

Population 8 Billion: World Population Issues and Trends

GEOG 254 / ENVI 254

Spring 2024; MWF 12:00-1:00
Carnegie 105

Instructor: Holly Barcus
Office: 104C Carnegie
Email: barcus@macalester.edu

Drop-In / Office Hours

M 3:30-4:30 p.m.; Tu 1:30-2:30 p.m.

No appointment is needed for Drop-in hours – just drop-in!

I can also meet with you by appointment (if neither time above works for you, we can set a different time). Please email me to arrange a time that works for us both.

Teaching Assistants:

Catherine Driver (cdriver@macalester.edu)
Zoe Frank (zfrank@macalester.edu)

Office Hours: TBA (See Moodle Page)

Course Description and Objectives

In 1798 Thomas Malthus first argued that population growth would exceed food production, which in turn, would lead to widespread starvation. Today we still have not conclusively answered the very controversial question of whether the world is or is not “overpopulated”. Questions of resource availability and distribution, world fertility and mortality rates and increasingly, the redistribution of populations through international migration change the ways in which we consider this question. Contemporary perspectives call out “overpopulation” claims as colonialist and racist, pointing rather to the challenges of overconsumption as the root cause of resource degradation. We’ll tackle these questions and debates through a spatial lens that challenges us to think critically about old and new debates around population.

In this introductory population geography course, we will explore global population trends and the various factors that influence the volume and distribution of populations across the globe focusing on both contemporary and historical population debates. Our objectives will be to understand the current spatial patterns of global human population distribution and how the primary components of population change (fertility, mortality and migration) differentially affect world regions. Contemporary population issues (global health, refugees, immigration, fertility choices and migration decisions) will provide the lens through which we begin to develop an understanding of the historical and, possibly, future trends and debates. We will examine these issues from both macro and micro perspectives. For example, we will consider migration flows such as those between Mexico-US, rural-urban migration in China, and transnational migration in Mongolia, seeking to better understand why individuals decide to move from one place to another and how changes in the global economy influence these decisions. Directed exercises and guest lectures will help you acquire the skills to measure and evaluate population structure and composition and independent projects will allow you to apply these skills to geographic areas of greatest interest to you, both locally and globally.

Learning Goals:

- To become more knowledgeable and proficient at assessing population statistics and information;
- To obtain greater appreciation for the complexity and diversity of perspectives pertaining to population dynamics;
- To specifically understand the spatial and geographical approach to studying human populations;
- To develop as a writer;
- To think critically about contemporary debates surrounding population change.

Textbooks

- Hazen, H.D., H.C. Alberts and K.J. Zaniewski. 2024. *Population Geography: Social Justice for a Sustainable World*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis: New York.

***Additional Readings will be available via Moodle or Library Reserves.

Our Class Community

Courtesy – The first and most important classroom policy is to BE COURTEOUS! This includes:

- If you arrive late or need to leave early, do so with a minimum of disruption.
- Please turn-off all cell phones, etc. during class, and if applicable, on Zoom.
- Be polite when others are speaking, there is enough time to discuss all perspectives.

Course Information – A fair amount of course information will be disseminated via Moodle and email. Please be sure to check your Macalester email account and the course Moodle page regularly.

Drop-in / Office Hours – Drop-in / Office hours provide a great opportunity to discuss questions, issues, or concerns about the class or to just talk about our class. Feel free to “stop by” during office hours or schedule a different time to meet, if your schedule conflicts with the posted office hours.

Attendance - Attendance plays an essential role in learning; you are warmly invited, encouraged, and expected to attend all class meetings. Attendance will be important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another and foster understanding across a range of perspectives. Your presence in class matters.

I recognize that there are unavoidable circumstances that sometimes make it impossible for you to attend class. If you will not be in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me in advance via email. It is also your responsibility to make up work you missed in your absence. If you have accommodations, please discuss these with me early in the course to work out a plan that aligns with maintaining course expectations and learning goals.

Participation - Participation is distinct from attendance and is also an essential part of this course. In-class discussions, on-line discussion forums, responses to brief ungraded writing assignments, etc. will be factored into your participation grade. Engaging with the classroom space — including by helping to create an environment where all of us can learn and think with and from one another — will also be factored into participation.

It is important to remember that we all have different styles of expression. If you have not been able to participate in a class discussion for any reason but want to demonstrate your active engagement, please send me an email after class with a comment or an idea you had that you would have liked to share, but were not able to during class.

This is an interactive course. Our days will be mostly oriented around in-class exercises and discussions. In this class I define participation as attending class regularly and on-time, asking questions, contributing to discussions, being prepared (this means doing the readings and exercises before coming to class) and generally being intellectually engaged in the material.

