Population Economics

Course Description

The course will examine the economic determinants of population change and demographic behavior including household formation, marriage, child bearing and rearing, mortality (and especially infant mortality) and key forms of human capital investment including schooling and migration. We will apply analytical tools of economics to investigate various economic and social consequences of population change. The consequences studied include the economic impact of immigrants on US workers, consumers, and taxpayers; population aging and the fiscal solvency of public pensions; consequences of below replacement fertility and the likely effect of government subsidies to stimulate fertility.

We start the course with a brief introduction of the history of population. We then consider theories and empirical evidence for the demographic transition, the transition from high–mortality and fertility to low–mortality and fertility. All developed countries have experienced the transition and almost all developing countries are currently at various stages of the transition. The transition reflects the movement from a traditional to modern economy and is thus associated with the Industrial Revolution. Robert Malthus wrote his Principles of Population at the beginning of the industrial revolution in England. We will consider his (equilibrium) model and investigate predictions of his framework on population dynamics. We use this perspective to consider the “Population Debate” that divides biologists and economists (among others). Other important policy issues we’ll discuss include the effect of population aging, and, time permitting, the relationship between population growth and the environment.

The course will emphasize a microeconomic approach, however, for some topics we will draw on tools from macroeconomics.

Prerequisites

Prerequisites for the course are: Economics 301 (Intermediate Microeconomics) and Economics 310 (Introduction to economic statistics or equivalent) or consent of the instructor.

Exams, Assignments, and Grading

Grades for undergraduate students will be based on 500 points, distributed as: 300 points for four short–writing assignments and two longer writing assignments (described on page 8), 100 points for an in–class midterm, and 100 points for a 75 minute final. The midterm will test on material covered since the the beginning of the course, while the final will test on material since the midterm. Graduate students will take the exams and write course paper (approximately 25 doubled–spaced pages).

Required Texts and Related Readings

There is no required textbook for the class. Reading material will be placed on the course web page or will be on reserve at the Somers Library (8th floor [lakeside] Social Science Building).

Office Hours

Monday 2:00 to 3:30 pm and by appointment.
Exam dates:

Midterm Exam: Thursday October 18, 2012 (in class)

Final Exam: Wednesday December 19, 2012 7:25 pm to 9:25 pm

Contact Information

e-mail: walker@ssc.wisc.edu

Course webpage: http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~walker/teaching/E623/

Economics Department Grievance Procedure

The Department of Economics has developed a grievance procedure through which you may register comments or complaints about a course, instructor, or a teaching assistant. The Department also uses course evaluations. If you wish to make anonymous complaints to an instructor or teaching assistant, the appropriate vehicle is the course evaluation. If you have a disagreement with an instructor or a teaching assistant, we strongly encourage you to resolve the dispute with him or her. The grievance procedure is for situations where neither the course evaluation nor direct contact is appropriate.

To file a grievance, you should go to Social Science 7238 and request a Course Content Sheet. On it you must provide a detailed statement about what you find unsatisfactory. You must also sign the sheet, provide your student ID number, an address and phone number. The Department investigates grievances fully and will respond in writing.

Your name, address, phone number and student ID will not be provided to the instructor or teaching assistant and will be treated confidentially. The Department uses this information in case the Department Chair or the chair’s nominee wishes to meet with the student to gather additional information. The written response is mailed to the address provided by the student.
### Anticipated Schedule

**Table 1: Anticipated Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>History of Population</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Theories of the Demographic Transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Population Aging and Population Decline</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Malthus and Population Debate</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Population and the Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Economics of the Family (Marriage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Economics of the Family (Division of Labor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Economic theories of fertility (Becker)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Economic theories of fertility (Easterlin)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Economic theories of fertility (Lifecycle)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Human Capital (Schooling)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Human Capital (Migration)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Health, Morbidity and Mortality (McKeown)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Health, Morbidity and Mortality (Fogel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Health, Morbidity and Mortality (Preston)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reading List

