Course Syllabus

GRAD-E1182: Public Policies and Demographic Change

1. General information

Course Format	Onsite
Instructor(s)	Michaela Kreyenfeld
Instructor's E-mail	kreyenfeld@hertie-school.org
Teaching Assistant	William Fernandez Tinoco W.Fernandez-Tinoco@phd.hertie-school.org
Assistant	Alwine Hoppe hoppe@hertie-school.org
Instructor's Office Hours	Please make an appointment via email: kreyenfeld@hertie-school.org

Link to Study, Examination and Admission Rules and MIA, MDS and MPP Module Handbooks

For information on **course room, times and session dates,** please consult the Course Plan on *MyStudies*.

Instructor Information:
Prof. Dr. Michaela Kreyenfeld is professor of Sociology at the Hertie School in Berlin. Her main interest is quantitative social policy research. Specifically, she is interested in aspects related to population diversity and social inequality. Her focus is on family research, but she is also interested in applied migration, aging, health and life course research. She is co-directing the Einstein Center Population Diversity in Berlin and Co-spokesperson of the graduate school DYNAMICS. She has also worked in policy consulting, particularly in the area of family policy.

2. Course Contents and Learning Objectives

Course contents:
Demographic ageing and population change are pressing problems in a growing number of countries. This course introduces participants to core demographic theories, data, measures, and methods. We will learn how to calculate and correctly interpret demographic indicators such as the fertility rate, the mortality rate, and measures that can be derived from migration statistics. Moreover, we will learn how to conduct population projections (using the cohort-component model). There is also time devoted to debating policy-relevant themes. For example, is population decline a challenge for local and national governments? Should we worry about the world's population continuing to grow in the face of climate change? What would be appropriate policies to address the challenges that come with demographic ageing and population decline?

Main learning objectives:
- Introduction into demographic theories and concepts (i.e., period/cohort approach, Lexis-diagram)
- Understand demographic methods and indicators (i.e., tempo and quantum effects)
- Learn how to perform population projections (using the cohort-component model)
- Improve argumentation and discussion skills
- Write demographic policy report

Target group:
Students of all areas of concentration are welcome. The course is also targeted to PhD students with an interest in demographic research questions.

Teaching style:
The course is organized in lectures. However, depending on the theme, there will also be different formats. For example, we will have debate sessions and sessions that require teamwork.

Prerequisites:
There are no specific prerequisites for taking this course. Many of the exercises given in class can be done with Excel. However, some R-skills are needed as we dive deeper into demographic methods. We will provide a "prep-course" for students who do not have any R-skills. Please contact the instructor in advance if you want to participate in the pre-course.

Diversity Statement:
Understanding and respect for all cultures and ethnicities is central to the teaching at Hertie. Being mindful of diversity is an important issue for policy professionals in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programmes designed for specific groups, populations, or communities. Diversity and cultural awareness will be integrated in the course content whenever possible. This course addresses key concepts of population diversity. We will use demographic data from European countries as well as other regions across the globe.

3. Grading and Assignments

Composition of Final Grade:

Assignment 1: participation & Exercises	Deadline: Fridays, 5 p.m.	Submit via Moodle	35%
Assignment 2: Debate	Date: 12-11-2025	Does not apply	10%
Assignment 3: Oral Presentation of Research Project	Date: 26-11-2025	Submit via Moodle	10%
Assignment 4: Policy Report	Deadline: 2-12-2025, 5 p.m.	Submit via Moodle	45%

Assignment Details

Assignment 1:
Participation means actively contributing to class discussions and engaging in team projects. An exercise will be handed out during each lecture. Parts of the exercise will be completed in class; the remainder must be finished at home and uploaded to Moodle. The exercise may consist of a written text or a presentation, which will need to be delivered at the beginning of the following lecture. These exercises include small tasks designed to help you practice the techniques learned in class. For example, an exercise might involve downloading UN data, then plotting and interpreting mortality rates for two countries of your choice. Completion of these exercises contributes to your participation grade.

Assignment 2:
In a debate, students will be given 5 minutes to convince the audience of their opinion. The "opponent group" will also have 5 minutes. There will be 10-20 minutes of discussion with the audience after both presentations. The topics will be developed together with the instructor.

Assignment 3:
Oral presentation (10 minutes) of planned research project. It is expected that all students prepare slides for their presentations.

