Course Overview and Syllabus

DEMOGRAPHY AND POPULATION

Schar School of Policy and Government
George Mason University

Fall 2020

Course Schedule: GOVT-444
Fairfax Campus (room: ENT 274)
Class on Tuesday (16:30 pm – 19:10 pm)
Credit Hours: 3

Faculty: Dr. John F. May, Van Metre Hall - Room # 648
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00 am – 13:00 pm (Van Metre Hall - Room # 648)
Email address: jmay21@gmu.edu

Placement: Undergraduate; Recommended pre-requisites: GOVT-132, GOVT-133

COURSE RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION

Population is a fundamental dimension of the world, countries, societies, and communities in which we live. Demographic patterns and trends exert their influence at different levels, namely global, regional, national, and sub-national (including the urban-rural divide). To follow current events and be able to plan for the future, we need to understand the changing size, rate of growth and distribution of a country’s population as well as its age structure and labor force. We need also to understand how these national and sub-national population dynamics interact with those of other nations, especially at the regional and global levels.

The Demographic Module of the course will explain the sources of demographic information (censuses, surveys, and civil registration and population registers data) and establish the core demographic measurements of mortality, fertility, migration, and natural and net population growth. The course will provide a very brief introduction to the Lexis diagram, a tool to represent demographic events on two axes: a horizontal axis with the time since occurrence of an event (or a common event experienced by a cohort) and a vertical axis with the age of the person (or the cohort). The demographic component of the course will also cover other dimensions of demographic change, including urbanization (and slums) patterns, the intermediate and proximate determinants of fertility, key family planning indicators, and the preparation of population projections. In order for the students to fully grasp these demographic concepts and measurements, the course will explain how to calculate basic demographic indicators and rates.
with hands-on exercises to be done at home and corrected in class, using a pocket calculator or a cell phone.

The Population Module of the course will bring the analytical information gathered so far into a broader perspective. It will consider demographic history, i.e., the slow growth of population before the Industrial Revolution when life was “nasty, brutish, and short”. It will show the transition from “the world we have lost” (according to P. Laslett, *The World we Have Lost: England Before the Industrial Age*, 3rd edit., New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1984) to “the world we have gained”, which is demographically more “modern”. However, because of extended longevity, life could possibly become “nasty, brutish, and long”. This module will also review the various population theories, especially the theory of Rev. Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and later, the counter-Malthusian theory proposed by the Danish economist Ester Boserup (1910-1999). Other key topics will be the impact of major diseases (e.g., HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Covid-19, etc.), national and international migration patterns and trends, and ongoing demographic developments and their implications for health care, education, employment, gender equity, poverty and inequality reduction, and socio-economic development more generally. With respect to economic development, one class will be devoted to the relatively new concept of the demographic dividends. The course will also cover how population policies influence demographic patterns and trends, how effective these policies can be, and how they relate to the gender and human rights agendas. Last but not least, a class will be devoted to the demography of the United States, with references to, and comparisons with Canada and Mexico.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The learning objectives of the course are to give students a basic understanding of the different demographic and population issues around the world as well as their relationship to the various dimensions of socio-economic development. The course will also equip students with tools that they will find useful in their future professional life (in particular, the database and projections available on the Websites of the UN Population Division and the Population Reference Bureau as well as a tool to tabulate, present, and use data from the Demographic and Health Surveys).

By the end of the course, the students will be able to:

1. Identify and describe the main demographic indicators and issues in the different parts of the world;
2. Differentiate between the various demographic regimes across the more developed, the less developed, and the least developed countries;
3. Analyze the impact of demographic differentials on socio-economic and development outcomes;
4. Interpret the empirical evidence on demographic patterns and trends and use this understanding to infer policy interventions across the various sectors with the view of improving demographic and socio-economic outcomes; and
5. Use demographic indicators and concepts that would be needed to implement the UN’s post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda.
**Learning Strategies:** Teaching will rely on formal presentations, videos (when available), hands-on exercises as well as exchanges and discussions among the students. Several guest speakers will be invited (if feasible) to offer their expertise and add their insights on specific topics.

