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 these analytical tools 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.

After we have developed an understanding of the components of population change we will consider Malthusian theory of economic growth and population dynamics. As one empirical evaluation of Mathus’s theory, we will consider historical evidence of preindustrial Britain. As another, we will consider the impact of the industrial revolution on population dynamics in Western Europe and North America. Known as the demographic transition (as societies moved from high-mortality-high-fertility to low-mortality-low-fertility regimes), this development runs counter to the dismal predictions of Malthus. And as a third application, we will investigate how well the demographic transition predicts population dynamics among modern developing countries. At the end of the course we will consider consequences of population growth, and especially 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. Methodologically we will cover the basic analytical measures and tools of demography.

Prerequisites

The course is targeted to three sets of students (a) undergraduate economics majors, and (b) graduate students from outside of economics. (Graduate students in economics may take the course for graduate credit. Please see me in the first week of the semester to work out a plan of study.) Prerequisites for the course are: Economics 301 (Intermediate Microeconomics) and Economics 310 (Introduction to economic statistics) or consent of the instructor. Graduate students without intermediate economics but a strong background in demography may take the course but are responsible for filling any gaps in their economics training. Undergraduate and graduate students will be graded separately and independently of each other.

Exams, Assignments, and Grading

For undergraduate students grades will be determined short assignments spread through out the semester (100 points), two in-class midterm exams (200 points), and a two-hour final exam (200 points). In addition to the assignments and exams taken by the undergraduates, graduate students will write a semester research paper (500 points). The midterm exams will test on the material covered since the previous exam. The final will be a comprehensive exam of the material covered in the course. There will be no make-up midterm exams. Missed midterm exams will increase accordingly the weight assigned to the final exam. The final exam must be taken.
The short assignments are an integral part of the course and will be problem sets or short writing assignments connected to the required reading for the class. Assignments will be either one or two weeks in duration depending on the subject matter. **LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR CREDIT.**

The semester research paper is an opportunity for graduate and honor students to take an in-depth review of some aspect of the economics of population. To encourage early work on the paper, a one page proposal for the paper is due 14 February 2012. We will meet in the last two weeks of February to review the proposal. A two to three page progress report will be due toward the middle of the semester. The final draft will be due in several weeks before the end of the semester so that needed revisions can be made.

**Required Texts and Related Readings**

There is no required textbook for the class. Reading material will be placed on the course web page and/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 1: Tuesday February 28, 2012**

**Midterm 2: Thursday April 12, 2012**

**Final Exam: Thursday May 17, 2012, 5:05 PM TO 7:05 PM.**

**Contact Information**

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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.
Reading List

Topic 0: Reference materials


Topic 1: Introduction and World Population Growth


Topic 2: Health, Morbidity, and Mortality


**Topic 3: Fertility**


**Topic 4: Human Capital and Schooling**


**Topic 5: Human Capital and Migration/Immigration**


**Topic 6: Household Formation, Marriage, Divorce**


**Topic 7: Theories of the Demographic Transition**


**Topic 8: Population Debate**


**Topic 9: Aging and Consequences of Population Decline**


**Topic 10: Population and Environment**


