innovations.

I will be sorry to miss seeing many of you in Philadelphia in November, but we are planning a number of virtual events....stay tuned!

Cordially,

Judy

GSA Meeting in November to be Virtual

To protect the health and safety of attendees, the GSA 2020 Annual Scientific Meeting will be held online instead of face-to-face in Philadelphia. The meeting will take place from November 4-7 and allow educators and scholars worldwide to participate in the sessions offered in a dynamic format. Those with accepted abstracts can register and share their posters, symposia, and

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papers with the online community of participants. For the full announcement, please visit [GSA's Annual Scientific Meeting webpage](#).

Congratulations to the Recent AGHE Award Recipients!

AGHE's spring award season resulted in awards granted to eleven exemplary educators. Please congratulate the AGHE colleagues identified below on their accomplishments and award recognition.

Clark Tibbitts Award: Honors an individual that has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of gerontology and/or geriatrics education.

Jan Abushakrah, PhD, FAGHE, Portland Community College

Hiram J. Friedsam Mentorship Award: Recognizes those who emulate Dr. Friedsam's excellence in mentorship

Karen Kopera-Frye, PhD, MPA, FGSA, FAGHE, New Mexico State University

Distinguished Faculty Award: Awarded to an individual whose teaching stands out as exemplary, innovative, and/or impactful.

Mary W. Carter, PhD, Towson University

Rising Star Early Career Faculty Award: Acknowledges a new faculty member whose teaching and/or leadership stands out as impactful and innovative.

Laurinda Reynolds, MA, American River College

David A. Peterson Award: Recognizes excellence in scholarship in academic gerontology by selecting the best article in a particular volume of *Gerontology & Geriatrics Education (G&GE)*, the official journal of AGHE. This year's awardees authored the winning article, "Creating an intergenerational university hub: Engaging older and younger users in the shaping of space and place".

Laura Harrington, PhD, MBA, McMaster University

Tara Kajaks, McMaster University

Shaarujaa Nadarajah, McMaster University

Parminder Raina, BSc, PhD, CAHS, McMaster University

Brenda H. Vrkljan, PhD, McMaster University



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Amanda Whalen, BA, McMaster University

P.J. White, PhD, McMaster University

Joann Montepare Elected as AGHE Vice-Chair Elect

Elections for the GSA Board of Directors and section leadership were held from June 10-July 1. Among those newly elected to these leadership roles was Joann M. Montepare, PhD who will serve as AGHE Vice-Chair Elect, beginning on January 1, 2021. Congratulations, Joann!

Peer-2-Peer Sessions Offer Valuable Resources and Connections

In June, several AGHE members led colleagues in three Peer-2-Peer sessions about critical education topics of interest to many in our community. Each session included practical information that can be incorporated into course planning for the upcoming fall semester. Below are the links to copies of the slides used and recordings of the sessions themselves. The Peer-2-Peer series was a follow-up to some of the concerns that members raised during the April 23, 2020 AGHE Connect Live event, a virtual town hall.

Clinical Placements: Exploring Virtual Options

Facilitated by Judith L. Howe, PhD and Jennifer Mendez, PhD

[Link to recording](#); [Link to slides](#)

Service Learning: The Good, the Bad, and the Challenges in the Time of COVID-19

Facilitated by Lisa Hollis-Sawyer, PhD

[Link to recording](#); [Link to slides](#)

Tips for Preparing to Lecture in Your Online Class

Facilitated by Nina M. Silverstein, PhD, and Joann M. Montepare, PhD

[Link to recording](#); [Link to slides](#)

AGHE Hosts Discussion About Anti-Racist Pedagogy

On July 21st, members of the AGHE community participated in an online discussion about anti-racist pedagogy, titled *Starting the Conversation: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Gerontology*. The conversation was facilitated by AGHE faculty members, Drs. Kyoko Kishimoto, Rona Karasik,



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Laura Donorfio, and Tina M. K. Newsham. This session, focused on attitudinal awareness and change, included an introduction to anti-racist pedagogy, its relationship to gerontology, and the implications for teaching, research, and practice.

A recording of the conversation can be found [here](#).

Explore AGHE's Educational Resources

If you haven't already explored the AGHE Teaching Briefs, now is the time to do so, as many of us gear up for a fall semester full of continued uncertainty and change. There you will find valuable information on adapting to online course delivery, including the creation of exams, the technique of "small teaching", incorporating guest experts for online lectures, and using breakout rooms in Zoom (just to name a few). You can also find useful resources about COVID-19, and learn about using open educational resources (OER) to expand learning opportunities and reduce costs for students. Check out all of these resources [here](#) (scroll down to AGHE Teaching Briefs).

Innovations in Gerontology Education

An Interview with Mary Ann Erickson, PhD

Dr. Erickson is an associate professor of Gerontology at Ithaca College. In this column, she describes her course, *Mindfulness in Aging*, which she developed in the spring 2020 semester.

How would you describe the Mindfulness in Aging course design?

