A Symposium on Aging at Illinois State University
November 5th, 2010, 2pm-6:30pm
Alumni Center of Illinois State University

Principal Organizer, Chris Wellin, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology & Anthropology
Schroeder Hall, Rm. 383
cwellin@ilstu.edu
438-7698

Seating/registration for CEUs 2:00-2:30 pm.

Opening Remarks 2:30-2:45
Jay Noren, MD, MPH
Former Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow at the National Academy of Sciences and U.S. Congress; Former President Wayne State University

Aging & Community 2:45-3:45
Panel 1:
Ann White
Company member, “Young at Heartland” Theater Company
Jennifer Engleman
Director of Senior Programs, Normal, IL
Michael O’Donnell
Executive Director, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging
Carrie Norman
Graduate Student, Certificate of Social Aspects of Aging, ISU

*Fifteen minute break

Academic Work and Societal Aging 4:00-5:15
Panel 2:
Charlene Aaron, RN
Mennonite College of Nursing, ISU
Daniel Liechty, Ph.D.
School of Social Work, ISU
Sandra Metts, Ph.D.
Department of Communication, ISU
Mignon Montpetite, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, Illinois Wesleyan University
Maria Schmeecle
Department of Sociology & Anthropology, ISU

*Ten minute break

Aging, the Arts, and Humanities 5:25-6:45
Panel 3:
Mary Byrnes, Ph.D.
Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Western Carolina University
“Listening to Photographs: Visual Data Collection with Older Adults”

Young at Heartland Theater
Excerpts from “Last Laughs,” a new play by Suzanne Walfoort & Ellen Weisling
*The performance will last approximately 35 minutes, to be followed by a “talk back” discussion between the audience, performers, and authors.

An informal reception with refreshments will follow.

*The symposium was made possible through financial support by the following: Department of Sociology & Anthropology, ISU; the Mennonite College of Nursing; Suzanne Wolfsoort, Ellen Weisling, and Chris Wellin.

Roster and Biographical Sketches of Participants (in order of presentations)

Chris Wellin, Ph.D., Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Illinois State University, is a sociologist whose teaching and research interests focus on critical gerontology; the study of work and occupations; and qualitative/interpretive research methods. Wellin has done ethnographic studies in diverse settings including the arts (technical theatre work), factory work, and paid care-giving for older people facing chronic illness and disability. Drawing on first-hand experience as a care-worker in assisted living facilities, as well as on field work, Wellin has sought to document the skill and implications of gendered care-work, both for the quality of life available for disabled people, and for the care-workers themselves, who represent the largest and fastest-growing segment of the service economy in the U.S. His publications have appeared in outlets such as Current Research on Occupations and Professions; Qualitative Sociology; Journal of Aging and Social Policy; and the Handbook of Ethnography. After doctoral work at Northwestern, Wellin was a post-doctoral researcher at the University of California.

Jay Noren, MD, MPH, did his undergraduate studies at the University of Minnesota and then graduated from the University of Minnesota Medical School. He also received master's degree in public health from Harvard University. Noren was the Robert Wood Johnson Health Policy Fellow at the National Academy of Sciences and U.S. Congress, and a Churchill Fellow in the United Kingdom. Noren was a Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs at Texas A&M University. He was then a Vice Chancellor at the University of Wisconsin. He was also the Provost and later the Dean at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Most recently, Dr. Noren served as President of Wayne State University.

Jennifer Engleman is Director of Senior’s Programs, Normal Township, an activity program for seniors at the Community Activity Center, One Normal Plaza, 1110 Douglas St., Normal., IL. She and her staff oversees a wide variety of programs and activities. It is the mission of the Seniors’ Program to create a friendly atmosphere for recreational, cultural, nutritional, health and support services for senior citizens throughout the community. To accomplish this goal, we believe in supporting a comprehensive range of programs and services for older adults. Our range of services includes programs, classes and activities to meet a wide array of interests, expectations and needs. Hours: 9:00am - 3:00pm, Monday – Friday; Phone Number: (309) 888-9099.
Carrie Norman is currently employed at ISU as a Publicity and Promotion Specialist. She is also pursuing her Master's Degree in Technology/Project Management and Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. Before coming to Illinois and ISU, Carrie worked as a Community Relations Director for eight years at Well Spring, a non-for-profit CCRC (Continuing Care Retirement Community) in Greensboro, NC. Ms. Norman is completing ISU's Graduate Certificate Program in Social Aspects of Aging. Phone: 439-4530; crnorma@ilstu.edu.

