Course/Seminar Overview and Syllabus

POPULATION POLICIES

Schar School of Policy and Government
George Mason University

Fall 2020

Course/Seminar Schedule: POGO-750
Arlington Campus (room: ARLVM 478)
Class on Thursday (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: Graduate; Pre-requisites: None

RATIONALE AND DESCRIPTION

Population is a fundamental dimension of the societies and the world in which we live. To a very large extent, demographic patterns and trends determine the future socio-economic prospects of all countries. These demographic patterns and trends exert their influence at different levels, namely sub-national (including the urban-rural divide), national, regional, and global. Therefore, in order to be able to plan for the future socio-economic outcomes, we need to understand the changing size, rate of growth and distribution of a country’s population as well as its changing age structure and labor force composition. We need also to understand how these sub-national and national population dynamics interact with those of other nations, especially at the regional and global levels, with the view of identifying demographic components and/or variables amenable to potential interventions.

Indeed, population patterns and trends are not a given. They can be influenced by right policy interventions with adequate policy levers. Population policies can be defined as “actions taken explicitly or implicitly by public authorities, in order to prevent, delay, or address imbalances between demographic changes, on the one hand, and social, economic, [environmental], and political goals, on the other” (J.F. May, World Population Policies: Their Origin, Evolution, and Impact, Cham, CH: Springer, 2012, pp. 1-2). Such policy interventions enable public authorities to modify demographic trajectories. Public authorities can implement these interventions with some degree of efficiency and, more importantly, within the framework of human rights.
This graduate course/seminar is designed to provide students with the key concepts needed to assess critical changes in national and global demographic patterns and trends, with a particular focus on population policies and their impact on human capital formation, health outcomes, and future socio-economic prospects.

After a presentation of key demographic concepts and data in the more, the less, and the least developed countries, the course/seminar will focus on the three main transitions, i.e., demographic, epidemiological, and migratory. It will highlight the diverse and dynamic demographic regional patterns, including urbanization trends and migration flows, and present the calculation of population projections. The course/seminar will focus on high and low (below replacement) fertility countries, on rapid population aging societies, and on international migration trends and prospects. The course/seminar will also cover the new theory of the demographic dividends as well as the crucial role of population policies or the lack thereof. Specific lectures will be devoted to the situation of sub-Saharan Africa and the United States, before dealing with ad hoc policies to address situations of high fertility and low fertility, population aging, and international migration. Finally, the course/seminar will conclude with a discussion of the prospects for, and implications of, future population policies.

The course/seminar will blend theoretical approaches with empirical and current data. Students will review key chapters and/or papers on core topics such as the demographic transition, population policies, the demographic dividends, and other topics relevant to understanding the current and future dynamics of demographic changes. The course/seminar will provide tools to enable students to appreciate change and development as generated by demography, and be equipped to understand the utility of a range of population interventions and policies. Throughout the course/seminar, students will also be encouraged to consider the relationship of current world events to their demographic foundations.

Course/seminar Objectives: Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Appraise demographic and development issues;
- Interpret current and projected population data;
- Evaluate the comparative demographic, social, and economic structures of the world’s different regions;
- Appraise a variety of demographic and socio-economic scenarios;
- Apply this knowledge to assess evidence-based policy responses and programmatic interventions; and
- Address the rising challenges and future opportunities of unfolding demographic trends.

Teaching Strategies: The course/seminar will rely on formal lectures, small group discussions, and analytical reviews of core literature through presentations in class by students. Teaching will rely on formal presentations, videos (when available), hands-on exercises as well as exchanges and discussions among the students. Several guest speakers (if feasible) will be invited to offer their expertise and add their insights.
**Evaluation Methods:** Students will present in-depth discussions of core papers assigned. They will also write two short research essays of a maximum length of 2,500 words each on assigned topics.

Grades for the course/seminar will be based on the following:

- Class participation: 15%
- Research essays: 50% (first essay 20%; second essay 30%)
- Class presentations: 35%

Two students (to be randomly selected) will make a class presentation of each key paper or article. It is expected that these presentations will be supported by deck of PowerPoint slides. Thereafter, these students will help lead a general in-class discussion about the main findings and lessons and/or shortcomings of these papers and articles. Students will be judged on the quality of the presentation content but also on the delivery of the presentations.

**COURSE/SEMINAR OUTLINE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class No.</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Written Work Due</th>
<th>Student Discussants</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Aug 27</td>
<td><strong>Global Overview of Demographic Patterns and Trends.</strong> Overview of</td>
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<td>the course; world demographic patterns and trends; demographic</td>
<td>world demographic patterns and trends; demographic components</td>
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<td></td>
<td>components (mortality, fertility, migration); key demographic</td>
<td>components (mortality, fertility, migration); key demographic indicators;</td>
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<td>indicators; balancing equation; population doubling time; review</td>
<td>balancing equation; population doubling time; review and use of the Population</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Sep 3</td>
<td><strong>The Demographic Transition.</strong> Analysis of the seminal review article</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>50(3): 361-387 (Assigned Paper or AP).</td>
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<td>Two student discussants</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Sep 10</td>
<td><strong>Population Projections.</strong> Projection methods; cohort component</td>
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<td>method; projections assumptions (normative, policy-oriented, or</td>
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<td>expert-based); assumptions variants; calculation of projections</td>
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<td>(including lifetables); projections results; use of population</td>
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<td>projections; policy implications of population projections; hands-on</td>
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<td>use of latest UN Population Division projections (2019 World Population</td>
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<td>Prospects).</td>
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<td>2020. “Population Policies”. In Y. Charbit (Ed.). Population and</td>
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<td>Development Issues [Forthcoming]. (AP). In addition, analysis of the</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Sep 24</td>
<td><strong>Sub-Saharan Africa’s Demography.</strong> Analysis of the chapter by J.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Two student discussants</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/seminar. Another major book will be J.F May. 2012. *World Population Policies: Their Origin, Evolution, and Impact*. New York, NY: Springer (GMU has an electronic copy at the Arlington Campus Library). 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 throughout the course/seminar (electronic and/or paper copies of this document will be distributed to students).

The required readings (to be done before the class) will provide critical data and basic information that will be referred to in class (about 30 to 40 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. Teaching will rely on formal presentations, 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.
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 additional readings:


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


Other readings that can contribute to the preparation of the two research essays will be available from Professor May, if needed.

PREPARATION OF RESEARCH ESSAYS

Each student will prepare two short research essays, which will count for 50% of the final grade. For each essay, one question or proposition will be assigned to students, who will need to develop and write arguments in order to justify their answer.

The research essays will be no longer than 2,500 words (approximately 5 pages). The use of tables and figures is encouraged when feasible. 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 used (again, references do not count against the word-count).

Please note that Wikipedia is not considered a reliable source of information. Instead, research essays should rely on academic (peer-reviewed) books and journal articles as well as official documents from Governments, international institutions, and/or NGOs.
The final Research Essays are due before midnight, on the days indicated in the Course/seminar Outline. Essays are 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 2,500 words maximum. Again, annexes and references do not count against the word-count.

KEY 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, 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 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/
- Vienna Institute of Demography: https://www.oeaw.ac.at/vid/home/
UNESCO: www.unesco.org

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 electronically student’s work 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.