



The University of Western Ontario
SOCIOLOGY 4441A - 001
Living and Dying: Demographic Inequalities
Fall 2024
In person

Instructor: Kate H. Choi
Office Hours: By appointment
Department of Sociology
Email: kate.choi@uwo.ca

This is a DRAFT only. Please see the course site for the final version.

Course Description: This course examines demographic inequalities in living and dying. Topics covered are births, deaths, migration, aging, and marriage. This course involves hands-on learning, where students learn to understand, read, and write about data regarding important trends in social inequality today, preparing them for a variety of labour market opportunities.

Prerequisite(s): Registration in third year or above

Unless you have either the prerequisites or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in the course, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. The decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Anti-requisite(s): None

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

The purpose of this course is to

- Gains insights into declining fertility rates, patterns and trends in international migration, and changes in mortality.
- Understand how social change contribute to demographic changes
- Apprehend how population changes has contributed to social changes over time

At the end of this course students will be able to:

- Learn how to use and interpret demographic measures (e.g., age-specific mortality, fertility rates)
- Develop the analytical and critical skills necessary to properly assess the impact of demographic processes on social inequality
- Application of class concepts to current events.
- Hone public speaking skills to ensure success in future educational and labor market endeavors.

Course Materials:

There is a mandatory text:

- Poston, Dudley L. and Leon F. Bouvier. (2017). *Population and Society: An Introduction to Demography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [2nd edition].

All other course materials can be downloaded from jstor.org or scholar.google.com. You can download them from the UWO library; type the journal name, and once you go to the journal type the article name, and log in using your library credentials. There will be a good mix of academic and non-academic work.

Relevant sites:

- <https://scholar.google.com>
- <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/>
- <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/business/businesseconomicnewspapersmagazines.html>

You need a stable internet connection and a computer with a working microphone and/or webcam.

Guidelines on how to read

- Read the abstract
- Read the introduction, background, results, and discussion/conclusion.
- Skim/skip the data and methods I am not going to require that you understand the math/statistics.
- If it is an empirical article, you are trying to determine:
 - What are the research questions that the various articles are trying to address?
 - What are the findings of prior studies on the topic?
 - What are their 3-4 key findings?

Communication:

Students are responsible for checking the course OWL Brightspace site (<https://westernu.brightspace.com/d2l/login>) on a regular basis for news and updates.

This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class.

The best way to reach the instructor will be via e-mail (kate.choi@uwo.ca). Please allow 24 hours during the week and 72 hours during weekends. If there is a question relevant to many students, the instructor reserves the right to address the question during the next class period.

Office hours are by appointment only. You *must* arrive 3-4 minutes before the appointment starts and leave once the appointment ends. Access to appointments will be *limited* following repeated no-shows.

Method of Evaluation:

The evaluation methods described in the course outline are essential requirements for the course. I believe that students should have agency in how they are being evaluated. I also believe that the best way to attain equity in the classroom is by offering all students options about (a) how they will be evaluated and (b) how they will manage their time given their time constraints at the onset of the class. To offer students agencies in their program of education, students can opt for one of two options of evaluation.

Option A:

- Midterm (50%)
- Final exam (50%) – TBA by the Registrar’s Office during the final exam period.

Option B:

- Midterm (33.3%)
- Optional Paper (33.3%)
- Final exam (33.4%) – TBA by the Registrar’s Office during the final exam period.

Note: Each assignment is curved to a predetermined and uniform class average. The choice of Option A or Option B will not affect your overall grade.

Midterm Exam

- Date: October 7, 2024, 1:30-4:30pm
- Format: Online, typed, short-answer questions, open book, no consultation (person or AI).
- Material: 75% lecture notes + 25% from readings and in-class discussion
- Number of questions: 5-6 questions (subject to the instructor’s discretion)
- Duration: 150 minutes + 30 minutes (grace period)
- Grades: You will be graded on a curve. With some exceptions, the class average will be 78-82%. With some exceptions, the class average for the class will be between 80-82%.
- Review: The class before the midterm.
- Communication during the exam: No substantive questions will be addressed by the professor or grader, just procedural questions.
- Late exams: Because students are offered a 30-minute grace period, 1 point will be deducted for each late minute after 180 minutes. This ensures fairness in the amount of time that students must take the exam.
- Submission: Need to e-mail kate.choi@uwo.ca and the grader. Both e-mail addresses can be found on the first page of your exam.

