

Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs  
The University of Minnesota

**PA8390 Economic Demography**  
**Spring 2016 - 3 Credits**

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**Instructor:** Janna E. Johnson

Office: 231 Humphrey Center

Email: jannaj@umn.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2pm (starting January 27) or by appointment

**Class meeting:** Mondays 4:40-7:25pm, Room 35 Humphrey

**Course Objectives:** This course will expose you to the major economic theories in demography, including those of migration, mortality, fertility, marriage, family formation, and others. We will also discuss recent empirical work on these same topics and explore the difficulties of causal inference in demography. You will have the opportunity to lead discussions and prepare lectures on demographic topics of your choice.

**Prerequisites:** Graduate level economic theory and econometrics, from Applied Economics, Carlson, Economics, Public Health, or similar.

**Texts and Readings:** Either a link to the eReserves for each reading or the readings themselves for this course will be posted on Moodle, and if not available there, are easily findable online through JSTOR or the UofM library.

Note there is one required textbook for the course: Gary Becker's *A Treatise on the Family*. It's not too expensive if you'd like to buy a hard copy (\$40 on Amazon), and the library has it on e-Reserve (link on Moodle) so you can use it there. HOWEVER, you are only able to save up to 100 pages to a PDF for printing, and we're likely to use more than 100 pages of the book in the course (the first reading from the *Treatise* is 44 pages).

**Grading:** Grades will be based on class participation, presentations, reading summaries, and a course paper, most likely according to the following weighting scheme:

20% Class Participation

20% Presentation(s)

20% Reading summaries

30% Course Paper

**Class Participation: Attendance is required at all class meetings**, with the exceptions of extreme illness, family emergency, or similar. Please notify me via email if you must miss class. **It is important that you do all the readings and actively participate in all class discussions.** This does not mean you have to read every word of every paper, but read them carefully enough to understand the issues, the research design, the methods, and the findings, and form a critical opinion of the paper. It will be useful to think about how you might apply methodological or theoretical lessons from the paper to other substantive topics.

To facilitate class discussion, **on every day you are not presenting (see below) you are required to bring at least two discussion questions/topics.** They should be posted to the specified Moodle forum by **noon on the day of class.** (they will count toward your class participation grade). Here are some suggestions for the form of the questions:

- Clarification - if there was something in the readings that you had a particularly hard time understanding, we can definitely go over it together. Chances are all of us had the same trouble!
- Perhaps you disagree with a claim made in the readings or think the authors could have addressed an issue more effectively.
- As you were reading, maybe you came up with an idea on how to empirically evaluate a theory or improve an existing empirical study.
- Many of the topics we cover in class connect with each other, talking about how they do so or how they relate to something you've learned in other classes or in your own research is a great discussion topic.

You must have at least one “substantial” question per week - not all the questions can be clarification!

**Presentations:** At least once during the term you are expected to prepare a lecture and facilitate discussion of a topic of your choice, including helping to make the reading list for that day. For this class you will take over the “professor” role, important practice for academics-in-training! Your lecture, presented at the beginning of the class period, should include a slide presentation and be designed to teach the topic to senior-level undergraduate Economics majors. It should last for approximately 30 minutes. Afterward, your classmates will evaluate your performance and provide constructive feedback. In the remainder of the time you will lead collective discussion of the assigned readings for that day. Your grade for these presentations will be based on your preparation for the class, and not on actual presentation style, as you should not be penalized for being nervous! To ensure you are fully prepared for the presentation and discussion, you are encouraged to meet with me. I will also provide suggestions for readings if need be. The reading list for your class must be ready and the readings posted by the Monday preceding your lecture.

On the day of your presentation (either before or right after), please send me via email an electronic copy of your slides and any accompanying notes. I will post the slides on Moodle.

