SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

PPA 730-3

DEMOGRAPHY, AGING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Spring 1998

Tuesdays, 3:00-6:00, Eggers Hall 113

SYLLABUS

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OBJECTIVES AND COURSE FORMAT

This course is intended to provide students with an understanding of the basic tools of
demographic analysis; to acquaint them with key facts about demographic trends in the U.S. and
elsewhere, and with the connections among fundamental demographic forces and population
aging; to survey a series of topics in "social demography" and "social gerontology" of particular
importance in aging societies; and to consider some of the policy issues that arise in connection
with population aging.

The course will be conducted using a combination of lecture and discussion. The material
presented in the first weeks of the course consists mainly of demographic concepts and tools, and
is somewhat technical in nature; these weeks will inevitably be conducted mainly in lecture
format. Later, as we consider material drawn from applied demographic and gerontological
research, and the associated policy issues, class discussion will occupy a larger share of our time.

READINGS

This course will entail a substantial amount of reading. The following books are available from
the Orange Bookstore:


The books will be supplemented by outside readings from books, journals, magazines and newspapers. Most will be made available in a photocopied course reader available at the Campus Copy Center. Several will be distributed in class. An extensive supplementary reading list on the topics covered in this class is in preparation and will be distributed.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Students are expected to attend class, read the required readings PRIOR to the class in which they will be presented and discussed, and to participate in class discussions. Generally, a list of discussion questions will be distributed to accompany the following week’s readings. There will also be several written assignments, two oral presentations, and a final exam.

Grading for the course will be based on the following:

1. **The quality of class participation:** 15% of the course grade.

2. **Country case study report:** each student will prepare a short (6-8 page) report on population aging in a country of their choice (other than the US, which I will be using as an example in lectures); the process of choosing countries will be managed such that three are no duplications. The report should provide a description of the current population profile of the country, and discuss the demographic forces that are contributing to population aging. Another issue that could be addressed is the consequences of projected trends in underlying demographic factors. I will provide you with data produced by the United Nations Population Division that will be more than adequate for this assignment. The same data are available in published form in the library. Further information on this assignment, including examples of this type of report (such as the "Aging Trends" articles routinely published in the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology*), will be supplied.

   percentage of course grade: 20%

3. **DUE DATE:** February 17

4. **Research summary/critique paper.**

   This, again, is to be a short (6-8 page) paper that summarizes and critiques the views presented in two published research papers, with respect to a well-specified research question. The supplementary reading list distributed with this syllabus is intended to serve as a guide to the selection of research papers for use in this assignment. Among the many substantive questions that could serve to motivate this assignment are "why do women provide more care to family members than men?"; "does home-based long-term care lead to savings in public programs?";
"do older people undermine local school budgets?"; "is the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 costly to employers?"; "is there a theoretical upper bound on longevity?"; and so on.

percentage of course grade: 20%

**DUE DATE:** March 31

(4) "Opinion" or "advocacy" essay.

Unlike the research summary/critique assignment, this assignment will ask you to argue a position, but one that is grounded in fact. This should be modeled on the "op-ed" style of writing, and might deal with a research issue suggested by the readings and/or a current policy issue. Further details will be provided in class.

percentage of course grade: 20%

**DUE DATE:** April 28

(5) Final exam: there will be a final exam, given during the scheduled slot of exam period, to which you may bring your notes (on lectures, texts, readings, etc.). The intent will be not to test your ability to solve problems (or to do calculations); rather it will be a test of your ability to think about, and draw connections among, the ideas and readings covered in the course.

percentage of course grade: 25%

**TOPICAL AGENDA** (subject to elaboration/change)

The following agenda lists a sequence of topics to be covered during the semester. Associated with each topic area are a list of questions and issues to be addressed, and a list of readings. The readings will form the basis of class discussion.

1. Overview of course; demographic concepts, tools, data, and measures.


   Issues/questions:

   How "old" is the U.S. population, and how does this compare with past and projected future patterns? To what extent is population aging a result of changes in mortality and in fertility patterns? Can we do anything about it? How does changing age structure of the population influence individual lives? Collective behavior? The economy?

   Readings:


3. Mortality patterns, trends, and differentials

Issues/questions:

What are the patterns of mortality by age; trends in death rates; life expectancy and the Life Table; differential mortality by gender, race, and other factors.

Readings:


4. Disease and disability; assessment of functional status; active life expectancy.

Issues/questions:

Diseases and conditions of old age; activities of daily living and "active life expectancy"; the "longer life-better health" tradeoff controversy; cognition.

Readings:


"Long-Term Care," chapter 21 in The President’s Health Security Plan (New York: Times Books, 1993) [particularly section on eligibility criteria].


5. Issues in the biology and genetics of aging.

Issues/questions:

Why do we live so long? Why and how do we age? Is there a genetic "clock"? Are there genetic influences on social organization?