- Accommodations:
 - Instructors are permitted to designate one assessment per course per term as requiring supporting documentation to receive academic consideration. For this course, the midterm has been designated as the assessment requiring supporting documentation.
 - Students who cannot take the exam on the designated time must provide valid medical or supporting documentation to their Home Faculty Academic Counselling Office, adhering to their rules and regulations about the format and timeline for the submission of set documentation. To the extent possible, I will honor the recommendations of Academic Counselling.
- Makeup exam: If a student misses the midterm with proper documentation, a make-up exam will be administered during the departmental make-up exam date (Date, Time, and Location: TBA). It will be an in-person exam. It will ask 1 broad essay question. Students will be graded in absolute terms. The instructor (not the grader) will mark the exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will be 150 minutes in duration and have a 30-minute grace period. It will cover the same material as the original test. The course professor will not be available during the makeup exam to answer questions.
- Missed exam and make-up exam: If you cannot make the test date and the departmental make-up date for a documented reason, then you must write the optional paper and the final exam. Each component will be worth 50% of your final grade.

Final Exam

- Date: Final exam period (Specific date/time is TBA by Registrar's Office)
- Eligibility to sit in the final exam: Student must have completed the midterm exam or the optional paper by the last day of class (i.e., December 6, 2024, 5pm EST)
- Format: Online, typed, short-answer questions, open book, no consultation (person or AI).
- Material: 75% lecture notes + 25% from readings and in-class discussion
- The number of questions: 5-6 questions (subject to my discretion) – 1-2 questions from material covered in the midterm and 3-4 questions from new material (the exact distribution of pre/post midterm exam content will be announced during the review of the final exam).
- Duration: 150 minutes + 30 minutes (grace period)
- Grades: You will be graded on a curve. With some exceptions, the class average will be 78-82%. With some exceptions, the class average for the class will be between 80-82%.
- Late exams: Because students are offered a 30-minute grace period, 1 point will be deducted for each late minute after 180 minutes. This ensures fairness in the amount of time that students have to take the exam.
- Submission: Need to e-mail kate.choi@uwo.ca and the grader. Both e-mail addresses can be found on the first page of your exam.
- Accommodations: If a student is unable to take this exam, you need to go to Academic Counselling or the Dean's Office to obtain the necessary documentation to take the make-up exam. Please note that the final exam is not subject to self reported absences.

- Makeup exam: If a student misses the midterm with proper documentation, a make-up exam will be administered during the departmental make-up exam date (Date, Time, and Location: TBA). It will be an in-person exam. It will ask 1 broad essay question. Students will be graded in absolute terms. The instructor (not the grader) will mark the exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will be 150 minutes in duration and have a 30-minute grace period. It will cover the same material as the original test. The course professor will not be available during the makeup exam to answer questions.
- Missed final exam and make-up final exam: If a student misses the exam with the proper documentation, they will write a 6,000-word essay on a topic designated by the instructor. The paper will be graded by the course professor and will not be curved. Due date: TBD

Optional policy paper

- Date: December 2, 2024, at 1:30pm. Grace period: 4 days. No points will be deducted if you turn in your optional paper by December 6, 2024, 1:30pm EST.
- Format: 2,500-word essay.
- Description: A detailed description and rubric will be provided to students 2 or 3 weeks ahead of the due date.
- Grades: Optional paper will be graded on a curve.
- Feedback: General feedback will be offered to all students who submit the paper at least 7 days before the due date (i.e., November 25, 2024, 1:30pm EST). These will be general comments and offer feedback about ways to improve the paper. The instructor will not do line-by-line edits on your essay, nor will the course professor write paragraphs. Because it is graded on a curve, the course professor cannot guess the student's grade and offer a list of things that they may want to address to get a precise grade.
- Late essays: This paper is optional. Failure to turn in the paper by the end of the grace period will automatically transition the student into Option 1 (midterm + final) without any penalty.
- Communication: There is no need to declare whether or not you will be writing the optional paper. There is also no need to let me know that you will be taking the grace days. You must write in your final exam answer sheet that you wrote the optional paper for inventory purposes.