**Reading Summaries:** Twice during the term you will be asked to prepare a brief critical summary of an optional reading. These should be 500 words or less, and should present the material in a non-technical and intuitive style. The should also include your views about the strengths and weaknesses of the article. You should attach one or two figures or tables that will provoke our interest and lead to discussion. The report should be emailed to the entire class by midnight the day before class (midnight on Sunday) to give other students all day on Monday to read the summary before class time. We will briefly discuss the summarized articles in class. Note that you will not be assigned both a presentation and a reading summary the same week!

**Course Paper:** A final research paper is due on May 13 by 5pm. The topic of the final paper is up to you, with the only restriction being it must fall within the realm of economic demography.

Here are three potential options for the format, depending on what program you're in and how advanced you are:

1. **Dissertation chapter draft** (for advanced PhD students) If a chapter of your dissertation (or other paper you are working on) is related to economic demography, you are welcome to turn in a draft as your final paper. This is a good opportunity to get feedback AND have a hard deadline to get a draft done. Of course, you cannot use an already existing draft to fulfill this requirement.
2. **Research proposal chapter** (for "mid-career" PhD students) Similar to option 1, but intended to be used as part of your proposal instead of the final dissertation. It should be written to convince your dissertation committee of your theory, data, and methods, showing that the topic and your research approach are viable for a dissertation topic and an important contribution to the field of economic demography.
3. **"Expanded" literature review** (for Master's students or beginning PhD students) If you choose this option you should find an interesting question in economic demography that has not yet been resolved, summarize previous work on the subject, and propose future research direction(s) in as much detail as possible.

The guidelines above are purposely extremely vague. You should meet with me several times over the course of the semester to discuss your ideas and progress. I am open to other formats than the ones described above if you can convince me it is the best use of your effort at this point in your academic career. **A 2-3 page proposal of your final paper is due on March 11.**

We will hopefully spend either the last class period or schedule another meeting during finals week to allow each student to present their final paper to the class and get feedback.

**Snacks:** As this is a long class at the end of the day, snacks will be essential! Each person will be assigned one or two Mondays to bring food of your choice to share with the class.

**Use of Electronics in Class:** You are allowed to use your laptop or tablet for taking notes in class, but not for any other purpose (facebook, email, etc.). I'd also like everyone to keep their mobile phones put away and silent during class unless you have a good reason (small children, etc.), but if so please tell me.

**Student Conduct Code:** The University seeks an environment that promotes academic achievement and integrity, that is protective of free inquiry, and that serves the educational mission of the University. Similarly, the University seeks a community that is free from violence, threats, and intimidation; that is respectful of the rights, opportunities, and welfare of students, faculty, staff, and guests of the University; and that does not threaten the physical or mental health or safety of members of the University community.

As a student at the University you are expected adhere to Board of Regents Policy: Student Conduct Code. To review the Student Conduct Code, please see: [http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf).

Note that the conduct code specifically addresses disruptive classroom conduct, which means "engaging in behavior that substantially or repeatedly interrupts either the instructor's ability

to teach or student learning. The classroom extends to any setting where a student is engaged in work toward academic credit or satisfaction of program-based requirements or related activities.”

**Scholastic Dishonesty:** You are expected to do your own academic work and cite sources as necessary. Failing to do so is scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis. (Student Conduct Code: [http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student\\_Conduct\\_Code.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Student_Conduct_Code.pdf)) If it is determined that a student has cheated, he or she may be given an "F" or an "N" for the course, and may face additional sanctions from the University.

**Sexual Harrassment:** “Sexual harassment” means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: <http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/SexHarassment.pdf>.

**Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action:** The University will provide equal access to and opportunity in its programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. For more information, please consult Board of Regents Policy: [http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Equity\\_Diversity\\_EO\\_AA.pdf](http://regents.umn.edu/sites/default/files/policies/Equity_Diversity_EO_AA.pdf).

**Mental Health and Stress Management:** As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Student Mental Health Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu>.

