Graduate Seminar in Population and Society II

Professor: Michal Engelman
Meeting Time and Place: Mondays 9:30am-12pm, 6112 Social Sciences
Contact: mengelman@ssc.wisc.edu
Office: 4432 Social Sciences
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am-12pm, and by appointment.

Soc 971 is designed as a graduate level introduction to population studies and aims to set the foundation for meaningful engagement with important demographic research questions. The graduate seminar in Population and Society is offered over two semesters, every other year. This second course in the sequence covers the signature themes of UW-Madison’s Center for Demography and Ecology and Center for the Demography of Health and Aging: (1) poverty & inequality, (2) families and households, (3) environmental and spatial demography, (4) health (and health disparities) across the life course, and (5) biodemography.

The course will provide students with a grounding in foundational texts and classic studies as well as a familiarity with contemporary research and policy debates in each area. In addition, students will develop competence in discussing data sources, methods, and analytic challenges central to each literature. Sessions will frequently include visiting faculty facilitators with expertise and ongoing research in the particular module. This course builds on its Fall Soc 971 precursor, but the latter is not an official prerequisite.

Readings and Workload

Most required readings are available as PDFs on CANVAS. You will be asked to purchase one book – Conley and Fletcher’s The Genome Factor – for the last two sessions of the course. Please plan ahead by obtaining the book from your favorite book sellers or the UW-Madison library.

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 wont get much out of this course if you dont 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 & 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. 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, along with additional comments.  
   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 **8pm on Sunday** before class. 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, so please be prepared to elaborate on questions you pose.  
   Research suggests that there are many benefits to class discussions (i.e. increases learning, fosters critical thinking and communication skills, develops 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. Those are all fine habits, but to be clear, I define **active participation** as students making substantive oral comments in class.

2. **Co-lead class discussion once:** 10%  
   I will lead the discussions for the first couple of 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 paper(s) (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 **Feb 27**, the second on **April 3** (both by 5pm).

4. **Write a final research paper: 45%**

You will write a term paper (8-15 pages, depending on the number of credits – see above) in which you consider some demographic topic of contemporary importance through the lens(es) of one or more of the authors we have read and perform a critical reading of the relevant literature. 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: (i) Paper topic and initial bibliography due March 8, 5pm (5%); (ii) Complete research paper due by Friday, May 10, 5:00 pm (40%).

**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.

**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.

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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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Facilitators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; Inequality: Introduction to Poverty</td>
<td>Carlson</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; Inequality: Inequality and Social Mobility</td>
<td>Engelman</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>Poverty &amp; Inequality: Race, Class, Place</td>
<td>Curtis</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>February 18</td>
<td>Family: Current Debates</td>
<td>Carlson</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>February 25</td>
<td>Family: Classics</td>
<td>Schwartz</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>March 4</td>
<td>Environmental/Spatial Demography: Intro</td>
<td>Curtis</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>March 11</td>
<td>Environmental/Spatial Demography: Climate</td>
<td>Nobles</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>Spring Break</td>
<td>No Class</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>March 25</td>
<td>Environmental/Spatial Demography: Place &amp; Health</td>
<td>Engelman</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>April 1</td>
<td>Health Across the Life Course: Introduction</td>
<td>Engelman</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>Health Across the Life Course: Cumulative Disadvantage</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>Health Across the Life Course: Disparities</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>April 22</td>
<td>Biodemography: Genomics</td>
<td>Fletcher</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>April 29</td>
<td>Biodemography: Gene/Environment &amp; Epigenetics</td>
<td>Fletcher/Engelman</td>
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Detailed Schedule

**Jan 28. Poverty & Inequality I: Introduction to Poverty** (Carlson)


**Feb 4. Poverty & Inequality II: Inequality and Social Mobility** (Engelman)


**Feb 11. Poverty & Inequality III: Race, Class, Place (Curtis)**


**Feb 18. Family I: Current Debates (Carlson)**


**Feb 25. Family II: Revisiting the Classics (Schwartz)**


March 4. Environmental & Spatial Demography I: Introduction (Curtis)

March 11. Environmental & Spatial Demography II: Climate (Nobles)

March 18. Spring Break: No Class

March 25. Environmental & Spatial Demography III: Place and Health (Engelman)

**April 1. Health Across the Life Course I: Introduction** (Engelman)


**April 8. Health Across the Life Course II: Cumulative (Dis)advantage** (Engelman)


**April 15. Health Across the Life Course III: Disparities and Inequities** (Engelman)


**April 22. Biodemography I: Genomics (Fletcher)**


**Suggested Readings**


**April 29. Biodemography II: Gene/Environment Interactions and Epigenetics (Fletcher/Engelman)**

Conley and Fletcher Chapter 5


