**First Formal Writing Assignment: Aging, a personal perspective (20% of final grade)**

**DUE: Final paper is due 3/10/20 and must be submitted by Blackboard (safe-assign).**

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| An outline with personal reflections on the topic is due on: | 2/13/20 |
| A first draft of this personal reflection is due on: | 2/27/20 |
| The final revised essay is due on: | 3/10/20 MUST USE SAFE ASSIGN |

**Background:** In *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism,* Applewhite begins her introduction with the statement, “I’ve never lied about my age…” Why would anyone feel the need to lie about how old they are? Consider a person who has recently celebrated their 50th birthday. The big 5-O! At their celebration, the balloons were black and most of the cards reflected a “you are over-the-hill” theme.  The message conveyed here is not positive. We are not celebrating the milestone of reaching age 50. Instead the occasion is seen as one of humor and lamentation for lost youth. The image of “being over-the-hill” is mainly negative, portraying the years to come as a process of loss and decay.

**Main Question:** Examine your own experience with aging, older people, and ageist beliefs. Model your response on Applewhite’s personal reflections on pages 1-14 in the book.

**Process:**At the beginning of the semester, students participated in a class discussion identifying how they interpreted their own aging. Students also explored their own longevity in a Blackboard assignment. *{In your own mind, what age are you? What does that mean to you? What makes you see someone else as old or young?**Post your life expectancy estimate and describe how you see yourself aging. That is, imagine your future self.}* Class discussions reviewed the concept of stereotypes and how these have changed over time from positive views on aging (gerontophilia) to negative views on aging (gerontophobia). In your paper, you must refer to the myths Applewhite identifies as perpetuating an anti-olders agenda (pages 15 – 65 of the book).

Returning to the theme of the first class exercise and Blackboard assignment, write a **4 page personal reflection** of your experience with aging, older people and ageist beliefs. Model your paper on Applewhite’s personal reflections to explore your own thoughts, beliefs and behaviors related to aging. The following questions will help organize your thoughts and approach to the writing assignment:

         Will you lie about your age?

         Have your views on aging changed since the first class exercise?

         How do you feel about your own aging?

         How do you see your life at age 84?

         What stereotypes and assumptions do you have about aging and the elderly? Be honest, we all have them. Explore recent encounters with older relatives, neighbors, or clients to identify how you interacted with them. Were these interactions positive or negative?

         How do we let go of our prejudice against the aged? As Applewhite says, the hardest prejudice to let go of is our own age denial. How will you let go of the prejudice against yourself, your own future, older self, as inferior to your younger self?

         As discussed in class, aging has not always been seen from a negative perspective. Ageism as a concept reflects our social constructs related to aging. To fully understand ageism, we need to understand as Applewhite states, when did aging “turn from a natural process into a social problem to be solved…” Studies indicate that children’s and young adults’ perceptions of older adults are negative more often than not. How can we help children and young adults understand the social construct of age and ageism?