

# Course Syllabus for Sociology 43402

## Population Dynamics

### Fall 2023

**Instructor** Richard Williams  
4058 Jenkins Nanovic (but Zoom will most often be better for meetings)  
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Course Web Page: <https://www3.nd.edu/~rwilliam/xsoc43402/index.html>

**Time & Place** Debartolo 347, MW 9:30 – 10:45 AM

**Canvas** We will make extensive use of Canvas in this course. The course Canvas page will include the most critical links for the course, e.g. for the class Zoom links and the course web page. All assignments should be submitted through Canvas unless you are told otherwise. I also use Canvas for most announcements. You may understand Canvas better than I do, but if you need help you can check out <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student> .

**Office Hours** MW 2:15-3:15, usually via Zoom, and by appointment. I am generally very accessible via phone, voicemail, email, Facebook video, and Zoom – including on nights and weekends if necessary.

### Course summary

Demography, the science of population, is concerned with virtually everything that influences, or can be influenced by, population size, distribution, processes, structure, or characteristics. This course pays particular attention to the causes and consequences of population change. Changes in fertility, mortality, migration, technology, lifestyle and culture have dramatically affected the United States and the other nations of the world. These changes have implications for a number of areas: hunger, the spread of illness and disease, environmental degradation, health services, household formation, the labor force, marriage and divorce, care for the elderly, birth control, poverty, urbanization, and business marketing strategies. An understanding of these is important as business, government, and individuals deal with the demands of the changing population.

### Course Web Page/ Required Readings

*Course Web Page (Check it often).* Online readings, discussion questions and other links of interest will be available on the course web page:

<http://www3.nd.edu/~rwilliam/xsoc43402/>

## *Online Readings Packet and Discussion Questions for Sociology 43402*

I have decided to go with an all-online packet this year. Some sections will include required or optional links to textbook-type entries that explain key demographic concepts. The readings packet further includes selections from a wide variety of scholarly and mass media sources. Though sometimes lengthy, most of the material in the packet is fairly easy to read. The packet is designed to achieve the following purposes:

- To explain major demographic concepts
- To illustrate the wide array of issues, controversies and opinions on population issues
- To show the “real” impact that population issues have on people’s lives

The packet reflects a wide range of views, but I do not claim to present a “balanced” perspective on each and every single issue. Students are encouraged to offer their own views on the issues and to do additional reading on topics of interest to them.

### **Classroom Policies & Format**

We will use a variety of learning styles in this class – I will lecture some but **much of the class will be taught seminar style, including small-group discussions and end-of-year student presentations.**

- **Diverse viewpoints are welcome.** It doesn’t matter whether I agree or disagree with you. The critical thing is how well you make your case. At the same time I do expect you to be respectful of other people – no personal insults, no rolling your eyes, etc.
- **Readings and classroom discussion are critical!** If you stay on top of the readings, instead of just cramming for exams, the classroom experience will be much better for you and everyone else.
- **Around six times a semester, I will break you down into small groups to go over discussion questions based on the readings.** I want everyone to be ready for these discussions; so, as noted below, you need to turn in your discussion notes beforehand.
- **I will often do low cost cold-calling on people.** I am not trying to embarrass anyone – you can occasionally defer on a question – but cold calling can be a good way to keep students involved and paying attention. **If speaking in class is a major problem for you, please let me know as soon as as possible.**
- I strongly discourage but do not ban the use of laptops during class (but I reserve the right to do so if laptops become a distraction or are being misused).
- Some material may be presented asynchronously, e.g. instead of having a regular class you will be asked to watch something on your own and discuss it later. This was very popular when the course was all-online so I may keep doing it.
- You are strongly encouraged to make contact with me outside of class, either by phone or electronically. If necessary and mutually convenient, I am willing to have Zoom meetings on nights and weekends, especially when major assignments are soon due.
- **Check your ND email regularly, preferably every day.** You may not use email much but I do, and I frequently send messages about upcoming readings and discussion topics.
- Do not lose your work – use some sort of Cloud backup service.

- Any files you send me (either via email or through Canvas) (e.g. exams, papers) should begin with your last name so I can easily alphabetize them, e.g. WilliamsExam1.docx. The document itself should include your name, so I do not have to dig through my email to figure out who sent something. Include page numbers on any document more than 2 pages!!! (It is a major source of irritation to me that some students repeatedly fail to do so!) I prefer Word or PDF formats; if you just send me a Google Docs link I have to go through extra steps to convert and download it.