Mike O'Donnell is Executive Director, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging. The ECIAAA provides: Leadership and advocacy for the elderly; assessment of the types and levels of services needed by older adults; development of resources to serve the elderly; planning with state and local organizations to promote new or expanded benefits and opportunities for older adults; collecting and sharing information on needs of the elderly and programs available to them; assisting agencies and businesses in the development of programs, products, and services for senior citizens; assuring accountability in the management of programs and quality in the delivery of services funded through Title III of the Older Americans Act of the U.S. Congress. The ECIAAA also houses the local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, which advocates on behalf of nursing home residents and those who receive long-term care in community settings. The agency provides volunteer opportunities; visits residents in long-term care facilities; and administers senior employment program for low income individuals age 55 and over. Location: 1003 Maple Hill Road, Bloomington, IL 61705-9327; Phone: (309) 829-2065 Service & Administration; Phone: (800) 888-4456 Information for east central IL counties. aginginfo@eciaaa.org

Julie Short, Director of Senior Programs, Western Avenue Community Center. Western Avenue Community Center offers a comprehensive service of health, welfare, recreation and education coordinated around the family as a unit. "Partnering within our diverse community to open doors of hope and love through our faith in Jesus Christ." Our Community Center reaches out to help senior citizens, youth, single parents, low income, at risk and minority families in our community. Our hope and intent as an organization is to help alleviate crime, keep youth off the streets, and reduce stress and worry in the family. We serve families and individuals by providing programs and activities at a very low, or no cost to them. Our current programs are: Hispanic Outreach, Senior Citizen Programs, After School Program, Teen Club Program, LINC Basketball Program, Summer Camp, and Survival Program for Youth(SPY), and Food Pantry. Telephone: (309) 829-4807; jshort@westernavenuecc.org

Charlene Aaron, RN, MSN, Mennonite College of Nursing, Illinois State University. Professor Aaron is the Coordinator of the Teaching Nursing Home. Mennonite College of Nursing at Illinois State University and Heritage Enterprises collaborated on a project, “Expanding the Teaching-Nursing Home Culture in the State of Illinois,” that has been funded by a five-year, $1.48 million grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). The grant money is funding a demonstration project to provide standardized orientation and continuing education in geriatric care best practices for new nurses hired by Heritage Enterprises nursing homes across Illinois. The funding will also support the development of a graduate program focus in gerontology nursing at Mennonite College of Nursing. The program will serve as a model of nursing partnership efforts between academia and practice settings to
address recruitment and retention, and could eventually be adopted by other nursing homes in Illinois. (309) 438-7116; csaaron@ilstu.edu.

Daniel Liechty, Ph.D., LCSW, School of Social Work, Illinois State University. Dan Liechty holds graduate degrees in ethics, religious studies, social work, and counseling. He is currently a professor on the graduate faculty of Illinois State University, and specializes in teaching human behavior in the social environment in the ISU School of Social Work. He was trained as a group therapist at The Institute of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia and practiced there as a group specialist. Before joining the faculty at Illinois State University, he was the Psychosocial Coordinator in the homecare and hospice program at Montgomery Hospital, where he specialized in counseling with dying patients and their families. Professor Liechty is the author/editor of a number of books pertaining to the study of Ernest Becker’s ideas, including Transference and Transcendence, Reflecting on Faith in a Post-Christian Time, Death and Denial, and The Ernest Becker Reader. HIV/AIDS. (309) 438-7615; dliecht@ilstu.edu

Sandra Metts, Ph.D. School of Communication, Illinois State University Dr. Metts' primary research interests focus on the initiation and maintenance of close relationships. Recent studies have examined the role of emotion in the initiation and termination of close relationships, antecedents for and consequences of first sexual episodes in romantic relationships, and face-work and politeness theory as enacted in personal relationships. Her research methods tend to be a combination of survey and/or experimental designs, sometimes employing conversational analysis for questions dealing with the structure of supportive episodes. Dr. Metts teaches several classes in the Communication Studies area. Her favorite classes include Psychology of Language, Human Communication and Aging, Theory and Research in Interpersonal Communication, and the graduate seminar in Interpersonal Communication, particularly on the topic of emotion. Her course on Human Communication and the Aging Process is an elective in the Gerontology Minor and Graduate Certificate Programs at ISU. 438-7883; smmetts@ilstu.edu.