There will be an emphasis on learning from comparisons and specific discussions of Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. Students will be trained to become enlightened users of population concepts and demographic tools for independent analysis. Students will also recognize linkages of population issues to the economy, development, gender equity, poverty and inequality reduction, environment, and mitigation of epidemics (e.g., HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Covid-19, etc.). Last but not least, students will appreciate the significance and effectiveness of policy measures to intervene on demographic outcomes as well as how demographic changes also impact on politics and policies (e.g., large migration flows into Europe in 2015-2016 and reassessment of the China 1979 “One-child” policy at the end of 2015).

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADINGS**

Students will demonstrate their understanding and learning in several ways. First, there will be two mid-term exams, to be taken in class or at home. Second, there will be the preparation of a Research Paper, which will address an issue with a demographic basis. During the course, students will prepare a draft abstract of their Research Paper. Feedback and guidance on the proposed topic will be provided. This Research Paper may be focused on a country, a region, or on a world issue, and will be submitted at the end of the course. The Research Paper will be a maximum length of 3,500 words. (Further details are provided below on the preparation of the Research Paper.)

**Grade Weightings:**

- Two in class (or at home) exams (first exam: 15%; second exam: 25%. Note: both exams might include simple calculations);
- Research Paper 50%; and
- In class participation 10%,

for a **total of 100%**.

**SCHEDULE AND OUTLINE OF TOPICS**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LECTURE TOPICS</th>
<th>KEY MILESTONES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographic Module</strong></td>
<td><em>Introduction to Demography and Population.</em> Overview of the course; demographic components; balancing equation; population doubling</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 25, 2020</td>
<td><em>Introduction to Demography and Population.</em> Overview of the course; demographic components; balancing equation; population doubling</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 8, 2020</td>
<td>Mortality. Key measures; infant and child mortality; adult mortality; life tables; mortality trends; epidemiological patterns and trends; exercises correction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 15, 2020</td>
<td>Fertility. Key measures; total fertility rate (TFR) and age-specific fertility rates (ASFRs); intermediate (or distal) and proximate (biological and behavioral) determinants of fertility; fertility trends and differentials; exercises correction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 22, 2020</td>
<td>Migration. Key measures; migration trends; pull and push factors; rural-urban drift; urbanization and slums; internally displaced persons (IDPs); refugees; international migration; migration data issues; exercises correction. <strong>First Mid-Term exam</strong></td>
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<td>September 29, 2020</td>
<td>Population Projections. Projection methods; cohort component method; projections assumptions (normative, policy-oriented, or expert-based); assumptions variants; projections results; use of population projections; in-class use of UN Population 2019</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>October 6, 2020</td>
<td>Population Changes in History</td>
<td>16th - 18th century demographic regimes, with a focus on Western Europe; traditional and modern demographic regimes; demographic and epidemiological transitions; importance of fertility transition; replicability of the demographic transition in the less and least developed countries.</td>
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<td>October 12, 2020</td>
<td>Columbus Day</td>
<td>Research Paper – Draft Abstract due</td>
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<td>October 20, 2020</td>
<td>Demography of the United States</td>
<td>Population aging in the USA; demographic differentials and convergences (mortality and fertility) between the USA and Canada; migration trends to both countries; migration from Mexico; migration reform in the US.</td>
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<td>October 27, 2020</td>
<td>Population and Development</td>
<td>Rev. Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and Ester Boserup (1910-1999); Marxist views on population issues; economists vs. demographers; “developmentalists” vs. “family planners”; revisionist reappraisal and modern approaches, including the demographic dividends; population and climate change; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).</td>
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<td>November 3, 2020</td>
<td>The Demographic Dividends (DD)</td>
<td>Definition; first and second DD; demographic dependency ratio, employment dependency ratio, and socio-economic dependency ratio; lessons from Asia; replicability to sub-Saharan Africa; policy implications (multisector and integrated policies).</td>
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<td>November 10, 2020</td>
<td>Contraception and Family Planning Programs</td>
<td>Second Mid-Term exam</td>
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contraception; contraceptive technology and methods; family planning programs; contraceptive method-mix; long-term family planning methods; induced abortion; ethical considerations.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture Content</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<td>November 17, 2020</td>
<td><em>Population Policies (I).</em> Origin, evolution, and impact of population policies; population policy or population policies? explicit and implicit policies; direct and indirect interventions; gender and human rights dimensions; integrated population policies; policies’ measurement and effectiveness.</td>
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<td>November 24, 2020</td>
<td><em>Population Policies (II).</em> Analysis of several population policies (e.g., Niger, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Maldives); analysis of several population policy documents (e.g., Niger); and exercises on content of population policies.</td>
<td>Research Paper due</td>
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<td>November 26, 2020</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving</td>
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<td>December 3, 2020</td>
<td><em>Population Policies (III).</em> Population and development modeling; population advocacy; role of leadership; roles of governments and donors (incl. a review of major donors); importance of population institutions; and funding issues. General reflections of the course. Course evaluation.</td>
<td>Last class</td>
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**REQUIRED READINGS**