**Topic 1: Introduction and World Population Growth**


**Topic 2: Theories of the Demographic Transition**


**Topic 3: Population Aging and Consequences of Population Decline**


Topic 4: Malthus and the Population Debate


Topic 5: Population and the Environment


Topic 6: Economic Theories of the Family


**Topic 7: Economic Theories of Fertility**


**Topic 8: Human Capital: Schooling and Migration**


**Topic 9: Health, Morbidity, and Mortality**


Writing Assignments

Economics 623 is a writing-intensive course. During the semester you will submit five one-page papers and two longer papers (each 6 to 8 double-spaced pages). The writing assignments are designed to help you understand and analyze the course material. In the process, my hope is that you will improve your writing skills. A few great writers are endowed with writing skills that surpass what mere mortals (like us, me anyway) could ever develop. However, every undergraduate enrolled at UW with some guidance, requisite effort, and practice can become a clear and effective writer.

The first secret to good writing is good editing, which means revising. I do a brain dump on the first draft, restructure the document to form a coherent presentation/argument in the second draft and polish stylistic elements in the third draft. This means that I am the only reader of the first draft. Close friends and some family members may read the second draft while remaining family members and the general public may read the third (and subsequent) drafts.

In this course you will be given practice at revising and editing your writing. Indeed, you are expected to write thoughtfully and revise your work to make it concise and clear.

Writing Fellow Through funding provided by the College of Letters and Science and the Writing Center, we are fortunate to have a peer writing tutor, Emily Dean, a Writing Fellow (WF), assigned to this course. The WF will work with you individually outside the lecture times to help improve your writing. I have chosen to work with a WF because I believe in the program’s philosophy: “All writers, no matter how accomplished, can improve their writing by sharing works in progress and by making revisions based on constructive criticism.”

The Writing Fellow is:

- an undergraduate student who will read your writing and make constructive suggestions for revision;
- trained to critically evaluate writing and to make helpful comments
- supervised by me!

The Writing Fellow does not:

- grade your papers;
- teach you course specific content (think of division of labor: the WF has expertise in communication and rhetoric, my expertise is economics, and particularly population economics)

How it works The WF will work with you on two assignments, the “How Many is Too Many?” and the ‘US Immigration Policy” papers. In each case, you will submit a polished2 draft of your paper to me on the assigned due date. I will pass the drafts on to the WF. The WF will read and make comments on your draft. You will meet with the WF to discuss your draft and will offer

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1Some sections follow verbatim from Professor Caitlyn Allen’s Women’s Studies 530: Biology and Gender Syllabus, Fall 1998, Available online at mendota.english.ws.edu/~WAC/page.jsp?id=82&c_type=category&c_id=10.

2A polished draft represents your best effort on the assignment. It is typewritten (double-spaced) and follows standard bibliographic standards in economics (i.e., use of footnotes to document facts and ideas of others and contains a complete bibliography. It is of quality comparable to what you would turn in for grading. It is not an outline, a rough draft or a first draft. Remember to proofread to remove grammatical, usage, and spelling errors (automated spell-checkers are not perfect and sometimes insert the wrong word). This allows the WF to concentrate on rhetorical issues such as organization, presentation, and clarity.
suggestions for revision. After the conference with the WF will will revise your draft. On the assignment date, you will submit to me (1) the revised version of your paper; (2) the polished draft submitted to and reviewed by the WF; and (3) a cover letter with a brief statement on how you responded to teach of the WF’s comments.

You are required to meet with the WF on each of the two major writing assignments. The most valuable asset of a writer is a reader who critically reads your prose and offers constructive criticism.3

Due Date Policy: Short writing assignments are due at the start of class on the date assigned. Late assignments are not accepted for credit. Longer writing assignments involving the WF are due by 5:00 on the date assigned. WF papers submitted before a negotiated deadline are counted as “on time.” Otherwise, I will only accept posthumously submitted late WF papers. (Working to the deadline is part of the exercise. (It’s axiomatic that a better product can be produced with more time.) Moreover, late papers will upset the WF’s work schedule.

