OBJECTIVES:
This graduate seminar will focus on demographic and socioeconomic aspects of fertility behavior. We start with an overview of the study of fertility, and then examine theories and patterns of fertility decline in both Europe and the Third World, focusing on economic theories as well as institutional and cultural approaches. After examining the impact of family planning programs, we then consider the relationship between women's status and fertility, including the roles of women's education and employment. We then focus on low fertility around the world and discuss the role of public policies to deal with the prospect of future population decline.

FORMAT:
The format of the seminar will vary, but will typically be a combination of presentations and discussion. Students will be expected to give presentations on the readings and to lead class discussion. Thus, it is essential that the assigned readings be completed in advance and that students come to class prepared to participate fully in discussion.

READINGS:
All required readings will be available for students in pdf form on CANVAS (accessible at www.elms.umd.edu).

TOPICS
1. Introduction and Overview (Jan. 29)
2. The Demographic Transition (Feb. 5)
3. Fertility decline in the West (Feb. 12)
4. Economic approaches to fertility (Feb. 19)
5. Non-economic approaches to fertility (Feb. 26)
6. Fertility decline in contemporary third world countries (Mar. 5)
7. The impact of family planning (Mar. 12)
8. Gender, empowerment and Fertility (Mar. 26)
9. Employment and Fertility (Apr. 2)
10. Contemporary U.S. fertility patterns (Apr. 9)
11. Teenage and nonmarital fertility (Apr. 16)
12. Below replacement fertility (Apr. 23)
13. Policies and the future of fertility (May 7)
14. Class Presentations (May 14)
REQUIREMENTS:

Grades will be based on a combination of class discussion (including leading discussion several times during the semester), four short (3-5 page) papers based on the readings, a 15-20 page research paper, and a Powerpoint presentation based on the research paper. The topics and dates for the short papers are listed below (students will select and write on 4 out of 5 topics). Each week, students are also required to post thoughtful comments and questions on the readings, on CANVAS by Mondays at 5 p.m. The discussion leader for the week should send me a set of proposed discussion questions by noon on Tuesday. The research paper may take the form of either a research proposal or an empirical analysis. Both the topic and the form of the paper (proposal vs. analysis) may be selected by the student, subject to my approval (by March 5). The class presentation should consist of no more than 12 PowerPoint slides which can be printed and distributed to the class as a handout.

Topics for short papers:

1. The classic Demographic Transition theory has been highly criticized over the years, with some authors suggesting that it simply be laid to rest. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the 'theory' for our understanding of fertility decline in the West. Should the theory be laid to rest?? Be sure to draw from the readings for this course. (DUE Feb. 12)

2. Demand (or cost-benefit) models underlie many theories of fertility decline. Although originating within the field of economics, they have been applied in many domains. Using the readings for this course, discuss and critique the basic economic approach to fertility, including its assumptions and simple predictions. Then discuss ways in which it has been incorporated into other theoretical approaches that emphasize the social and or cultural context. Be specific. (DUE Feb. 26)

3. Most theories of fertility decline were first developed to explain the Western European experience. However, many theories have since been applied to the experience of contemporary developing countries. Select 2 different explanations for fertility decline in the West and, after briefly explaining each one, discuss their relevance to the experience of a developing country (or region) in the past 2-3 decades. How well do the theories explain the patterns of fertility decline in the developing country/region? Try to be as specific as possible. (DUE Mar. 5)

4. The 1994 World Population Conference in Cairo stressed the importance of raising women's status as a means of reducing population growth. Discuss the mechanisms through which women's status is hypothesized to affect fertility (e.g., demographic, social, cultural and economic). Evaluate the empirical support for these effects, making sure to cite relevant literature. (DUE Mar. 26)

5. It is often argued that because women’s productive and reproductive roles are so closely linked, there are causal relationships between women’s work and fertility, and vice versa. Describe the nature and theoretical bases for each of these relationships (i.e., the impact of employment on fertility and the impact of fertility on employment). Be sure to consider the different aspects of employment (e.g. labor supply, wages, occupation) as well as fertility (e.g., timing and numbers of children, childrearing costs). (DUE April 2).
CLASS SCHEDULE:

1. **Introduction and Overview (Jan. 29)**

2. **The Demographic Transition (Feb. 5)**

3. **Fertility decline in the West (Feb.12)**

4. **Economic approaches to fertility (Feb. 19)**
5. **Non-economic approaches to fertility (Feb. 26)**

6. **Fertility decline in contemporary third world countries (Mar. 5)**

7. **The impact of family planning (Mar. 12)**
(NOTE: Students should give me a brief description (250 words) of their research paper topics and a preliminary bibliography (8-10 references) by today!)
8. **Gender, Empowerment and Fertility (Mar. 26)**


9. **Employment and Fertility (Apr. 2)**


10. **Contemporary US Fertility Patterns (Apr. 9)**


11. **Teenage and Nonmarital Fertility (Apr. 16)**

12. **Below Replacement Fertility (Apr. 23)**

**NO CLASS ON APRIL 30** (PAA annual meeting)

13. **Policies and the Future of Fertility (May 7)**

**CLASS PRESENTATIONS** and **END OF YEAR PARTY!** (May 14)