## Assignments, Exams and Grading

There will be one take-home exam during the semester, a take-home final, and a paper. These are each worth 28% of your grade.

**Exams.** Both exams will consist of short answer problems and 2-3 essay questions. The final will emphasize material from the second half of the course but will also give you a chance to apply principles that were learned earlier in the semester.

One of the things that will be most important on the exams will be your ability to incorporate material from the readings. The best exams will go beyond what was said in class and will cite specific facts, opinions, authors and articles. They will be like short research papers, incorporating information from a variety of sources, except I have provided you with the readings in advance.

**Papers.** The paper should be typed, double-spaced, and approximately 10 to 20 pages long. The paper should include a bibliography and all sources for material should be clearly cited.

- I must approve your topic. By **October 12**, you should give me a one-page typed summary briefly describing your proposed topic and any sources you have already identified. I encourage you to schedule meetings with me to talk about your ideas.
- If you want to give me a draft of your paper by **November 8**, I will return it with comments within about 7 days.
- Papers are due **November 22** (although you are welcome and encouraged to hand them in well before that).
- During the last few weeks of the class you will be given 15 minutes to discuss some aspect of your paper that you think would be of interest to the class (Amount of time and dates may be adjusted based on final enrollment). As a courtesy to your fellow students, I expect everyone to be there on those days. I often assign grades *after* the presentation, so a strong (or weak) presentation can impact your grade.
- Note that there is nothing that stops you from starting or even completing your paper well in advance of the due date; if you get a lot of the work done early the end of the semester will be a lot less hectic for you.

The paper should be a major, in-depth examination of some major demographic problem. It should demonstrate that you are familiar with the relevant research, and that you understand the issues and controversies involved. Your own original thinking, or your ability to offer some sort of critique, may be most helpful (but your own thoughts must not be used as a substitute for adequate research). A minimum of four or five scholarly sources should be cited (e.g. books,

journal articles). You can also cite other sources – Time, Newsweek, Atlantic Monthly, the New York Times and Wall Street Journal often have excellent articles - so long as you have the minimum number of scholarly references. Note that scholar.google.com is generally better than Google when searching for sources.

There will actually be 3 or 4 paper sessions – two during regular classtime, and one or two sessions held at other times. You only need to attend two sessions – the one you present in and one other. This is a covid-inspired change that has been very popular in my other classes. It allows for smaller, more casual, and in-depth discussions, while at the same time not requiring you to listen to everyone’s paper.

**Short assignments/ class participation/ paper presentations/ attendance** account for the other 16% of your grade. **Do not underestimate the importance of these!!!**

- This should be an easy 15 or 16 points for you. Come to class, keep up on the readings, hand in all the required short assignments and notes on the readings **on time**, and participate in discussions at least occasionally. In other words, do what you should be doing anyway. Unfortunately, **missed classes and assignments sometimes lower final grades substantially**. More critically, though, I think these will help you to understand the material better, produce better papers and exams, and improve the overall quality of the classroom experience.
- To make sure that everyone is familiar with the material and has something to contribute, **I want you to jot down about a dozen notes from the readings that you think are especially important**, any thoughts of your own on the subject, and questions which you would like to see discussed. (It is a good idea to always do this but it is especially critical to do so on discussion days.) In general, you should be prepared to make at least a few points about every major discussion question asked.
- In particular, **you will be required to hand in discussion notes before class for each topic before the days we are breaking down into small groups, approximately 6 times this semester**.
- **Assignments handed in on time will be worth up to 2 points (12 pts total), late assignments can still earn 1 point for a few days, and after that they will get 0 points**. I’m not super-picky when grading these so long as I see a good faith effort, but I do expect you to have enough to meaningfully contribute to discussion. In the past, some people have turned in about a page, others have turned in 10 pages.
- Besides affecting your participation grade, these notes will be a great help on the exam, as the discussion questions I give you on the readings often bear a remarkable similarity to the exam questions. Canvas lets you know when the notes are due so make sure you stay on top of things.
- Regular attendance & punctuality are expected and factor into your participation grade (up to 4 pts). **You are allowed up to three absences for any reason**. Attendance will be taken each class. If absences are excessive, University policy allows me to give you a D or F after providing written notice.