Students will be required to purchase the book of Tim Dyson, *Population and Development: The Demographic Transition*, London, GB: Zed Books, 2010, which will be the main textbook used throughout the course. The 2020 World Population Data Sheet of the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) will also be a key tool, which will be used and referred to in every class (electronic and/or paper copies of this document will be distributed to students).

The required readings (to be done before the classes) will provide critical data and basic information that will be referred to in class (about 20 to 30 pages of reading will be assigned per
week). There will also be handouts of the formal presentations, which will be distributed in class or electronically.

Readings for each class will be listed on Blackboard. Papers, chapters or documents that are not readily available in libraries and/or bookshops will be provided.

In addition, two publications, which are available from the Population Reference Bureau (PRB) Website, either for purchase (paper copy) or downloading (electronic copy) (see www.prb.org), will be suggested readings:


Last but not least, students will be expected to review and/or use identified sections of:


Other readings that can contribute to research papers will be available from Professor May.

**PREPARATION OF RESEARCH PAPER**

Each student will prepare a short research paper, which will count for 50% of the final grade.
This is an opportunity to write an essay and do research in an area of your choice. The paper will explore an issue with a demographic dimension, then discuss the policy implications of this issue (about 20% of the paper should be devoted to policy interventions). The topic could alternatively be focused on a country, a region, a city, a state (e.g., a US state) or could adopt a world-wide approach. Papers on demographic aspects of the United States and/or Canada are also appropriate. It will be very important to give your scientific sources (more on this later). A list of potential research topics will be shared with the students.

Students will be graded on their ability to identify an issue and analyze it from a demographic perspective. This will likely include historical data and data in table or graph format is encouraged to provide time-series perspective. The paper will be no longer than 3,500 words (approximately 7 pages). Annexes (which do not count against the word-count) can be used to support the analysis, and documentary references must be provided to show the sources which you used (references do not count against the word-count either). Please note that Wikipedia is not considered a reliable source of information. Instead, your paper should rely on academic (peer-reviewed) books and journal articles as well as official documents from Governments and/or international institutions and NGOs.

Here are the key milestones for this project:

**October 12, 2020: Draft Abstract is due (but earlier submissions are encouraged). This Abstract will provide a basis for reactions and suggestions from the Faculty.**

The Abstract, with a maximum of 250 words, will offer a short statement giving the title, the country (or region or else) to be considered, the area you will research, the topic that will be the focus of your work, and the sources (both data and references) that you intend to use.

