Global Population Futures

Anthropology 4811 /Geography and the Environment 4911 2025

Monday/Wednesday 8:30 to 10:00 am via zoom

The Zoom link is on the right side of the course website landing page (the page where the announcements are located)

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Our topic is a very timely and exciting issue – The human population has recently passed 8 billion people, but most developed countries have reproduction rates far below replacement levels. This means that over the course of the next few decades we will see peak population and then a fairly rapid decline. We will discuss how that came about, what the populations projections look like, which projections are more likely to be accurate and why, and what our potential futures are as a species over the next century, not just our numbers, but what our lives will be like. Our focus is more on human culture and societies rather than numerical techniques. The course draws from Anthropology and Geography themes.

How this course works:

This is a fourth-year course designed to begin your transition to post-graduate work environments or graduate school. So…. **no exams!!!!** Instead, you will complete projects to demonstrate your learning and you are expected to discuss course material during class to practice formulating your ideas and expressing them.

Students are expected to attend zoom classes **with their cameras on** and be prepared to participate in discussions. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to speak or to throw thoughts into the chat during lectures and discussions. Marks will be assigned for participation. If you are shy or anxious, talk/email the professor or GA to discuss how you can develop your discussion skills over the semester. This is an important skill that supports your learning and professional development and allows the rest of us to learn from you. – your ideas are just as important as anyone else's!

Read the course schedule well in advance of the class. There is also a column labelled 'Activities' on the schedule that contains a summary of homework and other items that may be due. The homework is posted on the web site in a homework folder within each of the 4 course sections. Be sure to complete

the activities to prepare for the next class. We will be using a mix of media to support your learning including websites, videos, podcasts, and academic texts. As part of the course, please reflect on how these media communicate messages and how they may be constrained or biased in that communication. Also pay attention to these media as you must pick one to use for the final project.

Course Learning outcomes:

- Students will engage with common methods for displaying demographic information.
- Students will explore demographic differences between countries and regions and examine why these differences exist.
- Students will assess trends in the drivers of population – urban migration, education of women, and social or cultural factors.
- Students will reflect on the Social Contract- Why do we live in societies? What makes a good life?
- Students will recognize themselves as Social Agents – they should develop the ability to recognize that they live in a particular society and culture that differs from others, and critically evaluate options in decision-making related to demographics at the individual and societal level.

<h2 style="text-align:center">Class Schedule</h2>

Date	Topic	Activities to complete after class (found in homework folder for each section)
Mon Jan 6th 1	Section 1: Building a basic scaffold of demographic knowledge Introduction to Demographics and History of Human Population Drivers of Population size: Births, Deaths and Migration	Short videos and questions on population pyramids and the population record of 8 billion
Wed Jan 8 2	History of the Study of Demographics Demographic Change to 20th C the Survival Paradigm	UN summary and longer report **Students sign up for a country/area case study for Project 1**
Mon Jan 13 3	20th Century: Growth Paradigm Overpopulation concerns Demographic Transition	Strassman and Clark, Ireland case study **Group meeting for project 1**
Wed Jan 15 4	Canadian Case Study	Pod Cast: If Books Could Kill – The Population Bomb
Mon Jan 20 5	Section conclusion: Class discussion: Is it a good question to ask "How many people is too many?"	**Submit 1.1 to the assignments folder by midnight**
Wed Jan 22 6	Section 2: Adding more tools and examples to your intellectual scaffold. CBR and Creating Infographics	Phinney - Vietnam case study– compare to Ireland -as two cultural ways to modify birth rates
Mon Jan 27 7	Meetings for Infographic project – decide on colour scheme and other common elements, discuss workload for regional overview	
Wed Jan 29		World Population Prospects Ch 3

