What is midlife, and what does it entail? How do we think about and experience it? Recent scholars note that midlife is the “last uncharted territory” of the life course, in that childhood, adolescence and old age have gained scholarly attention but little has been given to “middle years.” Individuals who are past young/mid adulthood are treated as a uniform category, and we know very little about any age, identity or experience associated with midlife in particular. Using data from my qualitative interview study of 130 menopausal women in Southeast Michigan, I use this presentation to explore women’s perceptions of midlife, as well as their current chronological ages and life stages. For instance, what does it mean to be 52 or 58? And what does it mean to be done raising kids? I also consider the life course contexts within which women think about and experience midlife, such as gender, class, race, relationship status, menopause, motherhood, job status, health or illness, and residential location.

Heather Dillaway
Interim Chair & Associate Professor
Sociology

Wednesday, September 14
12:30 PM - 1:30 PM
2339 Faculty/Administration Bldg
Free and Open to the Public

Heather Dillaway is Interim Chair and Graduate Director in the Sociology Department at Wayne State University. Her primary research project focuses on how women experience menopause, midlife, and aging. She initially came to Wayne State in Fall 2002, after graduating with a PhD from Michigan State. Since that time she has engaged actively in research on the topics of menopause, reproductive health, inequality, and aging. She has published consistently on these topics, especially menopause and aging. She is currently drafting a book proposal based on her interviews with menopausal women.

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