1 Objectives and logistics

This seminar is about mortality and health and their determinants. We will not focus too much on methodological issues. But some areas require to resolve non-rudimentary technical problems and we will need to develop the tools to solve them at the outset. This is what Sessions 1 and 2 are all about. The core of the seminar is the study of theories of mortality and health, their changes over time and variation across social groups and geographic areas. We will also study consequences of mortality and health changes both on demographic conditions and profiles (e.g. aging) and on social, economic and political institutions. The content of this seminar intentionally overemphasizes mortality and health among adults and the elderly, and focuses more closely on developed than on developing countries. We can adjust this as we move along by introducing extra readings and materials.

Although for the most part I will rely on lectures, every session will include a discussion of selected readings among those associated with a particular session (except for sessions 1 and 2). Each of you will be in charge of briefly presenting one or more (depending on theme) of the assigned readings and of moderating the discussion (exception for session No 1).

Grading will be based on a final research paper whose theme should be defined by the middle of November in agreement with Palloni. The paper should be focused on hypotheses testing using either micro or macro data. The central problem and plans of the paper are up to the student but should be cleared with instructor to ensure that (a) it falls squarely within the scope of the seminar and (b) paper is doable within the time limits of a semester’s worth of work. The following is an approximate timetable for the formulation and completion of paper:

- End of October: you should have discussed with instructor plans for paper
- Middle of November: you should have a preliminary plan for paper approved
- Last day of exams: you should deliver your paper.
- Note: Incompletes have a tendency to crawl and be postponed until final completion of work becomes an excruciating process. Avoid incompletes

READINGS

All readings will be available in the Social Science Reference Library (8th floor Social Science Bldg.) either on line (http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/name/social_science) or as material on reserve when PDF files are difficult or impossible to produce. Occasionally I will place on the web site my own

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1The number of this seminar should be 974. At least in the past this was the number specially assigned to Mortality and Health. Soc 971 is a more generic identification of a Seminar on Theories of Population (which includes but it is not confined to mortality)
notes to complement readings. The reading list for a seminar like this is extensive. To make things feasible I divided items into two categories, required (included in this document) and optional (included in the document syllabus-supplement in pdf form located in web site for course. This supplement will be updated periodically and I will alert you about each update. The entire list is quite populated and is meant to be an updated (as of September 2010) reference list. I do not expect you to read everything but you should at least study the items included in this document. The reading list is in ‘reading order’ and follows the order of presentation of subthemes. The subthemes are listed and identified by lower case letters. The readings are associated with subthemes by the lower case letters that precede the full citation. Some readings may appear in more than one section to allow for overlapping materials.

2 Themes, readings and course outline

2.1 Sessions No 1 and 2 (Sept 7th and 14th): Concepts and measures

- a. Overall review of seminar and organizational matters
- b. Brief review of what the study of health and mortality is all about
- c. Rates, integrated rates, standardization, single and multiple decrement life tables, life expectancies, decomposition of changes
- d. Modeling age patterns of mortality
- e. Measures of health status

READINGS

4. (c) Palloni, A Class Notes


### 2.2 Session No 3 (September 21st): Transitions

- (a) The past
- (b) Decline of mortality in Northern and Western Europe: 1210-2010
- (c) Health and Mortality in low income countries
- (d) A global view: the future

#### READINGS


### 2.3 Sessions No 4 and 5: Causes of historical changes (Sept 28th/Oct 5th)

- (a) Overview
- (b) Natural selection
- (b) Nutrition
- (c) Public Health, medicine and the state
- (d) Alternative paths
- (e) Evidence for developing countries
- (f) So, what do we know?

READINGS


2.4 Sessions No 6: Recent trends I (Oct 12th)

- (a) Mortality crises: past and present
- (b) Reversibility: the former Republics of the Soviet Union and HIV
- (c) Convergencies and divergencies: a summary of very recent trends

READINGS


2. (a) Livi-Bacci, M. A Concise History of World Population. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-2


2.5 Session No 7: Recent trends II (October 19th)

- (a) Compression and expansion: theory
- (b) Compression and expansion: evidence
- (c) Longevity: theory
- (d) Longevity: evidence
- (e) Generalizations

READINGS


### 2.6 Session No 8: consequences of mortality changes (October 26th)

- (a) Demographics effects: age and sex distribution
- (b) Demographic effects: kin distribution
- (c) Economic and social effects
- (d) Political and ideological

### READINGS


8. (c) Preston, S. 1980 Causes and consequences of mortality decline in less developed countries during the XXth Century" In R.A. Easterlin (ed.) *Population and Economic Change in Developing Countries*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.


2.7 Sessions No 9 and 10: the gaps (Nov 2nd and Nov 9th)

- by social classes (education, income, occupation)
- by race
- by gender

READINGS


2.8  Sessions No 11 and 12: the importance of the life cycle (Nov 16th and 23rd)

- The central argument
- Mechanisms
  - (a) via programming
  - (b) via disease connection
  - (c) via environments
  - (d) via selection

READINGS


2.9 Session No 13: genes, behavior, social rules and the evolution of mortality regimes

- (a) General theories
- (b) Mortality across species
- (c) Effects on gender and age patterns
- (d) Human mortality in perspective

READINGS

1. (a) Finch, C.E. THE BIOLOGY OF HUMAN LONGEVITY, 2007. Ch 1
2. (a) Strehler, B. L. and A. S. Mildvan 1960. General theory of mortality and aging. Science 132, 14-21

2.10 Session No 14: review of papers