Syllabus
Family Demography, Sociology 653, Spring 2021

Philip N. Cohen

This course is designed to build knowledge on the key theories, empirical patterns, and contemporary debates in the study of family demography, with lesser attention to methodology. (This course may pair well with another seminar, Families and Modern Social Theory.)

Policies

Academic integrity. Students must be familiar with the UMD Code of Academic Integrity (http://president.umd.edu/sites/president.umd.edu/files/documents/policies/III-100A.pdf). In this course there is zero tolerance for academic dishonesty.

Discussion. We will discuss course readings and related material, as well as current events, social issues, and politics. Everyone is free to express personal opinions and disagree with others, including the professor – just raise your hand. All discussion must be polite and respectful, and differences of opinion are tolerated. I will work to ensure the classroom is a safe space for all of use to participate freely. Please let me know if you have any concerns or suggestions for accomplishing this.

Difficult subjects. The content of this course may include topics that are difficult for some people to confront or discuss. As the professor, I cannot anticipate what those topics are, or who will be affected, but I can be sensitive and work with students who let me know of their needs. If there is a topic you are unable to discuss or need to be warned about, please notify me so we can make appropriate arrangements for your work. We will endeavor to be sensitive and considerate. However, we cannot prevent all students from being exposed to topics or ideas that they find objectionable or offensive.

Universal learning

The principle of universal learning means that our classroom and our interactions should be as inclusive as possible. Your success in this class is important to me. If there are circumstances that may affect your performance in this class, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work together to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Students with particular needs should contact the UMD Disability Support Service (http://www.counseling.umd.edu/DSS/), which will forward the necessary information to me. Please do it now instead of waiting till late in the semester.

Assignments

Presentation. Each student will give one presentation on one of the readings during the semester. This should be 10-15 minutes, including a few minutes summarizing, and then critical reflection and suggesting discussion questions.
Weekly writing. Write a 250/500-word response memo each week, addressing one or more of the readings. Do not summarize the readings. Offer a critical comment, question, or further reflection from the readings. These are due to be posted on ELMS by Tuesday at 5pm each week.

Thought papers. Students will write three more elaborate thought papers engaging the readings from the previous weeks. These exploratory essays will be approximately 2000 words, and make a critical argument, offering a hypothesis to explore, or making empirical connections between the course material and other research, bringing in some sources from outside the course. This is a chance for you to explore your own work in relation to the concepts and research in the course.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on participation (33%), weekly writings (33%), and exploratory essays (33%). Final scores of 90% or more get A's, 80-89% get B's, below 80% get C's.

SCHEDULE

January 27

Introduction


February 3

Theoretical perspectives in demography


February 10

Demographic transition


**February 17**

Second demographic transition


**February 24**

U.S. History


**March 3 [FIRST PAPER DUE]**

U.S. Today


March 10

Pandemic fertility


March 17

Spring Break

March 24

COVID-19 and race/ethnic inequality


**March 31**

**China and fertility policy**


**April 7 [SECOND PAPER DUE]**

**Divorce**


**April 14**

**Policy, race, and nonmarital births**


**April 21**

More U.S. inequality issues


**April 28**

Family structure and child wellbeing


**May 5** [THIRD PAPER DUE]

Maternal mortality


