

Sex, Death, and Data

Sociology/Demography C126
UC Berkeley, Fall 2016
Tues/Thurs 12-1:30, Barrows 60

Professor:

Jennifer Johnson-Hanks
johnsonhanks@berkeley.edu
Office Hours: Wed 9-10 in 484 Barrows

Graduate Student Instructor:

Leslie Root
leslie.root@berkeley.edu
Office Hours: Thurs 2-3 in 2232
Piedmont Ave, Rm. 100

Overview:

Our most intimate moments—of birth, marriage, illness, sex, and death—are at the same time our most widely shared, and even our most statistically predictable. New forms of data continue to make these regularities in vital rates clearer than ever. Using population data, we can address questions like: “Why are death rates so different for men and women?” and “Can we really know how often people have sex?” and “How do changes in birth rates matter for social life?”

This course provides a broadly accessible introduction to the social science of demography through an examination of some of the social, political, and ethical issues related to population size, structure, and change.

Over the course of the semester, we will address three major questions:

1. How do we create knowledge about population? (What are the sources of data? What is the relationship between demographic data and models? How do we evaluate different explanations of data?)
2. How do population size, structure, and change matter—for the economy, for politics, for social structure, for culture? (What things can they affect directly? Indirectly? Through what processes?)
3. What is the relationship between what individuals want, fear, or try to achieve and aggregate-level demographic patterns?

At the end of this course, you will have a basic toolkit for understanding population issues, and for thinking about relationships between aggregate statistics and individual choices or actions.

Format and practicalities:

This course is primarily lecture-based, although I will encourage your active participation as much as possible. This course covers a body of material intimately related to current issues in public policy. Smart & well-informed people disagree about these issues. Thus, while there is a corpus of facts, theories, and approaches that I expect you to master, there is also considerable scope for reflection and debate. To be part of the discussion, it is critical that you do the assigned reading in advance of class, and that you engage with each other in a respectful manner.

What readings are required? All the required readings are listed in this syllabus and will be available electronically through bCourses at <http://bCourses.berkeley.edu>. There is no reader or textbook to buy for this class.

How to get your questions answered: The best time and place for questions about the material is in class. If you do not understand something, chances are good that some of your classmates do not understand it either, and asking during class can be a service to them. If you are uncomfortable asking questions during class, I am happy to address your questions during office hours. More personal questions or concerns are also best addressed in office hours. I have set aside this time for you, and I am glad to see you there. Email should not be used for questions about the material, and indeed is the “medium of last resort.” I check email not more than once a day, and cannot always respond right away. If you have an important issue, please come to office hours.

Timely completion of assignments: Work is due when it is due. Except for very special circumstances, I will not accept work late. If you have a real emergency, email me 24 hours before the assignment is due, and I will work with you to make an exception.

Berkeley honor code: We all participate in maintaining our honor code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” This code defines how we live and work together. When I lecture, I endeavor to always cite my sources, identify places where experts disagree, and tell you honestly when I do not know the answer to a question. I seek to treat you with the dignity and respect you deserve. Your obligation is the same: treat your fellow students, your GSI, and me with respect, do your own work on assignments and exams, and cite your sources. If at any point you have any questions about how the honor code applies to a given context, or how best to fulfill your obligations as a member of the UC Berkeley community, please feel free to ask me or your GSI.

Religious Holy Days: I am glad to accommodate your observance of religious ritual. To do so, I need warning. Please notify me of your pending absence at least two weeks prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day, and I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Disability Accomodation: I am happy to provide accommodation to any student with an accommodation letter from the Disabled Students Program (DSP). Information about DSP is available at <http://dsp.berkeley.edu>.

Specific course requirements:

Students will be expected to:

- ✓ **Read the assigned material** by the class period indicated in the syllabus, and participate in class.
- ✓ **Demonstrate engagement and ongoing learning in two debates and two class discussions.**
- ✓ **Demonstrate mastery of the course material through an in-class midterm and take-home final exam.** The exams will be a combination of short-answer and essay questions. The final will be cumulative, but will emphasize the material in the second half of the course.
- ✓ **Complete a cumulative, collaborative project.** You will be coached through this process in your discussion section.

Grades will be based on: a mid-term exam (20%), final exam (25%), participation in class and section (15%), and a cumulative, collaborative project (40%). The mid-term exam will be conducted in class. The final will be take-home, and due as specified on the syllabus. In general, course grades will follow the usual distribution (ie. 95% is an A, 90% is an A-, etc.). However, grade cut-points may be altered slightly so that they fall at natural breaks in the point distribution (for example, 89%-91% may be a B+ or an A-, depending on the overall distribution of grades).

Regrading policy: If you believe that a grade on an assignment or exam question is inappropriate or unfair, submit the original paper with a written description of what you would like reconsidered. Please note that a regrade may result in either an increase or a decrease in your score.