## Honor Code

Entering Notre Dame you were required to study the on-line edition of the Academic Code of Honor, to pass a quiz on it, and to sign a pledge to abide by it. The full Code is available at <https://honorcode.nd.edu/>. I reserve the right to use University-approved mechanisms if I suspect plagiarism or cheating. Note: I am ok with students going to Notre Dame's Writing Center so long as they don't get help with the actual content of their work.

## Non-Discrimination/ Inclusion Statement

The University of Notre Dame is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and strive to maintain a positive learning environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. In this class we will not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate, please advise me and we will work with the Office for Students with Disabilities to make appropriate arrangements. (My thanks to Kevin Barry for the suggested wording of this.)

## Some Possible Paper Topics

Following are possible topics for your paper, but you are free to choose others. We will cover many of these in class, but I am sure you will be able to provide a much more in-depth examination. While there will often be some overlap with classroom material, *your presentations should emphasize material that has not already been covered in class.*

- Population status, problems, and prospects in the region/country of your choice (e.g. the former USSR, China, Israel, Ghana, Ireland, Latin America, Europe). I'll focus more on the United States, so you may find it worthwhile to look at other countries that are of interest to you.
- What effect does overpopulation in developing countries have on them, on the United States, and on world peace and stability? Is overpopulation really a problem, or is the problem the way in which resources are allocated within societies?
- Is global warming real? If so, how does overpopulation in the developing world and over-consumption in the developed world contribute to it? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the possible policy options?
- Demographic and social consequences of improved technological control over fertility. You might consider the possible impacts of couples being able to choose the sex of their child, test-tube babies, abortion pills, more effective contraceptive methods, surrogate motherhood, etc.
- The causes and consequences of overturning Roe V Wade. How was an almost 50 year precedent overturned? What are the positive and negative aspects of the reversal? What will the future of abortion be?
- Catholic perspectives on population issues (e.g. abortion, artificial insemination, birth control, stem cell research). Why does the church hold certain positions? What impact do those positions have? You might offer some sort of critique, or some sort of defense or attack, of Church positions. (You are free to take whatever positions you want, but I expect serious research and facts to be backing up your claims.)

- The American family - what did it used to be like, how has it changed, what will it be like in the future? You might look at changes in family size and composition, the feminization of poverty, changes in family routine, divorce, gay families, cohabitation, etc.
- Demographic effects of changing women's roles (such as on the labor force, fertility, male/female differentials in mortality).
- Demographic effects of changing men's roles and statuses. Do men continue to be the privileged ones? Or is there, as Christina Hoff Sommers claims, a "war against boys" that is turning men into the disadvantaged sex?
- Possible effects of demographic changes on businesses, marketing and politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. What types of products/services will rise/decline in importance? What will the impact be on the American labor force or American politics? Conversely, how will changes in the labor force affect business? You might discuss the effects of changing age composition and changing lifestyles.
- Just a few years ago, many were saying that demographic changes (e.g. the increasing population of Hispanics) were giving Democrats a long-term lock on the presidency. Obviously, that wasn't true in 2016, and even in 2020 Democrats did not do as well as many expected. Why? How are demographic and other factors likely to affect electoral politics in the future?
- Contemporary health problems. Why have health problems such as obesity and diabetes increased in recent years? What effect are they having on the US and/or world population? Will new health care policies in the United States alleviate health problems or make them worse?
- The future of social security - is a "crisis" coming? How will America deal with the elderly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Can "generational warfare" be averted?
- The effects of legal and illegal migration on the United States, both currently and in the future. Do American workers suffer from it? What benefits do immigrants bring? Would policy changes, such as the Dream Act, building the wall, or ending citizenship for anchor babies, be good or bad?
- The effect of demographic characteristics on poverty and wealth in America. How much do family origins, race, sex, etc., affect the status attainment of individuals in America today? Is the middle class collapsing, and if so why?
- Racial inequality in America. What effect has racial segregation in housing and other areas had on American life? Is segregation declining, or will it change in the future? Should affirmative action be forbidden or encouraged? Is the concept of race even meaningful?
- The effects of Covid-19. There are several possible areas you could cover. How has Covid-19 affected health and mortality in the US or the world? What lingering, long-term effects is Covid having (e.g. heart problems, loss of senses of taste and smell)? How has Covid exacerbated already-existing racial and economic inequalities? What changes are needed to avoid a similar crisis in the future?