Mignon Montpetit, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Illinois Wesleyan University. After completing her doctoral work in psychology at Notre Dame University, Professor Montpetit was a postdoctoral researcher at the same institution. Her teaching and research interests include adult development and aging; stress and coping (e.g., personality and social support); research methods and statistics; and cultural influences on psychological development. A co-authored article entitled, "Resilience-as-Process: Negative Affect, Stress, and Coupled Dynamical Systems" was just published in Psychology and Aging. Phone: 556-3365; mmontpet@iwu.edu.

Maria Schmeeckle, Ph.D. Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Illinois State University. Professor Schmeeckle received her Ph.D. in sociology and her graduate certificate in gender studies from the University of Southern California. Her dissertation explored adult children's perceptions of family membership with stepfamily, former stepfamily, and biological family members. She recently published "Gender Dynamics in Stepfamilies: Adult Stepchildren's Views" in The Journal of Marriage. Among her specializations are Children
and Youth; Global and Transnational Sociology; Family; Aging; and Sex and Gender. In a recent address to ISU’s International Studies Program, Professor Schmeeckle explored the issue of children in street situations from a global perspective, and laid a groundwork for action in both scholarship and outreach toward these children worldwide. 438-2932; mhschme@ilstu.edu.

Mary Byrnes, Ph.D. Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Western Carolina University. Professor Byrnes earned a Masters of Urban Planning (2003) and Ph.D. (2009) as a National Institute of Aging (NIA) pre-doctoral fellow from the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her research interests focus on aging inequalities and the sociology of place. Her dissertation explored the ways older adults who occupy several oppressed social locations across the lifespan move to and create new homes in age-segregated places like HUD 202’s (public housing for older adults). She also has a strong interest in new and unique methodologies and her dissertation was awarded an innovative research award from The Midwest Sociological Society for the use of photography, interviewing and observation in data collection. Some of her published work can be found in the Journal of Applied Sociology and, with Heather Dillaway, in Health Care for Women International and The Journal of Applied Gerontology. mbyrnes@wcu.edu.

Young at Heartland Theater, is affiliated with Heartland Community Theater, Normal, IL. The company’s mission is: to provide the citizens of Central Illinois with quality professional theatre utilizing first-rate talent and provide theatre artists a meaningful experience. The Company’s goals are: to explore the human condition through the art of theater—both the ideal and the less than ideal. As reported in a recent article in the local Pantagraph newspaper, the company started in 2004 with the help of a McLean County Arts Center grant. The troupe, for people 55 and older, has become so popular that founder and program director Ann B. White had to close enrollment when it hit 30 participants this year. Several troupe members return season after season. “I felt a senior actor workshop would be a chance to hone skills and give a place to perform,” said White, who got the support of the Heartland Theatre Company board in 2003. The first year, six people enrolled. The program, which costs $50 for the two-season year (scholarships are available), includes acting exercises, memory skills and voice training from a certified instructor. D. Ann Jones, who has an advanced certification in education, bachelor’s and master’s degrees in education and teaches acting and introduction to theater at Millikin University, has served in that role for four years. Classes take place each Monday in April and May, followed by 12 performances in June and July. The second season starts with August and September classes, followed by eight performances in October. Phone: 452-8709; http://www.heartlandtheatre.org/seniors-program.html; for tickets: boxoffice@heartlandtheatre.org.
**Gerontology at ISU Comes of Age**

(an entry by Chris Wellin in *Signs & Symbols* [Summer 2010, Vol. 10], the Newsletter of ISU Department of Sociology & Anthropology.)

My purpose in writing is to publicize and celebrate the relevance and reinvigoration of gerontology at Illinois State University. I'm confident that the activities I describe will both complement long-standing departmental strengths and goals, and also link us in new and essential ways to the campus and community beyond. I gratefully acknowledge earlier contributions of Professors David Eaton and Jacquelyn Frank, who built and sustained the program in earlier years.

