Graduate Seminar in Population and Society (I)

Professor: Michal Engelman
Meeting Time: Fridays 9:30am-12pm
Location: 6113 Sewell Social Sciences Building
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Office: 4432 Social Sciences
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10am-12pm, and by appointment.

Demography is an interdisciplinary field that deals with the life course of populations, describing how and where people are born and age; live and reproduce; fall ill and die. In this course, we’ll take a historical and critical perspective to the study of populations, examining demography’s intellectual history and major current research areas. We will consider the determinants of demographic patterns and the consequences of these patterns for society; we’ll also explore how demographic statistics are used by social scientists and policy makers as launching points or supports for social and political arguments.

Good demographic analysis (and good social science in general) requires you to be able to read and write as well as count. This is a graduate reading and writing course: though some of the work we’ll read relies on sophisticated mathematics or statistics, our main focus will be on understanding the logic of arguments. Advanced training in mathematics or statistics is not required, but a willingness to actively read and discuss is essential.

Soc 971 is designed as a graduate level introduction to demography, and aims to set the foundation for meaningful engagement with important population research questions. The graduate seminar in Population and Society is offered over two semesters, every other year. The substantive focus of this first semester are the core areas in demography: mortality, fertility, and migration. The follow up seminar in Spring 2019 will explore the signature themes of the UW-Madison Center for Demography and Ecology: poverty & inequality, the family, spatial demography, health disparities, and biodemography.

Readings and Workload

Required readings are asterisked below. They are available as PDFs on CANVAS, or via links provided in the detailed reading schedule below. Other readings are optional for the course – they may be useful as additional background and are recommended for the prelims. Most of these will also be posted on CANVAS, though any books listed should be obtained directly from the UW-Madison library or your favorite book sellers. Some books are available online via archive.org, and this is indicated in the syllabus when relevant.

I reserve the right to make changes to the reading schedule if needed. Any changes will be announced in class, via the course email list, and posted on the course website.
This course assumes UW’s standard 2:1 rule, meaning that for every course credit hour you spend inside the classroom (namely, 2.5 hours each week) you should expect to spend an average of three hours working on course requirements outside of class (so: 7.5 hours per week). In sum, 10 hours a week average workload. Note this is an average; some weeks you may spend more time, and some weeks less.

**Doing all of the readings, as listed below, is absolutely necessary for success in this course.** Keeping up with the assigned reading will be crucial to your grade. More importantly (to me, at least): you won’t get much out of this course if you don’t give yourself enough time to get through and stay on top of the readings.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

1. Prepare for class (read texts & submit weekly questions) and *actively participate in discussions*: 25%.
   
   You are expected to do the readings each week and come to class prepared to actively participate in discussion about them. You are encouraged to take notes on each reading, both to organize your thoughts and keep track of ideas for the short response papers and research paper. As you read, keep track of (1) the 3-5 most important concepts; (2) the thesis of the paper; (3) the key take-home messages of the article; and (4) Your key gripe(s) about the paper (e.g. unsatisfactory arguments, confusing or concerning claims, unanswered questions, etc.), along with additional comments (e.g. thoughts about connections to other readings in this course or your particular demographic research interests). These notes should help you feel prepared to discuss the texts in class. If you feel you’re not getting everything you want out of the readings and discussions, please email me and/or attend office hours, so we can talk things over.

   **To help us all engage each other, I ask that you post at least 2 questions (more questions are welcome!) on the readings to a discussion thread on CANVAS by 5pm on Thursday before each class you are not co-leading.** One may be an informational question (e.g. asking for clarification of a concept or argument, asking for background, questioning the accuracy of something, etc.). The other(s) should be discussion questions – i.e. pushing on a concept, or an argument, or relationship within the text or between texts, or what a particular aspect of the readings means for contemporary population issues (statistical or substantive), etc. We’ll use these questions to guide our discussion in class.

   Research suggests that there are many benefits to class discussions – they increase learning, foster critical thinking and communication skills, and develop the sociological imagination. However, an effective discussion doesn’t happen without multiple people speaking. So, in this course, active participation means more than simply attending class, staying awake, politely paying attention, and making occasional eye contact. To be clear, I define *active participation* as students making substantive oral comments – ideally multiple times during all or most class sessions.
2. Co-lead class discussion once: 10%

I will lead the discussions for the first two weeks. You will sign up to co-lead the discussions during one subsequent week. This will involve writing up your reading notes, sorting through the submitted questions to pick key themes for the discussion, and helping to facilitate the conversation.

Leading discussion doesn’t mean talking the entire session. Rather, it means opening up the text for critical analysis: locating it in space, time, and literature; highlighting its key questions and its central claims; assessing those claims and questions they left unanswered; and bringing up and in anything else that you, as facilitator(s), feel will lead to an engaged and productive exchange in class. Bringing in at least one of the recommended readings to expand the scope of the discussion is encouraged.

