Introduction to Demography  
SYD 5045  
Fall 2015  

Professor: Dr. Karin L. Brewster  
Email: karin.brewster@fsu.edu  
Office: 603a Bellamy  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30 to 3:00 or by appointment  
Phone: 644-7106  

Course Description and Objectives  
This course provides an introduction to substantive issues in demography. As a discipline, demography can be defined narrowly in terms of its analytic techniques, its concern with three variables—fertility, mortality, and migration—and the contribution of these variables to population composition and growth. Even a cursory perusal of the reading for this semester reveals that this narrow definition is insufficient to capture the range of issues addressed by contemporary demographers. This semester, we will consider both “classic” demographic concerns and contemporary issues, as well as trends in population growth and distribution. Course materials are drawn from multiple disciplines, including anthropology, sociology, and economics, and represent the variety of theoretical and policy perspectives that characterize the field.

By the semester’s end, you will be able to:  
• demonstrate, through class discussion and written assignments, familiarity with conceptual frameworks and important issues within the discipline of demography,
• explain how recent research has contributed to and sometimes challenged our understanding of the relationship between social structure and demographic behavior,
• describe global trends in fertility, mortality, and migration and the impact of government policies on these trends.

This course is recommended for—but not limited to—Sociology graduate students planning to take their area exam in Demography, and students in the Demography MS program. There are no course prerequisites.

Course Schedule  
Class meetings are scheduled for Thursday afternoons, from 1:15-4:15 in BEL 112.

Course Format  
This course is a seminar, the defining characteristics of which are discussion and the exchange of ideas by individuals who have read and thought about the topic at hand. Accordingly, class meetings will consist largely of discussion, with occasional (and limited) lecturing by the instructor.
Course Requirements

1. **Class attendance, preparation, and participation.** A seminar “works” only if all members are active, informed, and engaged, which means that you must do the readings, come to class, and take part in the conversation. Some guidelines:
   a. Your participation should be aimed toward a better group understanding of the materials and not towards showing that you know more or work harder than everyone else. **Think cooperation, not competition.**
   b. Monitor your participation relative to others. Engage with your peers; don’t dominate them and don’t let them render you voiceless.
   c. If you must miss a class, please contact me—in advance of class, if possible.

2. **Plan a class and lead the discussion:** During our first class meeting, you’ll be randomly assigned to a group and each group will be responsible for leading the class discussion two times (or more, depending on class size) during the semester. Each group will determine how to approach this task while providing (a) a comprehensive consideration of the assigned readings, and (b) an understanding of how the weeks’ readings are connected to each other and, if appropriate, other readings or issues discussed in prior classes.

3. **Weekly discussion questions:** For the weeks that you are not a discussion leader, you will compose at least two discussion questions based on the readings. These questions can be on two separate readings or on general issues that cross-cut the readings for the week. Post your questions on the course Discussion Board on BlackBoard no later than 4 PM on Tuesday, the day before the seminar (earlier is better!). Between 4 PM Tuesday and noon on Wednesday, read over your colleagues’ questions and add to or otherwise respond to at least two of them. You might also return to these questions after class to continue interesting discussions 😊

4. **Reaction papers:** For the weeks that you are a discussion leader, you write a reaction paper for an article selected from the readings your group is presenting. Papers will be 2-3 pages, double-spaced and 12-point font. You will hand in a hard copy after the pertinent class and a copy through Turnitin on the course website the night before class. Writing the essay will help you: (a) think through the conceptual and theoretical issues in the readings, and (b) guide the class discussion during your assigned week. Your essay should summarize—briefly—the authors’ key argument or hypothesis and supporting evidence or main findings, and “react” to the article. Questions to consider include:
   (a) Is the article a presentation of new research or an essay that attempts to summarize and integrate existing evidence? Does the article try to support an existing perspective in the literature or does it assert a new perspective on an on-going debate within the field? What are the main concepts?
(b) **If the reading is a research article:** what hypotheses are tested? What are the data and methods? Do you think these data and methods are appropriate? What are their strengths and limitations with respect to the researcher’s hypotheses?

What are the main findings of the research? Were you surprised by the findings? Do you think the data and methods influenced the findings of this research? What other data and methods might be better?

If the reading is an essay or review, what evidence does the author bring to bear on her/his argument? Does s/he consider counter-arguments or conflicting perspectives? Do you think the presented evidence is sufficient to the argument being made, or are important data/issues left unaddressed? Do you “buy” the authors’ conclusions? Why or why not?

(c) How does this work tie into other articles assigned for this week? Does its main finding or argument contradict or support the accompanying articles?

(d) Finally, what are the implications of this article for future theory and research? In other words, what existing questions remain unanswered and what new questions does this article raise?

5. **Research proposal:** You will write a 12-15 page course paper that addresses a topic or issue in demography, whether or not it is covered in the course. The paper is intended to help MSD students develop an idea for their Master’s research papers and doctoral students to further their research agendas. Research proposals consist of an introduction of the topic and your research question (1 page), a review of the relevant literature that clarifies the importance of your research question and its relevance to demography (8-11 pages), research hypotheses (no more than half of one page), and a brief description of an appropriate methodology, including identification of a likely data source (no more than 2 pages). If you have a project that you are already working on for another course or a thesis, you may write a paper that considers this work from a demographic perspective.