### Key Dates:

First take home exam: Due October 5<sup>th</sup> by 10:00 pm  
 Paper Topics submitted for approval: Oct 12  
 Drafts due if you want advance comments: Nov 8th  
 Papers due: Nov 22

Class presentations: Nov 29, Dec 4 (Along with possibly 1 or 2 sessions outside of class)  
 Final take home exam due: Monday, Dec 11, 10 am

Sociology 43402  
Population Dynamics  
Fall 2023  
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Aug 23, 28 – Introduction; Overview of the World’s Population

Readings packet, “Population: Historical overview”

Aug 30, Sept 4, 6 - Population, resources, environment, and food. A look at the theories of Malthus, Marx, the demographic transition, and others, followed by an examination of the effects of overpopulation in the world today.

Readings packet, “Population, resources, environment & food”

Sept 11, 13 - Fertility: concepts and trends ; also, Birth Cohorts. A look at fertility concepts and measurement; The importance of age and sex structure; current status of fertility in the United States and the world; the Baby Boom and other birth cohorts

Readings packet, “Fertility: Concepts & Trends”

Readings packet, “Birth cohorts.”

Sept 18, 20, 25 - Fertility: Issues, problems, policies. Includes birth control; new reproductive technology and the issues it raises; the battle over reproductive rights.

Readings packet, “Fertility issues: Reproductive technology”

Readings Packet, “Fertility Issues: The battle over reproductive rights”

Sept 27, Oct 2 – Status and Roles of Women and Men. A discussion of the demographic implications of recent changes in gender roles, families, and households.

Readings packet, “The status and roles of women and men”

*Oct 2 – Take home exam handed out*

*Oct 4, 5 – NO CLASS on Oct 4. TAKE HOME EXAM DUE BY Oct 5 at 10:00 pm.* If you keep up with the readings this should be plenty of time to finish the exam. But, if the due date is problematic because you have several other exams and papers due at about the same time, contact me in advance and we can negotiate over an extension.

Oct 9, 11 - Demographics. A look at how demographic information is used in business, political, and social planning.

Readings packet, “Demographics.”

*Oct 12 – PAPER TOPICS ARE DUE. Drafts are due Nov 8 if you want me to offer comments.*

Oct 23, 25 – Marriage & Family. A discussion of the demographic implications of recent changes in families and households.

Readings packet, “Teenage Sex & Unwed Pregnancy”

Readings packet, “Marriage, divorce, families and households”

Oct 30, Nov 1, 6 – Health & Mortality. Includes causes of death; differences in mortality by sex, marital status, age; problems with health care.

Readings packet, “Health & Mortality”

Nov 8, 13, 15 - Poverty and Wealth. Effects of sex, race, and other characteristics on status attainment; Poverty and welfare in America; the financial problems of the middle class, including credit & bankruptcy.

Readings packet, “Poverty & Welfare”

*Nov 22 – PAPERS DUE*

Nov 20, 27 – There are a variety of related topics I would like to cover if time permits. Remember, even if we do not go over a topic in depth, you may have opportunities to address it using the course readings in one of the optional exam questions.

Race. We’ll be talking about the importance of race throughout the course. In this part, we’ll pick up some new issues, such as what is race and the controversy over multiracial classifications. We may also talk about housing and segregation and general demographic issues concerning minorities not covered elsewhere.

Readings packet, “The Relevance of Race” (Time permitting)

Readings packet, “Diversity & Affirmative Action” (Time permitting)

Readings packet, “Housing and Segregation.” (Time permitting)

Migration (brief discussion) Causes and consequences of migration; current migration controversies, e.g. building the wall; the Dreamers

Readings packet, “Migration.”

*Nov 29, Dec 4, TBA - Paper presentations.* There will actually be 3 or 4 paper sessions, 2 during class and another 1 or 2 outside of regular class time. You only need to attend 2 of the sessions: the session you present in and one other.



*Dec 6 – The Future; Catch up; Review for final exam; Take home final handed out.* Discussion will include a focus on the bleak vision of the future presented in Doug Massey’s Presidential Address to the Population Association of American, and the responses to it. We will definitely go over Massey’s address in class.

Readings packet, “The Future.”

*December 11 (Monday) 10 am – Take home finals are due* (but are welcome sooner). DO NOT BE LATE!!! I only have a few days to get your grades in, and I am not allowed to give incompletes.