Gerontology PhD Program

UMass Boston

The Program

Gerontology is a rapidly expanding field of study focused on aging processes and aging populations. Advanced work in gerontology is interdisciplinary, bridging theories, concepts, and research methods drawn from the social and behavioral sciences. Our doctoral program prepares students for leadership roles as educators, researchers, planners, and policy makers.

The curriculum gives graduates command of a broad body of specialized knowledge in aging and social policy and prepares them to design rigorous studies to expand that knowledge. Students gain practical experience as researchers, policy analysts, and educators through service-learning experiences with faculty, research centers, and community partners.

Admission Requirements

- Bachelor's degree from accredited college
- Undergraduate GPA of 3.00 or better
- Transcripts of all prior academic work
- 3 three letters of recommendation
- Personal statement & resume

UMass Boston Gerontology is strongly committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and welcomes applications from members of historically underrepresented groups. Admission is competitive: approximately six to eight full-time students enroll each year, with a limited number of part-time students. Applications completed by February 1 are prioritized for research and teaching assistantship funding.

Degree Requirements

The Gerontology PhD program typically takes five years. Students must complete 69 course credits, an empirical research paper, a qualifying paper examination and a doctoral dissertation.

Coursework

- 5 courses on different disciplinary approaches to aging
- 6 research methods and statistics courses
- 3 policy foundation courses
- 3 professional development seminars
- At least 5 graduate-level electives
- 9 credits of dissertation research

Empirical Research Paper

By the end of the fourth semester of study, students complete a paper comparable to a professional academic journal article, becoming eligible for an en route MS in Gerontology.

Qualifying Paper Examination

This exam tests students' ability to lay the foundation for a substantial research project by reviewing diverse literature and developing a sound conceptual framework of the phenomena studied. Students take the exam following the completion of coursework. Students become PhD candidates after passing the exam.

Doctoral Dissertation

Students are required to complete a doctoral dissertation that reflects an original and independent scholarly contribution to the state of knowledge in the field of gerontology and aging.

Jeffrey Stokes, PhD Program Director | Jeffrey.Stokes@umb.edu
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Our Faculty

Jaqueline Contrera Avila, PhD, University of Texas Medical Branch • Population Health (Social determinants of health, tobacco-related disparities, cross-national comparisons)

Jeffrey A Burr, PhD, University of Texas at Austin • Sociology (Social demography, labor force, productive activity, aging and health)

Marc Cohen, PhD, Brandeis University • Social Welfare (Long-term services and supports (LTSS), care coordination, falls prevention)

Caitlin Coyle, PhD, University of Massachusetts Boston • Gerontology (Social aspects of health, isolation, disability)

Elizabeth Dugan, PhD, University of North Carolina Greensboro • Human development and family studies (Older drivers, healthy aging, psychological outcomes)

Edward Alan Miller, PhD, University of Michigan • Political Science and Health Services Organization & Policy (LTSS, evaluation, intergovernmental relations, e-health)

Jan E Mutchler, PhD, University of Texas at Austin • Sociology (Diversity, intergenerational support, health disparities, economic security, social demography)

Pamela Nadash, PhD, Columbia University • Public Health and Political Science (LTSS, comparative health policy, consumer choice, integrated care)

Sung Park, PhD, UCLA •Sociology (minority aging, economic inequalities, work as a social) determinant of health, caregiving, immigration, social demography

Qian Song, PhD, University of Albany, SUNY • Sociology (Migration and health, aging and life course, health and wellbeing, neighborhood effects, bereavement)

Jeffrey Stokes, PhD, Boston College • Sociology (Marriage and family, aging and life course, health and wellbeing, neighborhood effects, bereavement)

Christian Weller, PhD, University of Massachusetts Amherst • Economics (Private pensions, Social Security, retirement)

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University of Massachusetts Boston

UMass Boston is nationally recognized as a model of excellence for urban public universities, and part of the University of Massachusetts system. UMass Boston combines a closeness of community with the vast resources of a major research university, including extensive laboratories and computer resources, intramural and intercollegiate athletic facilities, and a world class library. Concerts, lectures, and plays on campus offer additional opportunities for a satisfying student life. The scenic waterfront campus, with easy access to Boston's culturally rich downtown, is located next to the John. F. Kennedy Library & Museum and the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the U.S. Senate.

Notable Facts about the Program

- Established in 1990 as one of the first Gerontology PhD programs
- UMass Boston has produced one in five Gerontology PhD graduates in the United States; more than any other program
- Our alumni have published several thousand journal articles, reports, chapters, and books
- Our alumni include the Secretary of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs and Chair of the United Nations NGO Committee on Ageing - Geneva

Gerontology Institute at UMass Boston

Faculty and students work closely with the Institute and its centers of excellence:
- Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging
- LeadingAge LTSS Center
- Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
- Pension Action Center
- Peer-reviewed Journals
  - *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*
  - *Research on Aging*

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