

## SOC 106 Demography

*Then God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth." Genesis 9:1. (New International Version)*

*"Therefore people are more and wealth is less; they work hard and receive little." – Han Fei-Tzu. Approximately 500 B.C., China.*

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### **Course description:**

In 1798 British scholar Thomas Malthus published an essay on the principle of population and thus started the beginning of a scientific attempt to understand the interaction between population and society. What intrigued Malthus two hundred years ago still puzzles us today, namely what human factors influence three basic demographic dynamics: fertility, mortality, and migration. Thanks to the contribution of numerous scholars after Malthus and the advancement of technology, today we know a little more than Malthus and his contemporaries did, but there are many issues that we still do not have answers for. This is a class in which we will discuss what we know about demography and speculate about what we do not know.

This is a course for graduate students and advanced undergraduate students. Although the instructor will lecture on occasion, the main style of teaching will be class discussion. Course topics and readings are listed in the end of this syllabus. Readings are the most important feature of this course, and should be done in advance of class. The course readings offer an overview of major theoretical approaches to the relationship between population and society, as well as examples of recent attempt to resolve the tension.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Understand the interaction between various social and cultural forces and the three fundamental demographic variables: fertility, mortality, and migration.
2. Evaluate different contrasting theories and hypotheses in demography: Malthusian, Marxist, Neo-Marxist, the Human-carrying-capacity hypotheses.
3. Develop an interesting and important research question concerning how various demographic phenomena interact with different social forces.
4. Design a research proposal that documents how a research question might be addressed.

- Analyze the rigor and evaluate the implications of research by prominent scholars in demography.

**Texts:**

- Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*, Sixth Edition, 1998, by John R. Weeks. San Francisco: Wadsworth.
- Beyond the Numbers*, 1994, edited by Laurie Ann Mazur. Washington D.C.: Island Press.

4. Library reserved readers:

- A New Look at Poverty in America* by William P. O'Hare, 1996. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.
- Americans on the Move* by Patricia Gober, 1993. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.
- America's Minorities: The Demographics of Diversity* by William P. O'Hare, 1992. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.
- Gender, Power, and Population Change* by Nancy Riley, 1997. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.
- Immigration to the United States: Journey to an Uncertain Destination* by Philip Martin and Elizabeth Midgley, 1994. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.
- Older Americans in the 1990s and Beyond* by Judith Treas, 1995. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.
- The Future of World Population* by Wolfgang Lutz, 1994. Washington D.C.: Population Reference Bureau.

**Course requirement for undergraduate students:**

Undergraduate students' grades will be based upon exams (60%), attendance/participation records (10%), and a term paper (30%).

Exams:

There will be a midterm (30%) and a non-cumulative final (30%) exam for this course. All question items will be multiple choice. The exams will cover reading materials from both textbooks and supplemental readings handed out in class. No make-up exams are allowed unless a documented medical emergency prevents a student from taking the scheduled exams. If such an unfortunate case occurs, students are responsible for contacting the instructor to schedule the make-up exam, which may include extra materials.

Attendance/Participation:

There will be various types of classroom activities designed to facilitate students' critical thinking abilities; therefore, active participation and regular class attendance are necessary for a satisfactory class performance. Students will be evaluated by their degree of participation and attendance records throughout the semester.

Paper:

A 1500-word paper is required for this course. Students are encouraged to discuss and explore possible topics with the instructor as early as possible. All topics have to deal with subject matter covered in the course. The paper should focus on the research findings involving the chosen topic. The paper should not become an opinion essay where a certain unexamined position is advocated. To complete the term paper, students need to submit two topic proposals in the early part of the semester. The instructor will evaluate the feasibility of each topic and make subsequent recommendations. Each proposal needs to spell out the specific topic and include a 50-word description on the content of the paper. At least five academic references, which can be books or research journals, are required for the final paper. Textbooks for this course cannot be counted as references.

**Reading Schedule:**

Week 1: Introduction and An Overview of the World's Population (Weeks Chap. 1 & 2; Cohen Chap. 1)

Week 2: Demographic Perspectives (Weeks Chap. 3; Cohen Chap. 2)

Week 3: Fertility: Concepts and Measurement (Weeks Chap 4; Easterlin Chap. 1 & 2)

Week 4: Fertility Trends, Levels, and Explanations (Weeks Chap 5; Easterlin Chap. 3, Riley)

Week 5: Mortality (Weeks Chap. 6; O'Hare et al.)

Week 6: Migration (Weeks Chap. 7; Martin/Midgley; Gober)

Week 7: Age and Sex Structure (Weeks Chap. 8; Easterlin Chap 4 & 5)

Week 8: Population Characteristics and Life Chances (Weeks Chap. 9; Easterlin Chap. 6; O'Hare)

Week 9: Population Growth and Household Structure (Weeks Chap. 10; Cohen Chap. 3)

Week 10: Population Growth and Aging (Weeks Chap. 11; Cohen Chap. 4; Easterlin Chap. 7; Treas)

Week 11: Population Growth and Urbanization (Weeks Chap. 12; Cohen Chap. 5)

Week 12: .Population Growth and Economic Development (Weeks Chap. 13; Cohen Chap. 6)

Week 13: Population Growth, Food, and the Environment (Weeks Chap. 14; Cohen Chap. 7; Lutz)

Week 14: Population Policy (Weeks Chap. 15; Cohen Chap. 8; Easterlin Chap. 8)

Week 15: Conclusion (Weeks Chap. 16)