3. Write two reading response papers (2-3 pages each): 10% each, total 20%.

Each response paper will be grounded in and draw connections among at least two texts from the course. The papers may compare and contrast the positions of authors on a given issue, relate readings to current events or controversies, take issue with points you disagree with or find to be unclear, or expand on an interesting idea. The point of these papers is to force yourself to think clearly and succinctly enough about the issues and the texts to be able to put your thoughts down on paper. Either an informal, reading journal-style tone or a more formal tone is fine, but your writing should be proofread and clear, with proper citations. The first paper is due on October 5, the second on November 9th (both by 5pm).

4. Write a final research paper: 45%.

You will write a term paper (10-15 pages) in which you consider some demographic topic of contemporary importance through the lenses of two or more of the texts we have read and perform a critical reading of the relevant literature. I’ll be available to discuss your topic and approach in office hours. You will present your own argument/thesis in both written and oral form, provide constructive feedback on others’ research, and incorporate such feedback into your own work.

Your grade will be based on the following:

- Paper topic and initial bibliography (5%, due October 19th, 5pm)
- A draft ready for presentation/discussion on the last day of class (10%). You will send a copy of the paper to your designated partner by noon on Dec 6th. On Dec 7th in class you will summarize your partner’s paper and respond to their summary of yours.
- Complete research paper (30%, due by Friday, December 14, 5:00 pm).
Academic Honesty

In your written assignment, you are expected to exercise academic honesty and integrity and to produce original work. If you must use the exact words used in another source, use quotation marks to indicate that those words are not your own and provide full credit to the source. If you are using an idea you obtained from someone else, cite the author(s), even if you did not quote her/him/them directly. The set of ideas you must cite includes those obtained from Wikipedia or any internet source. According to UWS 14, academic misconduct occurs when a student:

- seeks to claim credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation;
- uses unauthorized materials or fabricated data in any academic exercise;
- forges or falsifies academic documents or records;
- intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others;
- engages in conduct aimed at making false representation of [...] academic performance;
- assists other students in any of these acts.

The university’s Writing Center has an excellent webpage about how to successfully quote and paraphrase texts: [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html). See also these guidelines about avoiding plagiarism: [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html).

The internet makes it very easy to plagiarize (both intentionally and not), but it also makes it easy to identify plagiarized texts. Evidence of academic dishonesty in an assignment will result in an automatic grade of zero for the assignment, and will be reported to the Dean of Students following a meeting with the professor.

Accommodations

Please send me an email if you are eligible for special arrangements or accommodations for testing, assignments, or other aspects of the course.

If you wish to request a scheduling accommodation for religious observances, please send an email by the end of the second week of the course stating the specific date(s) for which you request accommodation; campus policy requires that religious observances be accommodated if you make a timely request early in the term. See [https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698](https://kb.wisc.edu/page.php?id=21698) for details.

Learning objectives

This course is designed to address the following instructional objectives, designated as priorities by the Department of Sociology:

- **Critically Evaluate Published Research:** Students will be able to read and evaluate published research as it appears in academic journals and popular or policy publications.
- **Communicate Skillfully:** Students write papers and make oral presentations that build arguments and assess evidence in a clear and effective manner.
• **Critical Thinking about Society and Social Processes:** Students can look beyond the surface of issues to discover the "why" and "how" of social order and structure and consider the underlying social mechanisms that may be creating a situation, identify evidence that may adjudicate between alternate explanations for phenomena, and develop proposed policies or action plans in light of theory and data.

• **See Things from a Global Perspective:** Students learn about different cultures, groups, and societies across both time and place. They are aware of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences among residents of the United States. They understand the ways events and processes in one country are linked to those in other countries.

• **Work effectively in groups:** Students will improve their skills in understanding group dynamics and working well with people from different backgrounds with different strengths and weaknesses.

• **Improve project management skills:** Students will improve their skills in time management, ordering and executing a series of complex and inter-related tasks, and integrating distinct components of a project into a final product.

**Departmental notice of grievance and appeal rights**

The Department of Sociology regularly conducts student evaluations of all professors near the end of the semester. Students who have more immediate concerns about this course should report them to the instructor or to the chair, 8128 Social Science (jraymo@wisc.edu).

**Course Overview and Organization**

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<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Population Thinking</td>
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<td>Demographic Transition: Mortality</td>
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<td>October 19</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity, and Demography</td>
<td>Research Proposals Due</td>
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<td>Gender in Demographic Research</td>
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<td>Workshop research paper drafts</td>
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Final Papers will be due by 5pm on Friday, December 14.
**Detailed Schedule**

*** Required readings are asterisked. Texts are listed in suggested order of reading.

**Sept 7. Introduction: Population Thinking from Antiquity to the Present**

“Population” is an idea with a long history linked to the development of modern states and economies, the study and application of probability and statistics, and wide-ranging debates about science, ethics, and public policy. This week we’ll begin with ancient Greek ideas about what/who constitutes a population, consider the rise of “political arithmetic” in Europe as a way of quantifying populations and situating demography in the service of States, and end with some new (or, perhaps, newly reformulated) questions about our contemporary concept of population.


