



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 9331
Demographic Analysis and Social Change
Winter 2026
Tuesdays, 1.30 – 4.30
DRAFT OUTLINE

Professor: Anders Holm

Office Hours: Per appointment
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Enrollment Restrictions

Enrollment in this course is restricted to graduate students in sociology, as well as any student that has obtained special permission to enroll in this course from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Course Description

This course approaches social demography through the lens of causal inference and applied policy evaluation, focusing on how population processes shape—and are shaped by—social and economic interventions. Core demographic domains such as fertility, mortality, migration, marriage, and inequality are examined using empirical strategies that emphasize identification, counterfactual reasoning, and the interpretation of demographic change over time and across populations. Students will critically assess demographic evidence used in policy debates, evaluate the strengths and limitations of observational designs, and learn how demographic measures and comparisons can be leveraged to support credible causal claims. Through readings, assignments, a midterm exam, and an original research paper, the course develops students' ability to connect demographic analysis to real-world policy questions in a methodologically disciplined way.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to critically evaluate demographic research with particular attention to causal identification, measurement, and empirical assumptions. Students will develop the ability to assess how demographic indicators, such as fertility rates, mortality measures, migration flows, and inequality gradients, are constructed and used to support substantive claims about social change. Emphasis is placed on understanding the limits of descriptive demographic analysis and on distinguishing between association, selection, and causal interpretation in population research.

Students will also acquire the skills needed to apply demographic reasoning to applied policy evaluation. They will learn to analyze how policies and institutional changes affect population processes over time and across groups, and to evaluate demographic evidence commonly used in policy debates. Through engagement with empirical studies, students will gain experience assessing the credibility of observational research designs, interpreting demographic trends in light of counterfactual reasoning, and

translating demographic findings into policy-relevant insights while remaining attentive to uncertainty and methodological constraints.

Finally, students will strengthen their capacity to communicate demographic analysis clearly and effectively in both written and oral formats. Through written assignments, presentations, and an original research paper, students will demonstrate the ability to formulate research questions, synthesize theoretical and empirical literature, and present evidence-based arguments grounded in demographic data. The course aims to prepare students to engage in scholarly debate, contribute to interdisciplinary research and policy discussions, and pursue advanced research or applied work that relies on rigorous demographic and causal analysis.

Course Material(s)

Articles:

Borjas, Georg J. (1994) The Economics of Immigration, *Journal of Economic Literature*, 32: 1667-1717.

Card, David (2009) *Immigration and Inequality*, NBER working paper series, 14683.

Cherlin, Andrew J. (2004) The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage, *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66: 848-861.

Chetty, RAJ, Nathaniel Hendren. Partick Kline, Emmanuel Saez and Nicholas Turner (2014) Is the United States Still a Land of Opportunity? Recent Trends in Intergenerational Mobility. *American Economic Review: Papers and Proceedings*, 104(5): 141-147.

Cutler, David, Angus Deaton and Adriana Lleras-Mune (2006) The Determinants of Mortality. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 20(3): 97–120.

Prados de la Escosura, Leandro (2023) Health, income, and the preston curve: A long view. *Economics and Human Biology*, 48.

Lee, Everett S. (1966) A theory of Migration, *Demography*, 3(1): 47-57.

Lesthaeghe, Ron (2014) The second demographic transition: A concise overview of its development, *PNAS*, 111(51): 18112-18115.

Mare, D. Rob (1981) Change and Stability in Educational Stratification, *American Sociological Review*, 46(1): 72-97.

Massey Douglas S., Joaquín Arango, Graeme Hugo, Ali Kouaouci, Adela Pellegrino and J. Edward Taylor (1993) Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3): 431-466.

McDonald, Peter (2000) Gender Equity in Theories of Fertility Transition, *Population and development Review*, 26(3), 427-439.

Preston, Samuel H. (1975) The Changing Relation between Mortality and Level of Economic Development. *Population Studies*, 29(2): 231-248

Other resources:

Trovato, Frank. 2015. Canada's Population in a Global Context: An Introduction to Social Demography. 2nd Edition. Oxford University Press Canada.

<http://papp.iussp.org/> for methods. This is an excellent free online resource from IUSSP we will use occasionally; you may find it helpful to browse to review select material for extra practice

Palmore, J. A., & Gardner, R. W. (1994). Measuring mortality, fertility, and natural increase: A self-teaching guide to elementary measures. Honolulu: East-West Center. Elementary but very useful as a review or introduction to basic concepts. Pdf available free at

<https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/1c756d7c-0a2c-4ae9-aff3-c18de8657ada/content>

Methods of Evaluation

Evaluation is made up of three online on page assignments (using the online software Kritik – kritik.ca), attendance and involvement in class, demonstrated through asking questions and discussing the material presented. There is also a midterm exam with a small number of short answer questions. This exam is written in class (Feb. 24th). There are student presentations of a chosen topic (March 10th through March 24th). The topic may be chosen by the student or assigned by the instructor as the students may wish. The topic may be aligned with work the student is doing on other projects and courses. The presentation should then be turned into final paper, due April 14th.

Evaluation Breakdown

Three Kritik assignments (each 5 %): 15 %

Attendance and involvement: 15 %

Midterm: 20 %

Presentation: 25 %

Final paper: 25 %

Course Schedule and Readings

Date	Topic	Reading	Deadlines
Jan. 6 th	Introduction	POPULATION BULLETIN, VOL. 75, NO. 1 • 2021	
Jan 13 th	Fertility	McDonald, Trovato chp. 6	
Jan 20 th	Marriage	Cherlin, Lesthaeghe, Trovato chp. 5	1 st Kritik assignment
Jan 27 th	Migration I	Lee, Massey et al., Trovato chp. 8-9	
Feb. 3 rd	Migration II	Borjas, Card	

Feb. 10 th	Mortality	Cutler et al, Prados, Preston, Trovato chp. 7	2 nd Kritik assignment
Feb. 17 th	Reading Week	-	-
Feb. 24 th	Midterm exam	-	-
March 3 rd	Inequality, stratification and demography	Chetty et al., Mare	3 rd Kritik assignment
March 10 th	Presentations		
March 17 th	Presentations		
March 24 th	Presentations		
April 14 th	-		Final paper due

Important Policies

Policies for Assignment Deadlines

Insert here if applicable.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Completion of Course Requirements

Course requirements must be completed by the end of the term in which the course is offered (Fall-December 31; Winter-April 30, Summer-August 31). Only in exceptional circumstances may a student take additional time to complete the course requirements. In such a case, the student must first meet with the Graduate Chair to request permission to carry the incomplete. Medical documentation, where required, will be kept on file in the Sociology graduate program office. More details regarding incompletes are outlined in the Graduate Handbook:

http://www.sociology.uwo.ca/graduate_handbook/course_information.html

Standards of Professional Behaviour

It is the responsibility of all members of the Department of Sociology to adhere to and promote standards of professional behaviour that support an effective learning environment. These include:

- **respect for others** both in and out of the classroom through words and actions (be professional, fair, and respectful in interactions with people on-line and in-person; understand and respect differences among classmates and colleagues; avoid disrupting the learning environment; respect others' expectations of confidentiality and privacy)
- **active engagement in learning** and commitment to quality (being prepared for classes; participating and listening actively to other; using technology and social media appropriately, striving to do your best)
- **personal integrity** (following through on commitments; doing own work)

Students should also be aware of the **UWO Student Code of Conduct** found at <https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Health/Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence:

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Textbook and Other Learning Materials