Dr. Erickson: Mindfulness and Aging is an upper-level undergraduate course in Aging Studies. I designed the course to give participants an understanding of different contemporary approaches to mindfulness, as well as its early Buddhist origins. To complement this academic work, participants also gained experience in a variety of mindfulness practices in an intergenerational context.

Once we were oriented to each other and the basic concepts, we focused on discussing readings on Tuesdays, and practicing together on Thursdays. Students were expected to submit reflections on each reading, and for each week of practice. They also completed a research paper on a topic of their choice relevant to the class material.

What led you to develop this new course?



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Dr. Erickson: I was fortunate to have the opportunity to offer a new upper level course in the spring semester of 2020. I have been practicing mindfulness for some years, and I had recently completed a graduate certificate in Mindfulness Studies at Lesley University. Offering a course integrating my background in mindfulness with our Aging Studies curriculum seemed like a great opportunity. It also seemed like the right course to experiment with locating a course entirely at our senior living facility partner, Longview.

Who were your students?

Dr. Erickson: Ten Ithaca College undergraduates enrolled in the class, and 5 Longview tenants audited the course. The Ithaca College students had a variety of majors, from Occupational Therapy to Cinema and Photography to Chemistry. The students had all taken at least one previous Aging Studies course.

In what ways did this course challenge you to innovate?

Dr. Erickson: When teaching about mindfulness, it's always a challenge to balance sacred and secular approaches. It's important to honor the spiritual aspects of mindfulness, yet I wanted to focus our attention on what social scientists are learning about the impacts of mindfulness practice. The choice of text was key. The book I chose (*Mindfulness: Ancient Wisdom Meets Modern Psychology*) was written by a Buddhist teacher (Christina Feldman) and a research clinical psychologist (Willem Kuyken).

Another choice one needs to make when teaching mindfulness is the balance of theory and practice. In a for-credit class, the question of grading and evaluation arises. Especially given the disruptions of this past semester, how can you grade students' mindfulness practice? The weekly reflections worked well for this – I could give credit even if the reflection was a thoughtful paragraph about why the student was not able to practice during the week. Over the course of the semester, students observed that they had weeks where their mindfulness practice was important and inspiring, and other weeks where it was not. All students found practices that helped them maintain their balance during the changes that occurred in all of our lives over the course of the semester.

What challenges did you face, and how did you overcome them?

Dr. Erickson: The biggest challenge was transportation. Longview is just across the street from the Ithaca College campus, but we worried about how to get students to Longview and back to campus, given that some students had classes both before and after the Mindfulness and Aging class. We are fortunate that the college funds a shuttle service so we scheduled the class during those hours. Even then, students sometimes found it challenging to get to class. I had to be

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flexible with class timing, ending about ten minutes early so that students could get to their new classes.

Something that might have been a challenge was attracting elders to the class. Locating the class at Longview would have been for nothing if we had not had elders participating. Luckily, we had very committed participants; three of the five elders continued to participate through Zoom after the college moved to remote instruction in March.

Of course, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 epidemic was a challenge. However, we were able to continue our twice-weekly meetings over Zoom, with almost all of our previous participants. The class meetings became more important for everyone, as we all struggled with loss of valued activities and social connections.

What surprised you about this experience?

Dr. Erickson: Whenever we gather a group together, we hope that the group will become a supportive and engaged community. In this respect, my experience with this class exceeded my expectations. Typically, the Longview elders arrived early to class. Because students came to class via different modes of transportation, often some of them were early as well. Everyone made it a point to get to know others in the class, and a caring and respectful community emerged.

The aging aspect of the class was, honestly, carried by the elder participants. We heard from the elders about how they saw mindfulness relating to their lives, including health challenges, caregiving, widowhood, residential moves, and retirement. This content was so much more vivid than I could have made it myself.

What advice would you give to someone interested in teaching a course in this area?

Dr. Erickson: I would definitely recommend establishing a personal practice before teaching others. You don't have to have experience in all forms of practice, as there are definitely many audio and video resources available, but one needs to have some experience with both the benefits and the challenges in order to mentor others.

Given that, I wouldn't be worried about how students will react to learning about mindfulness. In my experience, students are at the minimum somewhat curious about mindfulness. Others, of course, are very interested. As long as you make it clear that any practice is experimental, that we are "seeing what happens", students will probably be receptive.

What are some of the primary lessons you learned from teaching this course?

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Dr. Erickson: I have taught mindfulness in a variety of contexts now at Ithaca College, and this was by far my best experience. What made it such a good experience were: students and elders committed for the “long haul” (an entire semester); the size of the group was large enough for rich discussions but small enough to feel personal; and elders were equal participants in the class. I think this last point is worth highlighting – as much as the elders at Longview enjoy being resources for classes, they really appreciated the chance to be learners in this context.

What's next?

Dr. Erickson: I don't know when I'll have the opportunity to teach this class in this way again, but I hope to talk and write about my experience to promote intergenerational mindfulness opportunities. I believe that mindfulness practice, where we are all working with our wonderful and challenging human lives, is a space with great potential to bring the generations together.