Table 1: Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Presenter(s)	Optional Reading Summary	Snacks
25-Jan	Introduction	Janna	n/a	Janna
1-Feb	Causal Inference in Demography	Janna	Wahed	Kendal
8-Feb	Becker's Theory of Fertility (Q-Q)	Janna	Amrita	Lawrence
15-Feb				
22-Feb				
29-Feb				
7-Mar				
14-Mar	SPRING BREAK			
21-Mar				
28-Mar				
4-Apr				
11-Apr				
18-Apr				
25-Apr				
2-May	Presentations	All	n/a	TBD
9-May	Presentations (if needed)			
13-May	Final Paper due			

## Reading List:

### Week 1 (January 25): Introduction

Required Readings:

Guinnane, Timothy. "The Historical Fertility Transition: A Guide for Economists," *Journal of Economic Literature*, September 2011, 49(3): 589-614.

Lam, David. "How the World Survived the Population Bomb: Lessons from Fifty Years of Extraordinary Demographic History," *Demography*, November 2011, 48(4): 1231-1262.

Lee, Ronald. "The Demographic Transition: Three Centuries of Fundamental Change," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Fall 2003, 17(4): 167-190.

Schultz, T.P. "Preindustrial Equilibrium: A Malthusian Perspective" Chapter 2 in *Economics of Population* 1981.

### Week 2 (February 1): Causal Inference in Demography

Required Readings:

Moffitt, Robert A. "Issues in the Estimation of Causal Effects in Population Research, with an Application to the Effects of Teenage Childbearing" Chapter 2 in H. Engelhardt et al. (eds.), *Causal Analysis in Population Studies*, The Springer Series on Demographic Methods and Population Analysis 23, 2009.

Bhrolchain, Marie Ni, and Tim Dyson. "On Causation in Demography: Issues and Illustrations" *Population and Development Review*, March 2007, 33(1): 1-36. **READ PAGES 1-7**

Moffitt, Robert A. "Program Evaluation with Nonexperimental Data" *Evaluation Review*, June 1991, 15(3): 291-314.

Optional Reading:

Meyer, Bruce D. "Natural & Quasi-Experiments in Economics" *Journal of Business & Economic Statistics*, April 1995, 13(2): 151-161.

### Week 3 (February 8): Economics of Fertility

Required Readings:

#### **Theory**

*Read these theory articles in this order. Note you only need to read part of the handbook chapter.*

Becker, Gary S. “An Economic Analysis of Fertility” in *Demographic and Economic Change in Developed Countries*, Conference of the Universities-National Bureau Committee for Economic Research, a Report of the National Bureau of Economic Research, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press: 209-240, 1960.

Hotz, V. Joseph, Jacob Alex Klerman, and Robert J. Willis. “The Economics of Fertility in Developed Countries” Chapter 7 in M.R. Rosenzweig and O. Stark (eds.), *Handbook of Population and Family Economics*, 1997. **PARTS 1-3 AND 5.1-5.2**

Becker, Gary S. *A Treatise on the Family*, Chapter 5, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Willis, Robert J. “A New Approach to the Economic Theory of Fertility Behavior” *Journal of Political Economy*, March-April 1973, 81(2.2): S14-S64.

#### **Empirics**

Angrist, Joshua, Victor Lavy, and Analia Schlosser. “Multiple Experiments for the Causal Link between the Quantity and Quality of Children” *Journal of Labor Economics*, October 2010, 28(4): 773-824.

Optional Reading:

Hanushek, Eric A. “The Trade-off between Child Quantity and Quality” *Journal of Political Economy*, February 1992, 100(1): 84-117.

#### **Other Potential Topics**

- Fertility and the Family
  - Investments in children
  - China’s one-child policy
  - Contraception
  - Marriage and divorce
- Health and Aging
  - Investment in health (à la Becker)
  - Macroeconomic effects of population growth and/or aging
  - Life-cycle models of savings and investment (individual level)
  - Population health shocks - effects of
- Migration
  - Internal migration in developed and/or developing countries
  - International migration
  - Remittances, other effects of migration