References: You must cite references for facts and ideas that are not your own. Anything less is plagiarism. (For example, CNN and Time suspended Fareed Zakaria last month after the media documented his plagiarism. He kept his job with Time Inc. because an internal review board ruled his plagiarism accidental.) You may cite class lectures as Econ623, date–of–lecture. Anything else should follow standard bibliographic format, such as the style used in the Reading List.

Table 2: Assignment Due Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Sept 13</td>
<td>1-page summary of “Carrying Capacity”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday Sept 27</td>
<td>1-page summary of “Demographic Transition”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday October 5</td>
<td>Polished draft of WF assignment 1: How Many is Too Many?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday October 11</td>
<td>1-page summary “Family Planning”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday October 26</td>
<td>Revised draft of WF assignment 1: How Many is Too Many?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday November 1</td>
<td>1-page summary of “Education is the best Contraceptive”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday November 9</td>
<td>Polished draft of WF assignment 2: US Immigration Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday November 15</td>
<td>1-page summary of “Preston–Fogel Debate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday December 7</td>
<td>Revised draft of WF assignment 2: US Immigration Policy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Five one–page summary papers. An important goal of the course is to teach to read economic literature critically. To help you take an active approach to these readings, you will write brief summaries of four readings listed below. The one–page summaries are due in class on the day the reading is assigned.

The summary should contain a concise summary of the research or concept described in the reading, followed by your critique. (A concise summary can be four or five sentences. Stay focused on major ideas; avoid copying the abstract.) Papers should be typewritten, one–page, double–spaced with one–inch margins.

The summary should answer:

1. What is the author(s) primary idea?
2. What methods and data were used to support or investigate the idea?
3. What results were obtained?

3 A friend is someone who corrects your errors in private.
4. How did the author(s) interpret the results?

The critique may consider one or two of the following questions (or others as appropriate):

1. Did the empirical evidence adequately investigate the conjecture?
2. Was the author(s) interpretation of the results appropriate?
3. Did the paper consider and evaluate alternative explanations for the results?
4. Were all relevant results or sources considered?

2. An six– to eight–page paper on “How Many is Too Many?”. (WF) In a carefully documented essay, critically assess the debate between economists and other scholars on the existence and level of a sustainable human population. What role does biological and economic theory play in the discussion? What empirical evidence do biologists and economists use to support their arguments? Is government intervention feasible and desirable to correct market forces? Cite sources supporting your view. Write this essay as a letter to the editor of The Atlantic. Thus, it must be understandable to an educated audience of non–economists. Your essay may work best if it makes one central point.

Due Date: A polished draft is due on Friday, October 5, 2012. The revised version of this paper is due on Friday October 26, 2012.

3. An six– to eight–page paper on US Immigration Policy. (WF) Immigration policy is the only population policy in the United States. It is possible that alternative views of US Immigration policy may appear during the national elections this fall. Indeed, as a “nation of immigrants” immigration policy elicits strong opinions from many quarters. Yet, the partisan discussion masks facts and thoughtful analysis. What is US Immigration Policy? What is the evidence on the magnitude of documented and undocumented (illegal) immigration flows into (and out of) the US? What’s the evidence on who is harmed by immigration and who benefits from immigration? Follow these steps to complete this assignment.

1. Write a one page summary of current US Immigration Policy as described previously.

2. In the remaining pages, use economic theory to develop a framework to evaluate costs and benefits of the current policy. Present empirical evidence on winners and losers from current policy. Based on this analysis recommend reforms to US policy. Write this essay as a policy brief to a US senator. The recommended policy must be feasible and credible. (Think creatively and broadly but the senator wants to be reelected.)

3. Attach copies of your research sources to your completed paper.

- Data base searching is thorough and once mastered a major timesaver, but it may take you some time to learn to use it efficiently. (Yes, use Google and Google Scholar but you are expected to use more than Google.)
- List your sources at the end of the paper using a standard bibliographic reference style. The paper should be about six to eight, typewritten doubled–spaces pages (with one–inch margins).
- Due date: A polished draft of this paper is due on Friday, Nov 9. The revised version of the paper is due on Friday, Dec 7, 2012.