For example, your Abstract could state: Impact of girls’ education on family size in Ghana. This research would look at the issue of family size, with a particular focus on girls’ education over the last 30 years. The eventual focus of the work would be the impact of school fees on fertility levels and population growth. The paper will rely mostly on data from the series of Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS).

Other example: The topic of the study will be the life expectancy at birth in Russia. The research will investigate the role of alcohol, tobacco use, accidents, and poor diet in the low life expectancy of the Russian population. The topic may be narrowed to focus on only one aspect (e.g., alcohol). The research would rely on the health surveys and other health statistics and reports available for Russia.

**October 20, 2020: Initial Faculty Feedback is Provided on Draft Abstract.**

You will receive electronic feedback from Professor May. This will confirm the Research Paper’s title, clarify the statement of the issue you are researching, and confirm the sources you expect to use [i.e., the data sources and main references such as documents/reports, books, journal articles, grey literature, etc.] Revisions may be made as the work progresses; however, any major deviation from the agreed topic and framework should be discussed with Professor May.
October 27, 2020: Second Faculty Feedback is Provided on Draft Abstract (if needed)

November 24, 2020: The final research paper is due before midnight, to be sent electronically to Professor May <jmay21@gmu.edu> in a Word file format (not in a PDF file format). Note: NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED. Remember that the paper should be 3,500 words maximum. Again, annexes and references do not count against the word-count.

MAIN POPULATION JOURNALS

- Population and Development Review
- Population Studies
- Demography
- Studies in Family Planning
- Canadian Studies in Population
- Population (in French; English version available)
- Genus (articles in English, French, and Italian)

Other online and/or open-access journals (e.g., The Lancet) are available as well.

USEFUL WEBSITES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- Population Reference Bureau: http://www.prb.org/
- US Census Bureau, International Program Center: http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/
- The Population Council: http://www.popcouncil.org/
- Center for Global Development: http://www.cgdev.org/
- Migration Policy Institute: http://www.migrationinformation.org/
- Population Action International: http://www.populationaction.org/
- The Population Institute: http://www.populationinstitute.org/
- Central Intelligence Agency: http://www.cia.gov/
- The Center for Strategic and International Studies has a creative program on population aging in the more developed countries: http://www.csis.org/gai/pubs_subject.html
- Australian National University: http://demography.anu.edu.au/
- The Oxford Institute of Population Ageing: http://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/
ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Accommodation for a Disability. If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the DRC.

Academic Integrity. Faculty in the Schar School of Policy and Government have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce George Mason University’s Honor Code.

The SPP Plagiarism Policy. The profession of scholarship and the intellectual life of a university as well as the field of public policy inquiry depend fundamentally on a foundation of trust. Thus, any act of plagiarism strikes at the heart of the meaning of the university and the purpose of the Schar School of Public Policy. It constitutes a serious breach of professional ethics and it is unacceptable.

Plagiarism is the use of another’s words or ideas presented as one’s own. It includes, among other things, the use of specific words, ideas, or frameworks that are the product of another’s work. Honesty and thoroughness in citing sources is essential to professional accountability and personal responsibility. Appropriate citation is necessary so that arguments, evidence, and claims can be critically examined. Plagiarism is wrong because of the injustice it does to the person whose ideas are stolen. But it is also wrong because it constitutes lying to one’s professional colleagues. From a prudential perspective, it is shortsighted and self-defeating, and it can ruin a professional career.

The faculty of the School of Public Policy takes plagiarism seriously and has adopted a zero-tolerance policy. Any plagiarized assignment will receive an automatic grade of “F.” This may lead to failure for the course, resulting in dismissal from the University. This dismissal will be noted on the student’s transcript. For foreign students who are on a university-sponsored visa, dismissal also results in the revocation of their visa.

To help enforce the SPP policy on plagiarism, all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time examine student’s work electronically without prior permission from the student. The SPP policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace it or substitute for it.