**Sept 14. Malthus: Influences, Ideas, Critiques**

Malthus and his *Essay on the Principle Population* are a source of apparently endless debate and controversy. Over more than 200 years of commentary, he has been lauded for his observation of European marriage patterns, economic insights, and influence over subsequent theories of natural selection. He has also been critiqued for failing to foresee the impact of technology on food production and population growth, for blaming the poor (and particularly, their reproductive habits) for poverty, and for the use and misuse of his arguments in political battles over sanitary reform, eugenics, nationalism, colonialism, birth control, and environmentalism. This week we’ll consider Malthus’ ideas in the context of both their precursors and subsequent impact.

*Malthus, Thomas. 1798. *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Skim all of it, but focus on chapters 1-5. – Available for (free) borrowing at: https://archive.org ; Many other options are available online and at the library

* We will also read the following pages from the 2018 Norton Critical Edition, edited by Joyce E. Chaplin: pp. 21-28 (Influenced on Malthus, read first), and pp. 187-195, 200-205 (Critiques of Malthus, read after).

Sept 21. Demographic Transition: Mortality

The dramatic increase in life expectancy throughout much of the world over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries is uncontested, but explanations for these improvements have been the subject of much debate between advocates of economic development on one hand, and champions of public health on the other. Although the presumption of a strict dichotomy dividing these factors now seems largely outdated, these arguments have shaped not only our understanding of demographic history, but also contemporary debates about policies and resource allocation.


Sept 28. Demographic Transition: Fertility

For most of the 20th century, demographers struggled with the interrelated questions of why, when, and how fertility rates fall. This week we will read some of the classic papers on the notion of demographic transition, and review the controversies surrounding the reasons for fertility declines.


Oct 5. Rising Longevity & Population Health (Response Paper 1 Due at 5pm)

For populations, rising life expectancy is an aggregate mark of human success in reducing fertility, improving a broad set of living conditions, and curbing risks of death through innovations in public health and medicine. For individuals, reaching old age represents triumph over illnesses, injuries, and a myriad challenges to survival. This week we’ll go beyond the classic demographic functions of fertility and mortality to consider the health of populations.


**Oct 12. The Social determinants of Health**

From the World Health Organization: “The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels. The social determinants of health are mostly responsible for health inequities – the unfair and avoidable differences in health status seen within and between countries.”


Malcolm Harris (2017) The death of the white working class has been greatly exaggerated. *Pacific Standard* https://psmag.com/news/the-death-of-the-white-working-class-has-been-greatly-exaggerated


Oct 19. Race, Ethnicity, and Populations  (Research Proposal Due at 5pm)

Race and ethnicity are popularly referred to as “demographics,” but how do the population sciences define, measure, and interpret these contentious social constructs? This week we’ll consider both research that deals deliberately with the meaning of race and ethnicity and the ways in which race and ethnicity figure in research that employs them somewhat less deliberately.


Oct 26. Sex and Gender in Demographic Research

Analyzing men and women separately has long been standard practice in demographic research, and numerous studies consider differences between women and men in education, work and income; the division of domestic labor and caregiving; and fertility, reproductive behaviors, and physical and mental health. Yet critics have argued that demography has failed to engage with gender in a meaningful way. This week, we’ll consider ways for population research to deal with gender more constructively.


Nov 2. Fertility in Poor Countries

Contemporary research on fertility in low income countries examines the need for, access to, and use of contraceptives, as well as the impacts of that use, including the health, economic and social consequences of expanding access to family planning and other reproductive health services. Over the past half century, the rationale for such research and programmatic interventions has shifted from controlling population growth to promoting women’s health and human rights. This week we’ll examine this shift both on the level of policy as well as on people’s lives.


Nov 9. Low Fertility  (Response Paper 2 Due at 5pm)

After decades (if not centuries) of concern about the economic and environmental consequences of high fertility and rapid population growth, some analysts and policy makers now find themselves alarmed about trends of low fertility, population aging, and population decline in some countries. This week we’ll look into what’s up with that.


Migration is the third pillar of classic demographic analysis: the hardest to measure and currently the most controversial. This week we review key theories of migration and current statistics.


**Nov 23. Thanksgiving. Enjoy the Break!**

**Nov 30. Migration: Current Debates**

Migration research is framed by empirical puzzles and contentious policy arguments. We sample just a few of these this week.


**Dec 7. Workshop Paper Drafts**

* Email a working draft of the paper to your assigned partners by the morning of Dec. 6

Final Papers will be due by 5pm on Friday, December 14.