Readings:

Moody, pp. 35-65


6. Household composition and living arrangements of the elderly.

Issues/questions:

In what kinds of living arrangements are the elderly found? What factors influence the decision to live in the community versus in a nursing home? Who do the elderly live with? What are the consequences of sharing residential space?

Readings:


7. Care of the "frail" elderly--

Moody, pp. 127-152

(A) Norms, expectations, attitudes, and preferences

E. Brody, "Parent Care as a Normative Family Stress." The Gerontologist 25 (1985): 19-
29.


(B) Patterns of care


(C) The policy environment


(D) Work-caregiving tradeoffs; the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993


(E) How should the "burden" of elder care be distributed?

Moody, pp. 71-94.


D. Wolf, "Efficiency in the Allocation and Targeting of Long-Term Care Resources."

8. Migration of the elderly; proximity of family members and its consequences

Readings:


Mark Robbins, William Duncombe and Douglas Wolf, "Can State and Local Governments Influence Elderly Migration?"

9. Ethical issues in aging

Issues/Questions:

Is euthanasia acceptable? Assisted suicide? Can the wishes of older people be ascertained and adhered to? Should we screen for genetic predisposition to Alzheimer’s disease? What are the limits on uses of information so obtained?

Readings:


10. The politics of age and generational "warfare"

Issues/questions:

Age-group competition; the elderly as an interest group; popular imagery regarding the elderly; is there an "old-age crisis"?

Readings:

Moody, pp. 189-250.

Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Supplementary Medical Insurance Trust Fund (Medicare).


GENERAL SOURCES


DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES ON POPULATION AGING

Patterns and trends


Cynthia Taeuber and Ira Rosenwaike, "A Demographic Portrait of the Oldest Old." Chapter 2 in Suzman, Willis and Manton.


Origins


6.5


**Projections**


**Consequences**


MORTALITY

Patterns and trends


**Differential mortality**


**by sex--**


**by race--**


**by socioeconomic status; occupation--**


Mark Hayward, William Grady, Melissa Hardy, and David Sommers (1989), "Occupational influences on retirement, disability, and death." *Demography* 26:393-409.

Sam Preston and Paul Taubman, "Socioeconomic differentials in adult mortality and health status." Chapter 8 in Martin and Preston.

Sam Preston and Irma Elo, "Are educational differentials in adult mortality increasing in the
by marital status; bereavement effects--


macro influences on mortality; effects of inequality


Yoav Ben-Schlomo et al., "Does the variation in the socioeconomic characteristics of an area affect mortality?" *British Medical Journal* 312 (1996):1013-1014.


Bruce Kennedy et al., "(Dis)respect and black mortality." *Ethnicity and Disease* 7 (1997):xxx-xxx.

other--


**DISEASE AND DISABILITY**

*Measurement and Assessment*


**Trends and differentials**


**Active Life Expectancy**


Guralnik, Jack M., Kenneth C. Land, Dan Blazer, Gerda G. Fillenbaum, and Laurence G. Branch. (July 8 1993). "Educational Status and Active Life Expectancy Among Older Blacks and


**BIOLOGICAL AND GENETIC PERSPECTIVES**


**HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS**

*Theories; Patterns of coresidence*


Consequences


CARE OF THE "FRAIL" ELDERLY

Norms, expectations, attitudes, preferences, motivations


Howard Degenholtz et al., "Care-related preferences and values of elderly community-based LTC consumers: Can case managers learn what’s important to clients?" The Gerontologist 37(1997):767-776.


Les Whitbeck, Danny R. Hoyt, and Shirley M. Huck, "Early Family Relationships,

*Family Care*


Michael C. Hendrickson, "State Tax Incentives for Persons Giving Informal Care to the Elderly."

**Nursing Home Care**


"Home Care"; costs, and effectiveness


Joshua M. Wiener and Raymond J. Hanley, "Caring for the Disabled Elderly: There’s No Place Like Home." xxx


**The policy environment**


"Substitution" and "spenddown"


An interesting special case: New York State


Office of the State Comptroller, State of New York, "Departments of Social Services and Health: Long Term Home Health Care Program" (Executive Summary). Report 95-S-136, February 19,
1997.

**Work-caregiving tradeoffs; the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993**


**How should the "burden" of elder care be distributed?**


Peter Uhlenberg, "Replacing the Nursing Home." The Public Interest 128(1997): 73-84.

Daniel Callahan, "Must the Young and Old Struggle Over Health Care Resources?" Journal of Long-Term Home Health Care 15, No.4 (1996):4-14.

MIGRATION AND FAMILIAL PROXIMITY

Migration patterns; spatial distribution of the elderly and their families


Local-area impacts; spatial concentration of the elderly


ETHICAL ISSUES IN AGING


THE POLITICS OF AGE AND GENERATIONAL "WARFARE"; IS THERE AND "OLD AGE CRISIS"?