Assignment 4:
Students must submit a policy report that presents and analyses a demographic issue in a country of their choice. The paper should demonstrate the student's ability to use and visualize demographic data (e.g. demographic data from UN, Eurostat, or DHS-data). The policy relevance of the topic needs to be elaborated. Team projects that compare the situation from a cross-national perspective are welcome. 2,500 words +/- 10% without abstract and references. (Team projects: +1,500 words for each additional author)

Late submission of assignments: The same regulations that apply to MA-theses apply for the research papers: The deadline for the research paper is a hard deadline. Late submissions will be sanctioned with a reduction in the grade as stipulated below. Deadline extension is only granted based on medical certificate or equivalent that must be submitted to the examination office.

- Up to 3 hours past deadline: 2-point reduction.
- Between 3 hours and less than 24 hours late: 5-point reduction.
- Per day late: 10 points (24-48 hours late means a 20-point reduction, etc.).

Attendance: Students are expected to be present and prepared for every class session. Active participation during lectures and seminar discussions is essential. If unavoidable circumstances arise which prevent attendance or preparation, the instructor should be advised by email with as much advance notice as possible. Please note that students cannot miss more than two out of 12 course sessions. For further information please consult the Examination Rules §10.

Academic Integrity: The Hertie School is committed to the standards of good academic and ethical conduct. Any violation of these standards shall be subject to disciplinary action. Plagiarism, misuse of AI, free riding in group work, and other deceitful actions are not tolerated. See Examination Rules §16, the Hertie Plagiarism Policy, and the Hertie Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence Tools.

Compensation for Disadvantages: If a student furnishes evidence that he or she is not able to take an examination as required in whole or in part due to disability or permanent illness, the Examination Committee may upon written request approve learning accommodation(s). In this respect, the submission of adequate certificates may be required. See Examination Rules §14.

Extenuating circumstances: An extension can be granted due to extenuating circumstances (i.e., for reasons like illness, personal loss or hardship, or caring duties). In such cases, please contact the course instructor and Examination Office *in advance* of the assignment deadline.

4. Course Sessions and Readings

All course readings can be accessed on the course Moodle page.

Session 1	
Generation and change	
Learning Objectives	This session provides an introduction to basic demographic concepts. What typifies a demographic perspective? What is a period and a cohort approach? How does it add to our understanding of social change?
Required Readings	Ryder, N. B. (1965). The cohort as a concept in the study of social change. American Sociological Review, 30: 843-861.
Optional Readings	Calot, G. (2001). Demographic techniques: Lexis Diagram. In: Smelser, Neil J. & Baltes, Paul B. (Eds.): International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences. Amsterdam. Elsevier: 3472-3480.
	Kertzer, D.I. (1983). Generation as a sociological problem. Annual Review of Sociology, 9: 125-149.
	Ortega, A. C. (2023). Toward critical demography 2.0. Human Geography 16: 343–354.
	Riley, M.W. (1987). On the significance of age in Sociology. American Sociological Review, 52: 1-14.
	Schuman, H. & J. Scott (1989). Generations and collective memories. American Sociological Review, 54: 359-381.
Optional Classical Reading	Mannheim, K. (1952 [1923]). The sociological problem of generations. In: Kecskemeti, P. (Ed.): Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge. New York: Oxford Univ. Press: 276-322.
	Mannheim, K. (2011 [1928]). The sociological problem of generations. In: J. K. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi, & D. Levy (Eds.), The Collective Memory Reader. Oxford Univ. Press.
	Inglehart, R. (1971). The silent revolution in Europe: Intergenerational change in post-industrial societies. American Political Science Review, 65: 991-1017.

Session 2	
Demographic measures and techniques	
Learning Objectives	This session provides an overview on demographic measures. Based on the example of the period total fertility rate, we elaborate the problem of "tempo effects" in demographic measures. We also get familiar with the concept of the second demographic transition theory, a prominent theoretical model that seeks to predict demographic change.
Required Readings	Zaidi, B., Morgan, P.S. (2017). The Second Demographic Theory: A review and appraisal. Annual Review of Sociology, 43: 473-492
Optional Readings	Coleman, D. (2004). Why we don't have to believe without doubting in the 'Second Demographic Transition'. Some agnostic comments. Vienna Yearbook of Population Research, 2: 11-24. Lesthaeghe, R. (2014). The Second Demographic Transition: A concise overview of its development. PNAS, 111: 18112-18115. Sobotka, T., Lutz, W. (2011). Misleading policy messages derived from the period TFR: Should we stop using it? Comparative Population Studies, 35: 637–664. Szreter, S. (1993). The idea of demographic transition and the study of fertility change: A critical intellectual history. Population and Development Review, 19: 659-701.
Optional Classical Reading	Kirk, D. (1996). Demographic transition theory. Population Studies, 50: 361-387.
Internet link	https://www.humanfertility.org https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/data/world-fertility-data