8	No meeting – complete media assignment in homework folder	
Mon Feb 3 9	Sex Ratio at Birth and Infant Mortality: Case Study of China's Attempts to Decrease Fertility	Reflections on China's demographic issues and critical assessment of the West's response **Submit 3 ideas for your term paper project (Projects 2.1 and 2.2) to the assignment folder by midnight**
Wed Feb 5 10	Case Studies of Government Attempts to Increase Fertility: Romania	
Mon Feb 10 11	Scenario Planning	**Submit infographic and regional write up to discussions folder by midnight**
Wed Feb 12 12	Section 3: Drivers of Declining Fertility	
Feb 17-21 READING WEEK		
Mon Feb 24 13	Education	Education in Africa
Wed Feb 26 14	Urbanization	**Submit Project 1.4, Your Country 2050 to Assignment Folder by midnight**
Mon March 3 15	Section 4 Decline Paradigm and current issues	**Submit project 1.3 your reflections on how it was viewed by the class** Dowsley and Southcott 2018 + video
Wed Mar 5 Drop date is March 7th 16	Second Demographic Transition	**Submit term paper outline to Assignments Folder**
Mon Mar 10 17	TBA	
Wed Mar 12 18	Current Issues	
Mon Mar 17 19	TBA	
Wed Mar 19 20	Conclusions	
Mon Mar 24 21	Media Presentations	**Submit term paper by midnight to Assignments Folder**
Wed Mar 26 22	Media Presentations	
Mon March 31 23	Media Presentations	
Wed Apr 2 24	Media Presentations	

Project 1.1: Country Write-up   15%

Project 1.2: Your Infographic   10%

Project 1.3: Your reflection on class feedback   5%

Project 1.4: Your Country, 2050 Written Assignment 15%

Project 2.1: Term Project Paper   25%

Project 2.2 Media Presentation of Term Project   10%

Web Site Posts   5%

Participation in Class   15%

Assignment Information

Project 1: Infographic and Regional Overview

- Students will be divided into 7 regional groups, with each student focusing on one country/state case study
  1. Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria, South Africa, Madagascar, countries from East and West Africa),
  2. North Africa and the Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Tunisia/Libya)
  3. Europe (Russia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Germany, one of Scandinavian countries)
  4. India (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar)
  5. Continental Asia (China, Korea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Thailand, Laos/Vietnam/Cambodia)
  6. Asian island states (Japan, Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Australia/New Zealand, Sri Lanka, Singapore)
  7. South America and the Caribbean (Brazil, Cuba, Uruguay, Bolivia)

- Each group member will select a country/area in their assigned region in consultation with their group. Be sure the group covers the major countries in terms of largest population as well as few countries with interesting demographic situations

Project 1.1

- Each group member will individually submit a write-up to the Assignments page, a 5 page double-spaced paper explaining the demographic situation of their country/area. This should include: population pyramid, graph of fertility rate through time, life expectancy, education levels, any gender disparities, immigration, and other pieces of information important to your country/area – such as does it have a high infant mortality rate? Incorporate graphics, but each one must not take up more than ½ a page. The write up should cite all references which should be at least 5 academic references, plus institutional web sites like the UN, government, NGOs.

Project 1.2

- Each group member will prepare an infographic telling the demographic story of their country, (To construct the infographic, there are free software available to help you including Canva)
- Group must achieve stylistic unity amongst the infographics (use similar colour palette, style, font and size) but each infographic should be designed specifically to best illustrate its country's situation
- Group must write a regional overview (4 pages double spaced) to provide a general introduction and any apparent themes for their region. This should be presented as a UN style report for public viewing -not just a word doc. Make it interesting – summary in bullet points, add colour or graphics summarizing the region. Save as a PDF
- The group regional overview and the infographics will be posted to the Discussion page of the web site
- Each student in the class will review all the infographics on the website and provide comments for 3 of them. You must also comment on one regional over view. These comments should be constructive and thoughtful – at least 3 sentences including one suggestion to make the presentation of the information stronger. Please really engage with the infographics and read the regional overviews.

Project 1.3 Your Reflection on your Infographic

- Students will then individually prepare a reflection on their own infographic. Discuss your individual choices for the infographic (3 pages) and a reflection on how it was received (1-2 pages). In the reflection discuss how the draft was changed after group feedback, how the class audience received the infographic vs the message you wanted to send via their comments on the discussion page, and a reflection on that information.

Project 1.4 Your Country, 2050

- This written assignment is what you predict for the demographics of **your country** in the next few decades. Consider key factors effecting population size and change: female education, urbanization/internal migration and specific cultural and political factors (including population policies), immigration/emigration
- Example things to cover:
    - What will be the major cities? What will be the main economic drivers of different parts of the country?
    - Produce a population pyramid for 2050. Compare to current pyramid. Explain reasons for differences
    - Produce a graphic to illustrate internal movements or immigration effects on different parts or cities of your country and explain them
    - Provide a section on the state of the country (economics, health, quality of life, environment) ex. economics – what will be the major industries? What will be the state of their natural resources and infrastructure (including water, agriculture, renewable and non-renewable resources), manufacturing (production of goods) and service industries (including education, health and tourism)?

