Social demography

Given by Juho Härkönen

Register online

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This course deals with some current debates and research topics in social demography. Social demography deals with questions of population composition and change and how they interact with sociological variables at the individual and contextual levels. Social demography also uses demographic approaches and methods to make sense of social, economic, and political phenomena.

The course is structured into two parts. Part I provides an introduction to some current debates, with the purpose of laying a common background to Part II, in which these topics are deepened by individual presentations of more specific questions.

In Part I, read all the texts assigned to the core readings, plus one from the additional readings. Brief response papers (about 1 page) should identify the core question/debate addressed in the readings and the summarize evidence for/against core arguments. The response papers are due at 17:00 the day before class (on Brightspace). Similarly, the classroom discussions should focus on these topics. The purpose of the additional reading is to offer further insights into the core debate, often through an empirical study. You should bring this insight to the classroom.

Part II consists of individual papers (7-10 pages) and their presentations. You will be asked to design a study related to a current debate in social demography. This can expand and deepen upon the topics discussed in Part I, or you can alternatively choose another debate that was not addressed. Your paper and presentation can—but does not have to—be something that you will yourself study in the future (but it cannot be something that you are already doing). This can offer a chance to develop you ideas; the focus should be on identifying a current debate or research topic, review relevant literature, and ask an empirical question that will contribute to the debate. I will be available for discussing these papers and presentations. Other seminar participants are expected to read the papers, and a discussant will be assigned for each presentation.
**Schedule**

**Part I**

Monday, 13 January, 11:00-13:00, Seminar room 3  
**Introduction**

Friday, 17 January, 11:00-13:00, Seminar room 3  
**Framing questions**

Thursday, 23 January, 11:00-13:00, Seminar room 1  
**Health and mortality**

Wednesday, 29 January, 15:00-17:00, Seminar room 3  
**Family change**

Monday, 3 February, 11:00-13:00, Seminar room 3  
**Migration and migrants**

Monday, 10 February, 11:00-13:00, Seminar room 4  
**Population and policy**

**Part II**

Wednesday, 4 March, 11:00-13:00, Seminar room 2  
**Presentations**

Wednesday, 4 March, 14:00-17:00, Seminar room 1  
**Presentations**

Thursday, 5 March, 10:00-13:00, Seminar room 2  
**Presentations**

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**PART I**

**Session 1  
Introduction**

Demography is a study of human populations. A key question is how populations change in size due to the three fundamental demographic processes of births, deaths, and migration. Social demography studies the social, economic, and political causes and consequences of these processes. This session introduces some core questions in demography and shows both how these processes can be thought of in relation to social, economic and political variables and how the demographic approach can be used to address other questions in the social sciences.

*Response papers: write a response paper on Preston and the additional reading. However, also read Livi-Bacci for background and classroom discussion!*

**Core readings**


**Additional readings (pick one)**


Session 2 Health and mortality
Life expectancy has increased globally over several decades, breaking earlier predictions of upper limits to life expectancy. This trend has not, however, been monotonic, with mortality increases in Russia after the fall of the Soviet Union and more recently, in the United States (and possibly elsewhere). Mortality and health are socially patterned: those in lower socioeconomic groups have poorer health and die younger than those in higher socioeconomic groups. At the same time, research on health and mortality have identified different paradoxes. For example, women often have worse health than men, but live longer, and many migrant groups have better health and lower mortality than natives. Social demography investigates social inequalities in and the social determinants of health and mortality, as well as the impacts of health on social status and functioning.

Core readings


**Additional readings (pick one)**


**Session 3  Family change**

In high-income countries, fertility continued to decline after the Demographic Transition was considered completed. This fertility decline was coupled by other comprehensive changes in families, such as a delay and foregoing of marriage, and increases in cohabitation, divorce, and family complexity, a trend often referred to as the “second demographic transition”. Demographers continue to debate to what extent these trends have cut across different societies or whether countries and regions follow idiosyncratic paths, with possibly deep historical roots. Another debate has concerned the social patterning of this change: have families changed more in some social groups than others? Finally, the implications of this change have been debated.
**Core readings**


**Additional readings (pick one)**


Session 4  Migration and migrants
Migration is changing the face of populations as well as their social, economic, and political dynamics. Social demography analyzes the dynamics of migration and how migrants shape the demography of receiving and sending countries. Social demography also studies how the migrant populations change in size and character and whether they integrate and assimilate to host populations, and which social and demographic factors affect these processes.

Core readings


Additional readings (pick one)


Session 5  Population and policy

Population processes are of interest to many policy-makers, who may want to limit or boost fertility, improve population health, or curtail migration. The intended and unintended consequences of these policies have thus caught the attention of demographers and other social scientists. Population processes can also be affected by other policies that do not directly aim to influence them.

Core readings


Additional readings (pick one)


Boertien, D., & Vignoli, D. Forthcoming. Legalizing same-sex marriage matters for the subjective well-being of individuals in same-sex unions. Demography


Morosow, K., Jalovaara, M., & Härkönen, J. Forthcoming. Cash-for-care use and union dissolution in Finland. *Journal of Marriage and Family*