3 Questions: Asking questions following in-class presentations or guest lectures is an acquired skill. Such skills only improve with practice. 3 Questions challenges you to think about the questions you have about a presentation in this classroom. Questions can come in a variety of forms, for example, asking for clarification, or more information. Think critically, ask questions.

Students with any concerns, questions, or need for consideration for flexibility should connect with me as soon as possible to determine an appropriate plan.

Please note: It may be that illness or other unexpected situations will require you to be away for class for an extended period of time, necessitating that we consider the possibility of withdrawal or an incomplete. We will stay in contact, and will seek support from colleagues in Student Affairs and in Academic Advising, should that situation arise.

Academic Integrity Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable and dishonest. In this class you are expected to complete and turn in your own work and to follow established academic practices regarding proper use and citation of materials and ideas that are not your own. Engaging in cheating or plagiarism will result in a failing grade in this class. More information is available about Macalester's academic integrity policy in the Student Handbook (www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/).

Recording Policy: If it becomes necessary to record our class sessions, for example if we must move to fully remote learning, I will plan to record some of our synchronous class sessions in a manner consistent with [Macalester's classroom recording policy](#). I will share these recordings in a password-protected (and not public) place. If you download any class recordings, you must store them in a password-protected file or on a password-protected site. Please note that the recording policy clearly states that ***you may not share, replicate, or publish any class recording, in whole or in part, or use any of the recordings for any purpose besides knowing what happened during the class period, without my written approval.*** If I use any recorded content from any of our classes for purposes beyond our class, I will – in accordance with the policy – obtain your written permission to do so.

Health and Well-Being: Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Investing time in taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be psychological, emotional, physical, financial, etc., and how they can have an academic impact. I encourage you to remember that sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please reach out to one of the resources listed below.

Please adhere to the [Mac Stays Safer Community Commitment](#), which outlines practices to maintain your own health and that of others around you: wear a mask, wash your hands frequently, use hand sanitizer when handwashing is not available.

Supporting Student Learning: In some circumstances, course design may pose barriers to a student's ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content. If you are encountering barriers to your learning that we can mitigate, please bring them to my attention. Reasonable

accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Disability Services office by emailing disabilityresources@macalester.edu, or calling 651-696-6874 to schedule an appointment to discuss your individual needs. It is important to meet as early in the semester as possible; this will ensure that your accommodations can be implemented early on.

Grading & Assessment

Attendance

Attendance will be taken during each class period. Your attendance counts towards your participation grade. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to make-up any assignments or work that you missed. I do ask that you *PLEASE BE ON TIME* to avoid disrupting the class. More details are provided in the previous section.

Discussion, Readings, and Class Participation

Participating in class is an important component of your grade. You should attend each class period and be prepared to discuss the weekly readings. Please complete the readings before coming to class. I frequently call on students to give a brief overview of an article that we've read or respond to specific questions about a reading. By taking notes while you read the assigned articles and books you will be more prepared to participate in discussion.

The core population processes, fertility, mortality and migration, are highly varied and complex. It is my goal to introduce and include, as much as I possibly can, a wide range of perspectives on these topics. This includes historical, contemporary, Global North, Global South, politically and culturally diverse perspectives. Engaging with these different perspectives fosters intellectual growth and a broader understanding of world views. I invite and challenge you to embrace this intellectual journey and welcome you to contribute additional readings or media that highlight new or alternative perspectives.

Short Writing Assignments

As part of the WA Requirements for this course, you will complete a series of relatively short writing assignments. You will receive feedback on your writing so that you can improve your writing skills. A brief description of each short writing assignment is below. You will receive more explicit instructions and details about each assignment as we progress through the semester.

1. Population Concepts Exercise: This is an exercise designed to help you understand basic statistical measures of population growth and change. This assignment is a combination of data assessment and short written responses.
2. Population, Environment, and Resource Assignment: This is a group assignment designed to highlight global population and resource issues and specific case studies. This is primarily an oral, rather than written, assignment and will help you develop group working skills and oral presentation skills.
3. Country Profile: The topics covered in this class often take a global perspective when defining trends and patterns of change. To add depth to our discussions and a sense of how varied and complex these generalized patterns are in reality, each of you will choose a country which you will profile over the course of the semester according to our topics. Each profile will document the circumstances of your chosen country. There are three short, two-page essays in which you will provide country-specific overviews based on assigned topics. These topics might include assessing current population issues, fertility, mortality, or migration circumstances in your chosen country.

Final Short Research Paper (graded)

This is a longer writing assignment, 12 pages, based on a population topic of your choice. Specific details will be discussed in class. The final paper also includes a draft and final presentation.