Extra Credit: Participation

- Attendance: I do not take attendance.
- Philosophy about participation: Participation is an important aspect of all my classes. It is also the part that students find very enjoyable. It also helps develop mastery in verbal skill sets necessary to help students perform better in job interviews, team meetings upon employment, and when they enroll in law/graduate schools.
- Prerequisite to receive participation marks: Must fill out the weekly participation inventory.
- Participation grade: 60% of the marks come from verbal discussions. 40% of the marks come from the participation diary in OWL. Up to 10 percentage points can be added to your exams and/or optional exam.
- Expectations: You will receive a rubric and will be graded before the beginning of the second class accordingly. Below are some noteworthy expectations:

- Length of participation: The skill set being developed is (a) accurate and concise description of a social phenomenon and (b) the construction of an effective argument. This is an important skill to develop for job interviews or to get advanced degrees. If a person is verbose, they seldom can accomplish (a) or (b). I am going to ask that you stay within 2 minutes *unless* prompted to elaborate.
- Number of times students participate: There is no set amount the student needs to speak to receive a good grade. Nevertheless, active listening is an important element of participation. If a student seeks to dominate class discussion, I reserve the right to not call on the student when they raise their hand.
- Relevance of participation points: This is a class where we discuss structural correlates of family formation behavior. Learning how to stay on topic is an extremely important skill to have for your transition into the labor market or higher learning. The student will earn no marks for irrelevant points.
- Disruptive behavior: I care a lot about all my students. Part of caring for my students is ensuring that the classroom is a safe environment for everyone. Politically incorrect speech about the union formation behavior of marginalized groups will be considered disruptive behavior. Although students may provide anecdotal evidence to make a point, they cannot use the classroom to discuss personal dating issues or make assertions about dating/marriage/cohabitation that is unsupported by the academic literature. The determination of what is/is not disruptive behavior is at the discretion of the course professor.
- Consequences to disruptive behavior: To ensure that our class is a pleasant learning environment for everyone, there is a zero-tolerance policy towards disruptive behavior in class. The first time - you will receive a warning in writing; the second time- you will forfeit your right to any extra credit marks. The third time – you will be asked to leave the class and I will request that the student be considered for disciplinary action. It is at my sole discretion to determine what is and what is not disruptive.
- Requests for accommodations for extra credit assignment: This is an extra credit assignment. It also includes flexibility in the assessment: you can also forgo participating in two of the courses without any impact on your extra credit participation marks. As such, I will not offer **any** alternate assignments for this portion of the class, nor will I honor any requests for accommodations for this component of the course.

Grade negotiations

- To contest your grade, there needs to be an academic basis for why you feel like you need a higher grade.
- The grader (who has never met you) marks the exam. I review the exams to ensure that they are graded reliably and validly and decide on a curve. The two-tiered process ensures greater accuracy.
- **Process to negotiate grades:**
 - Research suggests that the likelihood of approaching faculty to verbally negotiate grades are lower for women than for men, more disadvantaged than advantaged students, younger relative to

- older students, and visible minority relative to other students. As someone committed to fairness, I will not entertain verbal grade negotiations.
- **Within 14 days of receiving your grade**, you must write a memo contesting a section of the grade; write down what your answer was, indicate what the written answer was, and explain why your grade deserves to be raised. This approach is taken to ensure that the process is fair and a learning experience.
 - It is also worth noting that I cannot alter grades on grounds of compassion.
 - If you submit another student's grade as an excuse, I will review both students' grades. Simply put, Student B's answer and grade can serve as a rationale for why Student A's grades deserve to be raised, but also a rationale for why Student B's grades should be lowered. Student B – proceed at your own risk.
 - **Invalid basis to contest grades**: I am a true believer in meritocracy and fairness of opportunity. As such, I will not honor student requests to adjust grades on the basis of
 - Student's future career or educational aspirations
 - Self-proclaimed "A-student" status.
 - Parent requests
 - Student's "truth": Exams are places where we test student's mastery with empirically supported findings or facts widely accepted in the literature. They are not places where students get to receive grades for speaking "their truth".
 - **Strategic assistance**: During the individual workshop, the instructor will go over strategies with the student on how to do well in the final exam and optional paper.

