Course overview

Population theory has a long history, tied to the emergence of the modern state and modern economy, to the development of probability and statistics, and to debates over evolution, ethics, free will, and human nature. This course focuses on that long history, offering an introduction to the fundaments of population thought through the close reading and contextualization of selected classic texts from 1650 to 1975. The works we will read do not represent a single chain of development or citation—contemporary population thought lies at the intersection of several distinct theoretical and philosophical traditions. Nonetheless, a couple of core issues reverberate across the disciplinary divides. Throughout the course, we will focus on three analytic issues that recur in the readings in different forms:

1. *Aggregation*: Does a population have properties or characteristics that apply only at the aggregate level, or can it be adequately theorized as the simple addition of its individual constituents?

2. *Probability, free will, and the nature of rates*: What does it mean that many rates remain relatively constant from year to year? Is it evidence of Divine Provenance (Sussmilch), of some Natural Law (Malthus), or of the limits of free will and the forces of “myriad little causes” (Quetelet)?

3. *Causation*: Do population facts, rates, or changes in rates have causes? And if so, what kinds of causes are they?

This is a reading course. Although some of the work we will encounter uses or comments on sophisticated mathematics, we are not going to try to reproduce the
details of the formal models, but rather focus on understanding the architecture of
the argument. Therefore, advanced training in mathematics or statistics is not
required. A willingness to read and discuss, however, is essential. In general, I will
lecture on Tuesday, and we will discuss on Thursday.

Texts

Texts with asterisks are required. In three of these cases, we read enough of the book
that you will need to purchase it. As of now, all are available at reasonable cost from
Amazon. These are:


Quetelet, Adolphe. Treatise on Man and the Development of his Faculties.

The other readings will be posted on bCourses, under the educational fair use policy
of US copyright law. Other texts (mostly secondary literature) are not required, but
may be useful as additional background. They are available in the library, or by
arrangement from JJH.

Course requirements and grading

You have four obligations. First, to read and participate in discussion throughout the
semester. Second, to write up reading notes and lead discussion twice during the
semester. Third, to write three short papers (5-7 pages each) over the course of the
semester, as noted below. Each little paper will discuss some analytic issue in two or
more of the texts, contrasting the positions of the authors or drawing out some subtle
similarity. The point of these papers is to force yourself to think clearly and succinctly
enough about the issues and the texts to be able to put your thoughts down on paper.
Finally, you will write a term paper (20-25 pages) in which you consider some
demographic topic of contemporary importance through the lens(es) of one or more
of the authors we have read.

✓ Class preparation and participation: 20%
✓ Co-lead class discussion (twice): 10% each, total 20%
✓ Three short papers (5-7 pages each): 10% each, total 30%
✓ Final paper (20-25 pages): 30%
Honor code
The student community at UC Berkeley has adopted the following Honor Code: “As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.” I am committed to fulfilling this code, and my hope and expectation is that you will as well. If you have any questions about what you can do to better live up to the Berkeley honor code, please ask me. We can use it to guide our interactions with each other in class, our decisions about citation in our papers, and many other aspects of our academic lives.

Accommodation
I am committed to making my class accessible to all graduate students regardless of religious practice, disability status, or other situation. If there are any ways in which you require accommodation (say, for religious observance, to have the readings scanned into text-to-voice software, or because our meeting room is not wheelchair accessible), please let me know and I will work with you. Of course, the sooner you let me know, the easier it will be to accommodate you.

Schedule of readings and assignments

Week 1: Introduction and overview

Week 2: The life table and the origins of empirical demography.

**Petty, William (1682) An Essay Concerning the Multiplication of Mankind.


Week 3: Population theory and enlightenment philosophy.


**Süssmilch, Johann Peter. (1961) The Divine order in the changes in the human sex from birth, death and reproduction of the same. Selections.

**de Montesquieu, Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron (1742) Lettres Persanes translated by John Davidson, Letters 113, 114, and 115.


Week 4: Thomas Malthus (misery and vice)


Week 5: Adolphe Quetelet (l’homme moyen)


**Week 6: Population variation and evolution**


The Darwin-Galton Correspondence, found at: http://galton.org/letters/darwin/correspondence.htm

**Week 7: Population statistics as “social facts”**


**Week 8: Demography in the interwar**


**Lorimer, Frank and Frederick Osborn, 1934. Dynamics of Population; Social and Biological Significance of Changing Birth Rates in the United States, N.Y.: MacMillan. Selections.**


**Week 9: Demographic Transition Theory, Part 1**

**Davis K. 1963. The Theory of Change and Response in Modern Demographic History. Population Index 29:345-66.**


### Week 10: Demographic Transition Theory, Part 2


### Week 12: Some heroes of American demography 1960-1990


**Weeks 13 and 14: Presentation and discussion of term papers**