As indicated on the syllabus for this course, your final assignment involves identifying a research-based resource on some issue related to aging and aging services, and outlining a plan explaining how this research might be applied in a program or policy. The objectives of this assignment are two-fold: First, you will learn how to access research about an issue related to aging and to critically analyze it. Second, you will exercise your imagination about how this research could be implemented in a care facility, activity program, community resource, local or national law, or other public program or policy serving the needs of elders. Follow these steps:

1. **Submit an issue or topic proposal in class on March 6th.** You can address any issue that interests you related to aging, but it would be preferable to have it relate to issues we are studying this term. Possible topics could relate to healthcare, long-term care, housing, death and dying, social security, the economics of aging, political issues related to aging, or careers in aging. You might be concerned about an issue that has come up in your work or volunteer experience. You may have noticed a problem with family members. Choose an issue that grabs your personal attention. It’s always easier to do research on something you care about. Submitting your issue or topic is worth **20 points**.

2. **Find at least two resources that directly relate to your issue.** If you have trouble finding something, change your focus. You may have to read or scan several potential resources before you find one that you think will be really useful to you. [See Finding Resources, below.] We will devote the entire class on March 6th to searching for resources on-line in the PCC Sylvania Library. Bring any additional resources you have already located to that session.

3. **Write analytical summaries of each resource you think you will use for your project.** In class on March 6th, we will work with your resources and search for others on the Internet. By the end of class, you should have settled on the two or three resources you want to use, and some idea of how you will write analytical summaries of them. [See Writing an Analytical Summary, below.] These analytical summaries are worth **100 points**.

4. **Write an applied research plan.** Once you have completed your Analytical Summaries, brainstorm about how this research might be used practically in a particular setting. Once you have a general idea of how you would implement it, formulate an applied research plan, according to the guidelines, below. [See Formulating an Applied Research Plan.] Since I will be attending the American Society on Aging Conference on March 13th, I will encourage you to either contact me by email or meet with me to go over your plan and get some feedback. This applied research plan should be **3 to 4 pages** and is worth **140 points**.

5. **Get a professional review of your plan.** Given time constraints, you may or may not be able to get an outside review of your plan. Make an attempt, since this will
help our in-class review. If you are unable to find anyone’s review, we will do it in class. This review is worth **30 points**.

**6. Present your plan** in class during the scheduled final examination period for this class, Thursday, March 20\(^{th}\), 6:30-8:30. This presentation is worth **30 points**.

**7.** Include with your plan and analytical summaries a **self-evaluation** of your project, answering the following questions: Did I use good, research-based resources? Did my analytical summaries convey the main points of the articles? Did I demonstrate how my applied research plan was based on the research? Did I follow the guidelines on writing analytical summaries and the applied research plan? This self-evaluation is worth **20 points**.

**Finding Resources**

1. Your textbook offers many suggestions on resources. Check out the References in the back of the book, look at credits on tables, figures and other features in each chapter, check out Online Resources for the Study of Aging inside the front cover, look at the Exploring the Internet section at the end of each chapter.

2. Periodically, I have shared resources with you in class or on the weekly study guides. Check those if they seem relevant.

3. Ebscohost is an electronic database of journals available to all PCC students. I will demonstrate how to use this in class, but you can also access it on your home computer. (You need to use the barcode number on your student body card.) Use the Research Elite database and search using key words related to your topic. If you aren’t finding appropriate resources, try using different key words. Read the abstracts of the articles to make sure that the article fits your needs. Print out one or two promising articles.

4. By using keywords and carefully sifting through websites, you can find additional Internet resources by using a Search Engine. I recommend Google. In general, the best Internet resources on aging and gerontology will be websites ending in .org, .gov, and .edu. There may be some good .com resources, particularly on existing products or programs that are run by for-profit enterprises.

5. You may get some ideas for applications from the resources, but I want you to use at least one resource that is focused primarily on research. You need to develop the skill of finding the application of existing research.

**Writing an Analytical Summary**

1. Select a substantive article or research report, and read it in its entirety once. It will be helpful to make comments in the margins as you read, mark or highlight important passages, and circle key terms.

2. After you have read the article in its entirety once, go back and read the opening paragraph(s), the concluding paragraph(s) and the first sentences of each paragraph.

3. Answer the three most important questions to grasp the substance of the article: What? Why? How? Then ask yourself: What is the author’s point of view toward
the subject? This should help you to establish the main argument or points of the article.

4. Once you have written down the main argument of the article, outline the ideas the author uses as support (the secondary ideas that justify what the author is stating).

5. Write the analytical summary of 1-1.5 pages maximum. The summary includes the following essential information:

   • In the first sentence, state the author and title of the work you are summarizing, along with the controlling idea or thesis.

   • Follow the first sentence with the major points of the work, or the supporting ideas that develop the argument. Select the ideas that are most important and show the relationship among the points—definitions, causes and effects, examples, and so on. Transitional expressions such as “because, however, when, moreover, secondly, in addition” and so on fulfill this function.

   • Finish with a concluding sentence, which may be a condensed version of the author’s conclusion, or a restatement of her or his controlling idea.

   • Write in the present tense, and use succinct and clear language. Recheck your summary to make sure you haven’t changed the author’s original meaning.

   • Your summary not only condenses the study or article, but it also serves as a critical analysis of it. Your own opinions and reactions should be stated, but make sure to argue your point logically and by carefully taking up the points raised by the author. A bad analysis would be, “This author is sexist.” A good analysis would be, “This author does a good job of explaining heart attack prevention for men, but he ignores the research on women’s heart attacks.”

**Formulating an Applied Research Plan**

1. In your first sentence, summarize the planned application, establishing a clear relationship between the application and the research. An example would be: “I propose creating classes at senior centers to help elders preserve and improve their memories, based on the research supporting the ability to improve memory through practice and using memory devices.”

2. In the following section, explain the need for your plan and how the plan could build on existing programs or policies. [This would be the equivalent of assessing needs and assets in a program proposal.]

3. In the third section, outline the details of your plan: what you would do, who would carry it out, who the recipients or beneficiaries of the plan would be, what the components or steps of the plan would be.

4. Conclude by summarizing the usefulness or projected benefits of your plan.