- **October 7:** Turn in at least one paragraph describing your topic and how it is relevant to the course along with a preliminary reference list. *Please see me by September 25th if you’re having trouble coming up with a topic.*
- **November 6:** Turn in an annotated bibliography for at least 15 articles and a paper outline.
- Turn in a hard copy of your paper on **Friday, December 4th by 4:00 PM** and submit an electronic copy through the Turnitin portal on BlackBoard.
- For **tutoring and writing help**, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services’ comprehensive list of tutoring options at [http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring](http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring) or contact [tutor@fsu.edu](mailto:tutor@fsu.edu). High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis.
Grades
Class attendance and participation: 10% of course grade. Evaluated weekly using a four-point scale:
- 0 (did not attend);
- 1 (attended, no scholarly participation); and
- 2 (attended and participated); and
- 3 (attended and demonstrated comprehensive understanding of readings).

Discussion questions: 10% of course grade. Evaluated using a four-point scale:
- 0 (did not submit questions);
- 1 (lack of depth or focus and/or failure to respond to peer postings);
- 2 (satisfactory attempt to engage material and/or failure to respond to peer postings);
- 3 (thoughtful and insightful posting).

Discussion leadership: 20% of course grade. Evaluated based on a three-point scale:
- 0 (did not attend);
- 2 (participation did not suggest good comprehension with materials and/or weak engagement with class members); and
- 4 (active engagement with class members and good comprehension of materials).

Critical essays: 20% of course grade. Evaluated using a four-point scale:
- 0 (missed essay);
- 1 (unfocused and/or underdeveloped and/or overly-lengthy essay);
- 3 (satisfactory attempt to engage material and its connection to other readings); and
- 4 (essay is particularly insightful and articulate).

Paper: 40% of course grade. The expectation is a thoughtful, well-written paper with a clear and logical argument, concise language, and no more than one or two grammatical errors or typos. Grades will be based on a letter scale, as follows: an A+ indicates work of near-professional quality, an A indicates excellent work, an A- indicates work that is better than average, a B+ or a B indicate work of average quality, and a B- indicates below-average work. Grades of C+ or lower indicate work that is substantially lacking in all respects.
**Student Responsibilities**
As graduate students, you are “professionals in training,” and the course policies are intended to reinforce this role. **Unprofessional behavior will impact your course grade adversely and may result in dismissal from the course.**

Students are expected to **attend all classes** and to **be prepared** for scholarly discussion. If you must miss class, please let me know before the class meeting if at all possible, either by phone or email. Missing more than two classes in a semester without an FSU-approved reason will adversely impact your grade.

**Do not be late for class.** Coming in late is disruptive and disrespectful of other class members. Persistent lateness also will have an adverse impact on your grade.

I expect all students to **treat class members in a courteous and considerate fashion**, with respect for alternative viewpoints and diverse backgrounds. Your participation should be related to the class and course material rather than reflective of personal beliefs or individual experience. While discussions may be lively or even heated, avoid using aggressive mannerisms, yelling, or shouting. Remember, scholarly discussion may entail follow-up questions and/or discussion about your comments or assertions; this is normal and expected and typically does not indicate personal dislike or animosity.

**Policy on Late Work**
Late work will be accepted **only** in extraordinary, unpreventable, and unforeseeable circumstances. Failure on your part to balance your obligations as a student in this (and other) courses, employee, graduate assistant, family member, or friend does not obligate me to accept late work.

**Assistance and Office Hours**
Please feel free to come by during my office hours to discuss any questions you may have regarding course materials or other course-related problems. If you can’t make it during my office hours, I’d be happy to work with you to find another time to meet. The quickest way to contact me is through e-mail (karin.brewster@fsu.edu), which I check (on weekdays) at least twice daily. During the work week, I typically respond within 24 hours.

**Academic Honor Policy**
The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm).

SYD 5045
Page 5
All work (discussion questions, papers) must be in accordance with the University Honor Code. Please read the Honor Code and make sure that you understand it. If you have any questions regarding the Code and how it specifically pertains to your work, please ask me.

**Plagiarism caution:** The Provost and legal counsel of Florida State University warn us that any uses of others' copyrighted materials without proper acknowledgement is unlawful and may lead to criminal prosecution. To this end, please be scrupulous in using the work of others by giving full and appropriate credit to the sources and materials that you use. Please use care when taking words and phrases from others.

As a general rule, if you use a string of three or more exact words from another source, you should place the words in quotes and cite the author, year and page number. Be a stickler about citing; cite more rather than less; cite early rather than late. Do NOT appropriate the concepts, phrases, or ideas of other people without giving them credit. If you do so, you risk losing your good name and getting into legal trouble. Any confirmed instance of plagiarism will result in an F grade for this course and will also be reported to the University Judicial Office for official adjudication.

**Americans With Disabilities Act**
Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (a) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center, and (2) bring paperwork from the SDRC to the instructor indicating the need for and nature of accommodation during the first week of classes. You can find information about the services available to FSU students with disabilities at http://disabilitycenter.fsu.edu.

**Syllabus Change Policy**
This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice. Changes will be announced in class and on the course web site.

**Scheduled Topics and Readings**

**26 August: Defining Demography**

*I will reference these articles during our first class meeting. They are not required but you may want to read them.*


2 September: Where we are now, demographically speaking, and how we got here
(Brewster leads)


START OF GROUP-LED DISCUSSIONS

9 September: Trends in Mortality and Morbidity
Group 1


16 September: Health inequalities and mortality differentials in the developed world
Group 2


23 September: Mortality in the developing world

*Group 3*


30 September: Fertility: perspectives and approaches

*Group 4*


7 October: Fertility transition in contemporary contexts

Group 1


14 October: SDA meetings—no class

21 October: Fertility in advanced industrial societies

Group 2


28 October: Families and households in high-income countries
Group 3


4 November: Families and households in low- and middle-income contexts
Group 4


11 November: NO CLASS – VETERANS DAY

18 November: Migration and the spatial (re)distribution of population
Group 1, 2


25 November: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

2 December: Immigration and Its Effects on Populations
Group 3, 4


