Course Description and Objectives
This course provides an introduction to demography and population studies. A quick google search will reveal many definitions of both demography and population studies as well as some disagreement about what each encompasses. Broadly speaking, however, most observers agree that demography is the study of human populations (size, spatial distribution, composition) and the processes through which populations change (fertility, mortality, migration), and population studies concern the causes and consequences of population change. In addition, demography is associated with statistical description and the mathematical techniques used to study population—an association which drives many students away from enrolling in courses like this one. As you’ll learn this semester, what demographers actually “do” extends well beyond what these definitions suggest and demographic research draws extensively from a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, economics, public health and sociology. Readings for this course are drawn from all of these disciplines and have been selected to emphasize the breadth of the field and the variety of theoretical and policy perspectives that characterize it.

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 and population studies,
- explain how recent research has contributed to and sometimes challenged our understanding of the relationship between social context and individuals’ demographic behaviors,
- 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 2:00 – 5:00 in BEL 519.
Course Format
This course is a seminar, the defining characteristics of which are discussion and the exchange of ideas by individuals who have read the assignments 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 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 10-12 page course paper that addresses a topic or issue in demography, whether or not it is covered in the course. Research proposals consist of an introduction of the topic and your research question (1-2 pages), a review of the relevant literature that clarifies the importance of your research question and its relevance to demography (6-8 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 (1-2 pages). This assignment is intended to help MSD students develop an idea for their Master’s research papers and doctoral students to further their research agendas.

• October 6: Submit a paragraph describing your topic and its relevance to the course, along with a preliminary reference list. Please see me by September 27th if you’re having trouble coming up with a topic.
• November 3: Submit an annotated bibliography for at least 15 articles and a paper outline.
• December 2: Submit your paper through the Turnitin portal on BlackBoard by 5:00 PM.
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:
- A to A+ Excellent work meeting the criteria above
- A- Very good work, but ideas could be more fully developed or writing improved.
- B to B+ Work of average quality with respect to clarity and quality of writing.
- C+ to B- Work falls short of the quality expected in a graduate course.

For writing help, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services’ comprehensive list of tutoring options at http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring or contact tutor@fsu.edu. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis.
**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](http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm)).
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](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**

1 September: Defining Demography

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


8 September: Where we are now, demographically speaking, and how we got here


15 September: Trends and patterns in life expectancy and mortality


22 September: Health inequalities and mortality differentials in high-income countries


**29 September: Morbidity and mortality in the developing world**


**6 October: Controlling fertility: what matters?**


**13 October: SDA meetings—no class**

**20 October: Fertility transition in contemporary contexts**


**27 October: Fertility in advanced industrial societies**


**3 November: Families and households in high-income countries**


**10 November: Families and households in low- and middle-income contexts**


**17 November: Migration and the spatial (re)distribution of population**


**24 November: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**1 December: Immigration and Its Effects on Populations**


8 December: Population Policies