Session 3	
Mortality rates and mortality measures	
Learning Objectives	This session gives an overview on mortality trends across Europe and worldwide. We will get to know the structure of the life table, calculate death rates and life expectancy at birth, and remaining life expectancy at different ages. We will also get to know the concept of "healthy life expectancy".
Required Readings	Vaupel, J. W. et al. (2021). Demographic perspectives on the rise of longevity. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 118: e2019536118
Optional Readings	Bleich, Sara N. et al. (2012). Health inequalities: Trends, progress, and policy. Annual Review of Public Health, 33: 7-40.
	Bozick, R. (2022). Population structure and excess mortality among young men in the United States. Biodemography and Social Biology, 67: 40-57.
	Dong, X. et. al. (2016). Evidence for a limit to human lifespan. Nature, 538: 257-259.
	Masquelier, B. et al. (2021). Global, regional, and national mortality trends in youth aged 15-24 years between 1990 and 2019: A systematic analysis. The Lancet. Global health 9, e409-e417.
	Oeppen, J. & Vaupel, J.W. (2002). Broken limits to life expectancy. Science, 296: 1029-1031.
	Omran, A. R. (2005). The epidemiologic transition: A theory of the epidemiology of population change. Milbank Quarterly, 83: 731-757.
	Payne, C. F. (2022). Expansion, compression, neither, both? Divergent patterns in healthy, disability-free, and morbidity-free life expectancy across U.S. birth cohorts, 1998-2016. Demography, 59, 949–973.
Optional historical Reading	Gruenberg, E. M. (1977). The failures of success. The Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly. Health and Society, 55: 3-24.
	Riley, J. C. (2005). Estimates of regional and global life expectancy, 1800-2001. Population and Development Review, 31: 537-543.
News clip	https://mortality.org/
	https://www.euromomo.eu/
	https://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/05/world/jeanne-calment-world-s-elder-dies-at-122.html

Session 4 (8-10-2025) Migration: Measures, data and methods	
Learning Objectives	This session gives an overview on current and past migration trends in Europe and worldwide. We discuss key theoretical concepts that try to explain migration processes and discuss the manifold shortcomings of migration data.
Required Readings	Massey, D.S. (2023). The shape of things to come: International migration in the twenty-first century. In: Lerpold, L. Et al. (eds.): Migration and Integration in a Post-Pandemic World. Cham: 29-82.
Optional Readings	Brambilla, C., Reece, J. (2020). Rethinking borders, violence, and conflict: From sovereign power to borderscapes as sites of struggles. Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 38: 287-305. Bartram, D., Poros, M., Monforte, P. (2014). Key Concepts in Migration. Beverly Hills, London, New Delhi: Sage. [see reserve shelf in library] Czaika, M., & Haas, H. D. (2013). The effectiveness of immigration policies. Population and Development Review, 39: 487-508. Haas, H.D., Czaika, M., Flahaux, M., Mahendra, E., Natter, K., Vezzoli, S., Villares-Varela, M. (2020). International migration: Trends, determinants, and policy effects. Population and Development, 45, 885-922. Massey, D. (1999). International migration at the dawn of the twenty-first century: The role of the state. Population and Development Review, 25: 303-322. Scott FitzGerald, D. (2020). Remote control of migration: theorising territoriality, shared coercion, and deterrence. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 46: 4-22. Willekens, F. (2016). Migration flows: Measurement, analysis and modelling. In: White, M.J. (Ed.): International Handbook of Migrants and Population Distribution. Springer: 225-241.
Classical Reading	Fairchild, H. P. (1924). The immigration law of 1924. The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 38: 653-665.
Internet link	https://gmdac.iom.int/global-migration-data-portal

Session 5 (15-10-205)	
Family diversity across the globe	
Learning Objectives	Family structures have been changing across the world. The nuclear family seems to be on the decline, while other family forms (cohabiting families, same sex unions with children, stepfamilies) are on the raise. How do we measure family complexity? How do patterns differ across countries? How does family complexity relate to social inequality?
Required Readings	McLanahan, S. (2004). Diverging destinies: How children are faring under the second demographic transition. Demography, 41: 607-627.
Optional Readings	Cherlin, A. J. (1999). Going to extremes: Family structure, children's well-being, and social science. Demography, 36: 421-428.
	Esteve, A. et al. (2022). Families in Latin America: Trends, singularities, and contextual factors. Annual Review of Sociology, 48: 485–505.
	Esteve, A. et al. (2024). A global perspective on household size and composition, 1970–2020. Genus, 80 (pre-print).
	Reher, D. S. (1998). Family ties in Western Europe: Persistent contrasts. Population and Development Review, 24: 203–34.
	Ruggles, S. (2010). Stem families and joint families in comparative historical perspective. Population and Development Review, 36: 563-577.

