GLOBAL POPULATION PROBLEMS 3653

Fall 2010

University of Utah

SOCIOLOGY -010

M 6-8:45pm

BEH Room 115

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Office hours: After class and by appointment

Course Description

Globalization is one of the most powerful processes confronting human societies and the global physical environment in the 21st century. Although not often discussed, the demographic fates of nations such as patterns of fertility decline, population aging, and cross-border migration are interconnected with their economic wellbeing and position on the world stage. For example, new waves of immigration, especially from Asia and Latin America, transform the cultural and racial-ethnic composition of US society. Strain on the natural environment looms as billion-plus populations of China and India grow more prosperous and begin to consume and pollute like “developed” nations. Many countries in Africa and elsewhere in the developing world face instability as AIDS decimates large segments of their working-age populations. A dramatic fertility decline is underway in much of Europe, threatening to destabilize pension and social security systems. What are the causes of these dramatic trends, what are the consequences, and can individuals and government policy do anything to address these issues? These are among the questions we will address in this course.

This course offers an introduction to the field of demography, or the scientific study of human populations. Using a demographic perspective, we will describe, measure, and address the implications of past and current trends in population growth and composition in developed and developing countries, and focus on the socio-economic determinants and consequences of these trends.

This course explores the social, psychological, and social structural impacts of historical, contemporary, and projected global population problems at regional, national, and local levels. Lectures first introduce you to basic demographic models of fertility, mortality, and migration, and then quickly move on to investigate specific demographic-related
problems in areas such as gender inequality, international migration, crime, public health, urbanization, poverty, and the human environment. There will be particular attention to some of the world’s most populated and otherwise most important countries, such as, Brazil, China, Japan, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Russia, and the United States. There will be specific attention to examining and comparing across major economic divisions, such as, countries in the developed versus developing world. Finally, similarities and comparisons will be made among and between world regions such as, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, East Asia and Eastern Europe.

Lastly, this class moves beyond mere theoretical notions of global population problems to explore personal activism. Our role as social actors on the stage in the midst of these phenomena must be determined. How are we impacted by these processes and how have others been impacted? If there are others who have been adversely affected, what is to be done? Mahatma Gandhi challenged, “Are we able to be the change [we] wish to see in the world?” This class explores our individual and societal opportunities to bring about change. We will have an opportunity to volunteer with the International Rescue Committee, a refugee resettlement organization in Utah as well as with the Food Co-op, serving local refugee communities.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

1) Identify and differentiate between the different demographic dimensions of the 21st century;
2) Build elementary quantitative skills that are essential for describing and analyzing features of population composition, distribution, and dynamics;
3) Critically evaluate competing perspectives of global population problems;
4) Apply competing perspectives and concepts of these phenomena to current events;
5) Participate in local solutions that seek to minimize adverse effects of global population problems.

Course Grading

1) Community Service/Response 30% 86 pts.
2) Midterm 35% 100 pts.
3) Second Midterm 35% 100 pts.

Class participation is crucial. You should come to class having completed the readings for the upcoming week and ready to discuss main concepts. The readings are engaging and yet intensive. Please don’t be discouraged by the complexity of
arguments. Be patient and always give yourselves adequate time to review the material. Always read with purpose; understand the main thesis and suggestions. Engage with the author’s premise and determine ways in which you agree and ways in which you disagree. Expect to read approximately 50 pgs/wk.

We will frequently engage in small group work. Verbal participation during discussion is encouraged for two reasons: a) you demonstrate a competency with material and b) you offer alternative perspectives based on your own experience to class members. Although I have chosen not to allocate specific percentage points to participation, your overall grade will heavily depend upon it—your success on both midterms requires consistent attendance and participation.

1) **Community Service/Response**

You are required to complete four hours of community service and write a three to five-page response. We use the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a refugee resettlement organization, as our main resource. During the semester, you will be expected to visit the IRC for one four-hour session where you may give new refugee arrivals a tour of the city, a visit to the library, a trip to a health appointment, file papers for the organization, furnish an apartment, or one of many other tasks. The first two weeks of class you will sign up for a volunteer slot. Attendance is mandatory; the IRC will be depending on you for assistance. If you need to change your date, you may change slots prior to the appointment. NO SHOWS WILL NOT BE GIVEN CREDIT FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.

The IRC is located downtown, across the street from the SL Main Library. The address is: 231 East 400 South □ Suite 50 □ Salt Lake City, UT 84111 □ Tel: (801) 328-1091

***For those of you with daytime scheduling conflicts, you may volunteer with the IRC special projects or the Food Co-Op, which offers monthly deliveries to local refugee communities.