Exams (graded)

Exams will consist of short answer, essay, and applied problem-solving questions. There are two exams in this course. Each exam covers lectures, readings, guest lectures and any additional material that we have discussed in class. Exams are in-class and timed. They are “open book” but you are strongly encouraged to study the material so that you are able to complete the exam during the class period.

Make-up and Late Assignments

Exams: Students are expected to take exams at the scheduled time. If extreme circumstances make it impossible to take an exam at the scheduled time, please notify me as far in advance as possible or as soon as possible after an unanticipated emergency.

Assignments: Assignments should be turned in on time. Much of our in-class work together is based on the assignments, readings, etc. that you work on independently and in groups.

Inclusivity and Safe Spaces

In this class we will discuss a wide range of issues. Some of these issues are challenging. I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment that welcomes and supports everybody. We all bring our own life experiences to class. These differences provide an opportunity to see the world, and specifically the topics in this class, from a wide range of perspectives. I aim to include all of these perspectives, respectfully, realizing that we all need safe places to learn about the world. I also recognize that some of the issues may be a trigger for you as an individual. If you encounter a topic that you feel is too challenging to engage with, please let me know. I don't need to know the details, I just need to know how to accommodate your needs. Please know I'm open to these conversations and adjustments and encourage you to take the very best care of your mental, emotional and physical health.

Grading Philosophy

First and foremost, I see you as a person; a person who is complex with a lot of opportunities and challenges in your life. I also see you as an adult who is embarking on an educational journey for many reasons, including curiosity, intellectual growth, skill development, employment opportunities, and many other reasons. I respect that you have many responsibilities in your life and I hope you will extend that same respect to me, as this is one of my many responsibilities (just like you). Because you are an adult I expect that you will approach your education from a balanced perspective, one that acknowledges your many commitments and also acknowledges the importance of you as an individual in this learning community. In my mind, being a good community member in this course has the following characteristics:

- 1) You attend class each day and come to class prepared and ready to learn. Being prepared means that you have read the readings or completed the tasks listed in the syllabus or assigned in previous class periods and are ready to discuss the materials.
- 2) You participate in class. This includes active listening, engaging in discussions and contributing to any group or individual presentations that are assigned.
- 3) You turn in all assignments on time.
- 4) You communicate with me when you are unable to do these things. Communication for me is a key aspect of your education at Macalester. We all occasionally have unexpected emergencies, illnesses, situations that require our immediate attention and preclude fully engaging in a task. Please communicate with me if you need to miss class, turn in a late assignment, etc. We can work it out, if we are communicating with each other.

As a member of this community you should expect the following from me:

- 1) I will be prepared for class.
- 2) I will communicate with you about how best to proceed through the course, be this through Moodle, or email, or written materials or in-person.

- 3) I will support you in your educational journey.
- 4) If I am unable to be in class because of an unexpected emergency, illness, or other situation, I will communicate with you how we will proceed.

We'll talk more about this in class so that we can all feel comfortable with this learning environment and explore ways that we can effectively and thoughtfully fulfill our different, but complimentary, roles in this learning community.

How are assignments “graded”?

- 1) Exams: All exams are graded. You will receive a letter grade for each exam.
- 2) Short Writing Assignments:
 - a. All writing assignments are graded. These assignments are graded on a 50 point scale. They are low stakes but important to complete.
- 3) Final Paper:
 - a. The *draft* of your final paper is graded as follows:
 - i. 50 pts = the draft is complete with all parts of the paper included in the draft.
 - ii. 37.5 pts = most of the draft is complete but substantive parts are missing.
 - iii. 0 pts = no draft is turned in.
 - b. Final Paper is graded based on the Geography Writing Rubric, which we will discuss in class and can also be found on our Moodle page.
 - c. Final Presentation is graded based on the Geography Presentation Rubric, which we will discuss in class and can also be found on our Moodle page.

Grading Scale – based on 950 points

200 = Exams (2 @ 100 points each)
 50 = Population Concepts Exercise
 50 = Resource Presentation
 150 = 3 Country Profile Essays (50 points each)
 200 = Final Paper
 50 = Draft of Final Paper
 50 = Final Paper Presentation
 200 = Attendance, participation and in-class activities. In-class activities are often not graded individually but turning each in is required for full points.

A = 94+	A- = 90.0 – 93.9%	
B+ = 87.0% - 89.9%;	B = 83.0 – 86.9%;	B- = 80.0 - 82.9%
C+ = 77.0% - 79.9%;	C = 73.0 – 76.9%;	C- = 70.0 – 72.9%
D+ = 67.0% - 69.9%;	D = 63.0 – 66.9%;	D- = 60.0 – 62.9%