Session 6 (22-10-205)	
World population: Heading towards 10 billion?	
Learning Objectives	We will take a global perspective on population development. We will revisit the "Population Bomb". How have perceptions and discussions changed since the publication of this seminal book? To what extent is population growth still a global challenge? Can countries reap the demographic dividend? We will furthermore discuss in a debate session whether climate change requires stronger efforts by policy makers to slow down population increase.
Required Readings	Crist, E. et al. (2017). The interaction of human population, food production, and biodiversity protection. Science, 356: 260-264.
	Lutz, W. (2023). Population decline will likely become a global trend and benefit long-term human wellbeing. Vienna Yearbook of Population Research, 21: 41-55.
	Rees. E. (2023). The human eco-predicament: Overshoot and the population conundrum. Vienna Yearbook of Population Research, 21: 21-39.
Optional Readings	Cohen, J. E. (1995). How many people can the earth support (chapter 11). New York: Norton.
	Coleman, D. & Rowthorn, R. (2011). Who's afraid of population decline? A critical examination of its consequences. Population and Development Review, 37: 217-248.
	Demeny, P. (2004). Population policy dilemmas in Europe at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Population and Development Review, 29: 1-28.
	Lam, D. (2011). How the world survived the population bomb: Lessons from 50 years of extraordinary demographic history. Demography, 48: 1231-1262.
	MacKellar, L. (1996). On human carrying capacity: A review essay on Joel Cohen's: How many people can the earth support? Population and Development Review, 22: 145-156.
	McIntosh C.A. & Finkle. J. L. (1995). The Cairo conference on population and development: A new paradigm? Population and Development Review, 21: 223-260.
Optional Classical Reading	Ehrlich, P. (1968). The Population Bomb. New York: Simon and Schuster. [see reserve shelf in library]
Internet link	https://population.un.org/wpp/

Session 7 (5-11)	
Census data: Challenges and Perspectives	
Learning Objectives	The basis for population analysis is census data. How is census data generated? How reliable is the data? This session will also deals with the difficulty of classifying persons by ethnicity, race and migration background.
Required Readings	Prewitt K. (2018). The census race classification: Is it doing its job? The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 677, 8-24.
	Abascal, M. (2020). Contraction as a response to group threat: Demographic decline and whites' classification of people who are ambiguously white. American Sociological Review, 85, 298–322.
	Davenport, D. (2020). The fluidity of racial classifications. Annual Review of Political Science 23, 221–240.
	Liebler, C. et a. (2017). America's churning races: Race and ethnicity response. Changes between census 2000 and the 2010 census. Demography. 54: 259-584.
	Schwartzman, L. F. (2007). Does money whiten? Intergenerational changes in racial classification in Brazil. American Sociological Review, 72, 940–963.
	Snipp, C.M. (2003). Racial measurement in the American census: Past practices and implications for the future. Annual Review of Sociology, 29: 563-588.
	Weindling, P. (1988): Fascism and population in comparative European perspective. Population and Development Review 14, 102-121.

Session 8 (12-11)	
Debate session	
Learning Objectives	We will organize 2 debates related to controversies in respect to fertility, mortality, migration and population growth. The debate will be based on topics and readings from the prior lectures. The topics are decided with the instructor.

Session 9 & 10 (19-11 & TBD)	
Population projections in practise (project-oriented work)	
Learning Objectives	How can we project future population size? How sensitive are population projections to different assumptions? We will conduct population projections for Berlin and then later for individual countries. Further, we engage with the current UN-World Population Prospects.
Required Readings	Preston, S. et al. (2001). Demography: Measuring and Modeling Population Processes- Blackwell: 166-121.
Internet link	https://population.un.org/wpp/ https://papp.iussp.org/sessions/papp101_s10/PAPP101_s10_010_010.html

Sessions 11 (26-11)	
Presentation of student projects [PhD-students are excused]	
Learning Objectives	In a "mini-workshop", students will present their research plan. The topics of the papers were developed together with the instructor. A first draft of the paper can be uploaded before the event. Each presenter will have about 5-10 minutes for presentation. Team projects are welcome.

Sessions 12 (3-12)	
Keynote lecture	
Learning Objectives	We have invited a keynote speaker who will present her work on a selected demographic topic (to be decided).