Schedule of activities: ***The following represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, it may be necessary or desirable to make changes to this schedule, add or change assigned readings, etc. That is a normal part of the teaching process. If revisions are made, they will be announced in class and posted on bCourses.***

| | Date | Do in advance | Do in class | Do in Section |
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| Introduction | Thursday, August 25 | | Introductions | No section |
| | Tuesday, August 30 | Bring in any questions about the syllabus or the class | Lecture: Overview of population size, structure, and change | Introductions Activity: population facts everyone should know |
| | Thursday, September 1 | Read: Lutz et al. 2001. The end of world population growth. Nature 412, 543-545. Watch: The unrealized Horrors of Population Explosion (NYT Retro Report) http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/01/us/the-unrealized-horrors-of-population-explosion.html?_r=0 | Lecture: Population size and growth | Population growth in contemporary media – is the “population explosion” danger over? |

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| | Tuesday, September 6 | Parsons, T. 1942. Age and Sex in the Social Structure of the United States. American Sociological Review. 7(5): 604-616. | Lecture: Population Structure and Composition | Activity: examining population pyramids and age structure |
| Inequality and Death Rates | Thursday, September 8 | Read: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/01/health/american-death-rate-rises-for-first-time-in-a-decade.html | Lecture: How do we measure deaths? How do death rates differ across and between populations? | Pre-work for both of next week's articles |
| | Tuesday, September 13 | Read: Case and Deaton, 2015. Rising morbidity and mortality in midlife among white non-Hispanic Americans in the 21st century. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. 112(49): 15078-15083. | Lecture: What accounts for death rates? How does social inequality influence death rates? | Discussion: death rates in the news (examining popular interpretations of Case and Deaton 2015, Chetty 2016) |
| | Thursday, September 15 | Guldin et al. 2015. Incidence of Suicide Among Persons Who Had a Parent Who Died During Their Childhood. A Population-Based Cohort Study. JAMA Psychiatry. 2015;72(12):1227-1234. | Lecture: What are some of the effects of differential death rates? | |
| | Tuesday, September 20 | Prepare 2 points for "yes" and 2 points for "no". You will be assigned randomly to one or the other side. | Debate: Should social security payments for different groups differ based on their life expectancy? | Debate postmortem Introduction to term project |

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| Special topic: Zika | Thursday, September 22 | Read and watch: BBC Story “Zika virus: Risk higher than first thought, say doctors” http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-36184799 | Lecture: What is Zika? What are its effects? | |
| | Tuesday, September 27 | Read: Erkoreka A. (2010) The Spanish influenza pandemic in occidental Europe (1918–1920) and victim age. <i>Influenza and Other Respiratory Viruses</i> 4(2), 81–89. | Lecture: How might Zika matter for long-run population patterns? | Preparation for Zika discussion – sourcing ideas and constructing arguments |
| | Thursday, September 29 | Reading TBA | Lecture: Social network models and Zika | Beginning of midterm review |
| | Tuesday, October 4 | Prepare some thoughts to share—300 words or so | Discussion: In the context of Zika & abortion, what interplay is there between concerns about population health, reproductive rights and disability rights? | Midterm review |
| Demographics of Sex and Sexuality | Thursday, October 6 | Bring lots of questions! | Midterm prep | |
| | Tuesday, October 11 | | In-class midterm | No section |

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| | Thursday, October 13 | | Lecture: Counting sex, sexuality, and gender | |
| | Tuesday, October 18 | Read: Wellings et al. 2006. Sexual and reproductive health 2 - Sexual behaviour in context: a global perspective. Lancet 368(9548): 1706-1728. | Lecture: How have non-marital sex and childbearing changed in the US? How do they differ from Europe? | Pre-work for Greenhalgh reading Term project workshop |
| | Thursday, October 20 | Read: Baumle and Compton. 2014. Identity Versus Identification: How LGBTQ Parents Identify Their Children on Census Surveys. Journal of Marriage and the Family. 76(1):94-104. | Lecture: How do the categories of data collection (matter for people's gendered and sexual identities? | |
| Sex-selective abortion and its effects | Tuesday, October 25 | Read: Greenhalgh, S. 1994. Controlling births and bodies in village China. | Lecture: Sex-selective abortion in East Asia, and especially China | The marriage market concept – supplement to Economist reading |
| | Thursday, October 27 | Read: "Bare Branches, Redundant Males" from the Economist Magazine: http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21648715-distorted-sex-ratios-birth-generation-ago-are-changing-marriage-and-damaging-societies-asias | Lecture: The Chinese marriage squeeze (sex ratios, age differences...) | Pre-work for sex-selective abortion debate: sourcing ideas and arguments |

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| | Tuesday, November 1 | Prepare 2 points for “yes” and 2 points for “no”. You will be assigned randomly to one or the other side. | Debate: Should optional (that is, not for medical reasons) sex-selective abortion be legal in the US? | Debate postmortem Term project workshop |
| Fertility and aging | Thursday, November 3 | Read: Schmidt et al. 2012 Demographic and Medical Consequences of the postponement of parenthood. Human Reproduction Update Vol 18, at: http://humupd.oxfordjournals.org/content/18/1/29.full.pdf+html | Lecture: The age at which women give birth is rising in the US and Europe | |
| | Tuesday, November 8 | Read/Watch: How has IVF developed since the first “test-tube baby”? http://www.bbc.com/news/health-33599353 | Lecture: The sociology of assisted reproduction | Assisted reproduction and challenges in (in)fertility measurement |
| | Thursday, November 10 | Read: Ryder, N. 1965. Cohort as a concept in the study of social change. American Sociological Review. 30(6):843-861. | Lecture: The intergenerational interval, population size, and social change | |

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| | Tuesday, November 15 | Prepare some thoughts to share—300 words or so. | Discussion: What are the personal costs and benefits of waiting to bear children? What about the social costs and benefits? How should we trade off between them? | Term project workshop |
| Conclusions | Thursday, November 17 | | Wrap-up lecture: Why does population matter? | |
| | Tuesday, November 22 | | No Class—meet in groups as useful | No section – extra office hours available for term project questions |
| | Thursday, November 24 | | No Class | |
| | Tuesday, November 29 | | Final Presentations | Final exam review |
| | Thursday, December 1 | | Final Presentations | |

Final Exam Due: Monday, December 12th at 5 pm