**What should this response include?**

**Honesty.** Be frank about your experience—you will not be penalized if the service was less-than-life-changing nor will you be given an immediate ‘A’ for praising the experience. I want you to honestly assess the quality of the experience and provide sufficient reasons.

The framework should loosely be:

a) A few paragraphs describing the experience, including your personal insights about it (**micro level**);
b) 1-2 pages of organizational evaluation as a whole—this may require a very basic understanding of what IRC does and how refugee issues are handled in the U.S. in general (mezzo level);

c) Nearly two pages of contextualizing the International Rescue Committee and their work into the overarching questions we have discussed about global population problems in the 21st century (macro level).

This final section is where you synthesize the class discussions, reading materials, and your own personal thoughts of the larger questions of global population problems, e.g. immigration, fertility, war, crime, gender inequality, AIDS into a solid piece.

2) Midterm
The midterm will cover all reading assignments, class lectures, multi-media resources used in class, and small group discussion questions. There will be **8 essay questions and 4 short answers**.

3) Second Midterm
The second midterm will cover all reading assignments, class lectures, multi-media resources used in class, and small group discussion questions used the second half of the semester. **It is not comprehensive.** There will be **8 essay questions and 4 short answers**.

**Grading Scale**

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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Class Format

The course will be organized in two sections. The first will provide a broad overview of world demography as a discipline within social science. This will involve the study of basic theoretical orientations and population processes.

The second will focus on selected population challenges within and among countries. The course will explore, for instance, the association between population growth and the environment, the changing nature of families, the global impact of the AIDS epidemic, and the challenges related to rapid population aging. It will examine the changing nature of the family in America, the impact of the one-child policy in China, the potential for environmental degradation in India, and the challenges of below replacement fertility in Japan. You will examine each problem as well as current policies and potential solutions. You will be encouraged to develop a critical perspective on why these and other aspects of population trends become defined as ‘problems’, why analysts disagree on the extent or nature of the problems and what can be done.

Class time will be devoted to lectures, video programs and class discussions. Class discussions will revolve around a set of assigned readings and videos shown in class. Lecture material will include technical and conceptual issues related to the study of demography, such as measures used in demographic research and some of the more important theoretical arguments. Some lecture material will not be covered in readings, therefore class attendance is important.

Videos and the assigned reading will be used as the basis for class discussions, which will be interspersed throughout.

Course Topics

Week 1: Introduction to population
Week 2: Population theory, concepts, measures and trends
Week 3: NO CLASS
Week 4: Fertility
Week 5: Mortality
Week 6: Health, morbidity and longevity
Week 7: TEST WEEK for material covered during weeks 1 to 5
Week 8: Population and environment: development and poverty, sustainability and examining Kyoto
Week 9: Low fertility, unmet need, sex selection
Week 10: Population aging
Week 11: HIV/AIDS
Week 12: War, violence, terrorism and disaster
Week 13: Immigration and urbanization
Week 14: Prospects and policies for America
Week 15: TEST WEEK for material covered during weeks 8 to 14.

Readings

August 23
Week 1: Introduction to population
No readings

August 30
Week 2: Population theory, concepts, measures and trends

September 6—NO SCHOOL/LABOR DAY
Week 3

September 13
Week 4: Fertility

September 20
Week 5: Mortality

**September 27**

**Week 6: Health, morbidity and longevity**


**October 4**

**Week 7: Test week**

No readings.

**October 11-NO SCHOOL/FALL BREAK**

**October 18**

**Week 8: Population and environment: development and poverty, sustainability and examining Kyoto**

October 25

**Week 9: Fertility change, unmet need, sex selection**


November 1

**Week 10: Population aging**


November 8

**Week 11: HIV/AIDS**


November 15
Week 12: War, violence, terrorism and disaster


November 22

Week 13: Immigration and urbanization


November 29

Week 14: Prospects and policies for America


December 6

Week 15: Test week

No readings
**List of Video Programs**

Several films from this list will be shown during class:
1. Paul Ehrlich and the population bomb (1996: 60 mins)
2. China’s only child (1987: 55 mins)
3. The bomb under the world (1995: 52 mins)
4. Six billion and beyond (1999: 60 mins.)
5. The desired number (1995: 28 mins.)

**Additional Materials (Supplemental: Not needed for class)**