- Provide 5-7 formal academic references for the material on your country and cite the infographic or regional overview for material on comparators. Additional references can be web sites, pod casts or other information
- At least 2 illustrations in addition to the population pyramid– figures, charts, maps etc. (be sure to cite these if you don't make them yourself)
- 1000 words. References and figures are in addition to the 1000-word limit – the style guide for referencing is available in the contents tab with the syllabus.

Project 2.1 Individual Term Paper – Theme is Population Futures

- The goal of this assignment is to develop a reasoned idea of what the future holds for a particular **demographic topic** in 2050
- Critically examine the topic: assess its current state, provide examples or case studies of the topic and the outcomes of them (30% of space). Provide a reasoned argument for what will happen with your topic by 2050 (70% of space).
- Step 1: Explore the resources on the class web site and on the internet in general to help you find something of interest
- Step 2: Submit a list of 3 topics with 2 academic references each. Provide a short paragraph for each of the three (3-6 sentences for each topic) explaining your interest and how you might proceed.
- Step 3: Consult with teaching team and decide on your topic.
- Step 4: Submit an outline on your chosen topic (include subtopics and points for each paragraph) using at least 6 academic references. It can be arranged as point form notes under each subheading/paragraph topic.
- Step 5: Submit final paper -should be 1500 words with 7-10 academic references and other references as appropriate.
- Step 6 is the next assignment (Project 2.2)– the media presentation – see below

Example Term Project Topics

- Select one category of how to deal with a declining population: pronatalist policies, immigration, automation, or some other? And explore the various examples of it and what the outcomes have been. Assess the usefulness and caveats of the action and project how useful that action will be in 2050 for select countries (Canada- immigration, Japan – automation) or if you determine that policy is a poor choice, what will they have to supplement that action with? (Japan accepting immigrants from ….? Canada – a baby boom?)
- Ways that older people are staying in the economy, or contributing to child rearing (use case studies where that is happening and new ideas for how older people might contribute -then project into the future how this ideas might develop
- Development challenges that affect the demographic transition of a certain country or region: health, sanitation, education, governance, economics (ex. desertification, climate change, wars?)

- Effects of changing demographics on economics, internal migration, ethnic groups, conservation of natural resources – what are the different generations (Boomers, X,Y, Milleniums), what is their size and how do those affect your chosen topic? – more information on this from USA, so might need to focus on just USA or maybe Canada
- Differences in ethnic demographics - For example, you could select one ethnic group in a multi-ethnic country and examine how their demographic history compares to the rest of the country (White Americans are sometimes concerned about Hispanic or black 'overfertilty'-as are many Europeans or other areas with high immigration. But to what degree is immigrant or minority high fertility even true? What might the future be? Or you could examine ethnic groups more broadly – what trends do we see among immigrant and minority communities compared to the wider society? Or even: Why does one ethnic group have a persistently high or low birth rate regardless of where they live?

- Declining fertility in men (sperm counts have declined by 50% since 1970s) – will population fall further as a result of this?
- Shrinking countries where people are emigrating or being relocated due to declining population (what will Korea or Eastern Europe look like in 2050?)
- Imagine a new world park resulting from the depopulation of a region. Where would it be? Consider all the parameters of creating such a park and explore why this site is the most likely and what would be done to make it into a park or protected area
- A war that has broken out due to demographic issues – what are they, where, why?

- Assisted Dying or reduced care for the elderly. What are the ethical, financial and cultural questions and issues around this topic? When does it become statistically significant that we are intentionally lowering our life expectancy? (esp Canada, UK, Netherlands)

- Loneliness is becoming the most common disease in aging countries– how are different societies dealing with it? Where is it at the lowest rate? Why? What lessons can we learn from them? How can we plan for a future with more elderly people?
- A hypothetical Baby boom – What is causing it? Where is it? -Covid caused reduced births in many countries, but some, including some Nordic Countries like Iceland experienced a baby boom.

- Nigeria becomes the largest country by population – What is going on there in 2050?
- Looming cultural or national extinction – what is a group doing to preserve some legacy of themselves?

Project 2.2 Media Presentation

Present a 10-minute media report on your term paper topic. Imagine it is 2050 and you are presenting this topic to a general audience. You can pick your medium – for example: a news report, a pod cast, a video blog, a documentary…
Your presentation should be engaging and informative. Visuals are strongly encouraged. You can have actors to play invited guests on your pod cast or video, you can create animations etc.

- 50% for creativity
- 50% for content