As a recent addition to the Department of Sociology & Anthropology, one of the most exciting and gratifying parts of my job is to help coordinate the gerontology program. Gerontology is the multi-disciplinary study of aging, which focuses on social, psychological, historical, political, and professional aspects of aging. (The term *geriatrics* typically refers to medical or clinical dimensions.) The gerontology program serves students at various levels—both undergraduate and graduate—in various ways: there is a minor, which can be combined to great advantage with many majors and career paths; and a graduate certificate. Both provide multiple angles of vision into the process of aging which, though culturally and biologically universal, reveals fascinating diversity across space and historical time. Guided by a *life course perspective*, research and teaching in gerontology helps one to connect broad patterns of social life (mapped in courses on inequality, population studies, medical sociology and social psychology) with individual lives, as they unfold in time. Though the focus on late life is strong, gerontologists treat aging as a life-long process.

Also, from its inception in the mid-Twentieth Century, gerontology has had a strong connection with applied research and practice—especially in health and social services—which drives many students to take advantage of the department’s pre-professional internship option (SOC 398). It is through this mechanism that students are able, not only to explore career options and personal commitments, but also provide essential contributions to a wide range of community agencies and programs. Those interested either in completing an internship, or in hosting an intern, should contact, Teri Farr-Behnke, Assistant to the Chair, Undergraduate Advisor and Internship coordinator. [phone 438-8669; tfarr@ilstu.edu.]

The strength and diversity of aging studies at ISU rooted in the fact that invaluable scholars and courses exist across virtually all of the University’s colleges and programs. To demonstrate this interdependence, we are planning a symposium for the fall semester during which teachers, researchers, and practitioners from various community agencies will gather to timely and compelling topics and issues we face, not only in the U.S. but, indeed, on a global scale.

People who work in the social sciences are famously (or infamously?) *reflective*; we reflect not only on the development of our own individual work, but also on the changing historical and cultural nature of the topics we study. This is no idle preoccupation, but essential to understanding the complexity and dynamism of society and culture. This insight is especially relevant to the field of gerontology: the field has both expanded and evolved in recent years, as a natural consequence of greater longevity and other changes (in family life, work careers, and social policy) that are
bound up with an “aging society.” Since we usually see aging as an individual, mostly biological, process, many will regard as odd the notion that the entire society is aging. Nonetheless, for example, within a decade or so the proportion of the U.S. population that is aged 65 or older (a familiar marker, linked to eligibility for social welfare programs) will be between four and five times as great as was true only one hundred years ago. Thus, this change in the age structure of our society will have taken place within the span of a single (though hearty) human life! This demographic fact is having repercussions that will be felt in virtually every corner of American life.

In the past these changes were often portrayed and perceived as negative—in terms of the burdens of an aging population. Increasingly, though, people are coming to appreciate that older people are an essential resource in our society. They’ll fulfill many of the volunteer and community roles that younger working people, starved for time, cannot. They enrich the lives of younger people and children, both relatives and grand-children as well as non-kin, in an increasing range of inter-generational programs. And, as Erin Luedke, a current student and winner of this year’s gerontology scholarship, points out, their personal and historical experiences provide older people with wisdom and insight that are vital in placing our current challenges in broader context. They help to balance the often alarmist views of current events that dominate mass media, in an era torn by war and economic instability.

This is not to deny the more challenging implications of societal aging. But, on reflection, one sees that that the “graying” of modern society is helping to propel us toward resolution of problems that affect people regardless of age. We all have a stake in a more humane healthcare system, and a society that better supports and utilizes the talents of people with disabilities. (A common tendency is for people to conflate problems of aging with those of disability, a bias that ill-serves both older folks and younger disabled people.) Also, now that many people can anticipate living anywhere from 10-25 years post-retirement (what some scholars term the third age) we can see the horizon of a world in which many creative, social, and civic pursuits that weren’t possible during one’s working years become available; this will enhance not only individual, but collective, well-being in ways that we can only glimpse today.

In more practical terms, occupational fields that have traditionally been associated with gerontology and attracted many gifted students (e.g., medicine, nursing, allied health, and social work) are among those projected to have sustained growth in coming years. But to these will be added others, such as adult education, marketing and public relations, disability services, architecture and interior design, administration (of health care settings and retirement communities), and “hospitality” roles in tourism and travel—which will also offer expanding and gratifying career paths.