Completing the course

- To receive a number grade in the course, students must complete at least 2 of the 3 major components of this course (i.e., midterm, final exam, optional paper) to receive a grade and potentially pass the course.
- If during the semester, you foresee a circumstance precluding you to complete 2 out of the 3 components of the course, consider dropping the course by the Fall official drop deadline.

Grading guidelines

- The Sociology Department has grading guidelines. For a 4000-level class, the class average is between 78-82%.
- Subject to some exception (e.g., exceptionally low grade from a student), I will curve so that the class average falls in the 80-82% range.

Student Absences:

- If you are unable to meet a course requirement due to illness or other serious circumstances, please follow the procedures below.
- University policy on academic considerations are described [here](#). This policy requires that all requests for academic considerations must be accompanied by a self-attestation. Further information about academic considerations, and information about submitting this self-attestation with your academic consideration request may be found here. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration,

in accordance with information presented in this course outline.”

- Students must familiarize themselves with the [Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#). Students missing course work for medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances can request academic consideration by completing a request at the central academic consideration portal. Students are permitted one academic consideration request per course per term without supporting documentation. Note that supporting documentation is **always** required for academic consideration requests for examinations scheduled by the office of the registrar (e.g. December and April exams) and for practical laboratory and performance tests typically schedule during the last week of the term. Students should also note that the instructor may designate one assessment per course per term that requires supporting documentation. This designated assessment is described elsewhere in this document. Please note that any academic considerations granted in this course will be determined by the instructor of this course, in consultation with the academic advisors in your Faculty of Registration, in accordance with information presented in this course outline. Supporting documentation for academic considerations for absences due to illness should use the [Student Medical Certificate](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation by a health care practitioner.
- Students with an approved absence from an in-class test or exam will be required to write a makeup exam. Course professor or teaching assistant(s) may not be available to respond to questions during the makeup exam. Students should be aware that the make-up test will not necessarily be in the same format, be of the same duration, or cover the same material as the original test.

Course Schedule and Readings:

- Weekly course schedule and readings will be made available to the students by the first day of class via OWL. They will center on the following four topics.
 - Demographic Transition Theory and Its Implications for Social Inequality
 - Patterns, trends, and consequences of fertility decline
 - Patterns, trends, and consequences of internal and international migration in Canada and abroad
 - Patterns, trends, and consequences of changing longevity and disparities in mortality

Artificial Intelligence:

Within this course, students are permitted to use AI tools exclusively for information gathering and preliminary research purposes. These tools are intended to enhance the learning experience by providing access to diverse information sources. However, it is essential that students critically evaluate the obtained information, exercise independent thinking, and engage in original research to synthesize and develop their own ideas, arguments and perspectives. The use of AI tools can serve as a starting point for exploring a topic, with students expected to uphold academic integrity by appropriately attributing all sources of information and avoiding plagiarism. Essays, written assignments and/or lab reports should reflect the student's own thoughts and independent written work. Students should also generate their own figures (e.g., graphs, diagrams) rather than using AI generated ones. By adhering to these guidelines, students contribute to a responsible and effective learning environment that promotes critical thinking, independent inquiry and all them to produce original written contributions. The same principles also apply to the use of translation software to support the writing the essays and other written assessments.

Academic Policies:

Please review the Department of Sociology “[Important Academic Policies](#)” document

https://sociology.uwo.ca/undergraduate/courses/Academic_Policies.pdf for additional information regarding:

- Scholastic Offences
- Plagiarism
- Copyright
- Course Selection
- Absence from Course Commitments
- Missed Tests and Exams
- Religious Accommodations
- Accessibility Options
- Mental Health
- Gender-Based and Sexual Violence statement

2024-2025