# Syllabus

Northwestern University

ECON 323-2: Economic History of the United States After 1865

January 2025

**Meeting times:** Tuesday Thursday 3:30-4:50

**Instructor:** Dr. Jesse McDevitt-Irwin

**Email:** jesse.mcdevittirwin@northwestern.edu

**Office Hours:** Tuesday 2-3, Kellog Global Hub 3479

**Teaching Assistant:** Franco Malpassi, francomalpassi@u.northwestern.edu

**Discussion sections:** Friday 4-4:50

The TA will use discussion sessions to provide support for students working with IPUMS data, offering guidance on coding and data analysis.

**Prerequisites:**

ECON 281-0, ECON 310-1, ECON 311-0 are required. ECON 323-1 is not a prerequisite.

**Software Requirements:**

This course requires the use of *R* and RStudio. No prior knowledge will be assumed, and all required software is freely available.

## Course Description

In 1860, the population of the US was 30 million; by 2010 it was over 300 million. US families in 1860 had an average of 5 children; by 1940 that number was 2. In 1900, 1-in-5 people died before age 5; by 1980, that number was less than 1-in-50. How did these changes occur? How do we measure them? How did these changes affect US society?

In this course, we will examine the **demographic history** of the US from after the Civil War to the mid 20th century. Students will learn core demographic concepts and measures, like fertility and mortality rates. They will explore the demographic patterns and changes in the United States. They will examine leading theories for **fertility** and **mortality** decline and explore the role of **immigration** in US history. Students will learn to analyze publicly available census microdata from IPUMS, culminating in an independent research project.

## Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Understand and use the **core toolbox of demography**, including **population pyramids**, **fertility** and **mortality** measures, and **period** and **cohort** analysis.
2. Be familiar with the **main empirical patterns of fertility and mortality** in the US from 1870 to today.
3. Be familiar with the main theoretical explanations for historical declines in fertility and mortality: **demographic transition theory**.
4. Be familiar with **how population is measured**, especially with the decennial US **census**.
5. Be able to access and analyze **US census microdata from IPUMS**, and plot these data in *R*. Students will learn to make **figures and maps in *R***.

## Assignments and Grading

- Assignments (30%)
  - **3 assignments** of 10% each.
- Midterm (30%)
  - **Essay questions** based on material covered in class.
- Final Project (30%)
  - **Independent research project** using **IPUMS** data.
- Participation (10%)
  - Based on reading responses, due every week on Tuesday at noon.

**Key Dates:**

- January 20: Assignment 1
- February 10: Assignment 2
- February 20: Midterm (in-class)
- March 3: Assignment 3
- March 17: Final Project

## Class Participation

For most classes, I will assign 1-2 readings. You will need to submit **1-2 comments or questions** related to each reading (when there are two readings, you'll need to submit questions or comments for both). I encourage you to use alternative forms of media, such as audio recordings, videos, or memes. But you may also simply write your responses.

There will be **10 readings** total; of these, **8 will count toward your grade**, allowing you to skip up to 2 submissions. These "freebies" are available for reasons like illness or a busy schedule. You don't need to provide reasons for skipping, but use them wisely.

These responses will be due every **Saturday.**

## Course Schedule

### *Week 1: Overview*

- **Readings**:
  - Demographic Transition
- **January 7**: Course overview and expectations
- **January 9**: Measuring Population: the US Census and IPUMS
  - **Homework**: Register for IPUMS-USA, install R, and install the following packages: tidyverse, ipumsr, ggplot2, usmaps, and gganimate.

### *Week 2: Tools of Demography*

- **Readings**:
  - Period vs. Cohort Measures
- **January 14**: Population pyramids
- **January 16**: Cohorts, periods, and Lexis diagrams

### *Week 3: Mortality*

- **January 20**: **Assignment 1 due**
- **Readings**:
  - Cain and Hong 2001
  - Preston et al. 1994
- **January 21**: Mortality Concepts (life tables and death rates)
- **January 23**: Measuring mortality (direct and indirect methods)

### *Week 4: The Mortality Transition*

- **Readings**:
  - Colgrove 2002
  - Condran and Crimmins 1978
- **January 28**: Mortality in the 19th Century
- **January 30**: The Epidemiological transition

### *Week 5: Fertility*

- **Readings**:
  - Lahey 2014
- **February 4**: Fertility Concepts and Measurement (CBR to ASFR to TFR)
- **February 6**: The First Demographic Transition

### *Week 6: Fertility*

- **Readings:**
  - Easterlin 1976
- **February 10**: **Assignment 2 due**
- **February 11**: Explaining fertility decline (theory)
- **February 13**: Fertility since 1950

### *Week 7: Midterm*

- **February 18**: Review session
- **February 20**: **Midterm Exam**

### *Week 8: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration*

- **Readings**:
  - Lee 1993
  - Bakhtiari 2022
- **February 25**: Decoding "Race" in the US census
- **February 27**: Immigration to the US over the *longue durée*

### *Week 9: Workshop Week*

- **March 3**: **Assignment 3 due**
- **March 4**: Working on final projects
- **March 6**: Working on final projects

### *Final Project Due*

- **March 17**: **Final Project due**

## Readings

*All readings will be made available online, nothing needs to be purchased.*

**Required**

Bakhtiari, E. 2022. "European Immigration and Patterns of Intra- and Interracial Mortality Inequality in the United States, 1900 to 1960." *Socius* 8: 1-13.

Cain, Louis, and Sok Chul Hong. "Survival in 19th century cities: The larger the city, the smaller your chances." *Explorations in Economic History* 46.4 (2009): 450-463.

Colgrove, James. 2002. "The McKeown Thesis: A Historical Controversy and Its Enduring Influence." *American Journal of Public Health* 92 (5): 725–29.

Condran, Gretchen A., and Rose A. Cheney. 1982. "Mortality Trends in Philadelphia: Age- and Cause-Specific Death Rates 1870–1930." *Demography* 19 (1): 97–123.

Easterlin, Richard A. "The Conflict between Aspirations and Resources." *Population and Development Review*, vol. 2, no. 3/4, 1976, pp. 417–25.

Lahey, J. N. (2014). The effect of anti-abortion legislation on nineteenth century fertility. *Demography*, *51*(3), 939-948.

Lee, S. M. (1993). Racial classifications in the US census: 1890–1990. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *16*(1), 75–94.

Wanamaker, M. H. (2012). Industrialization and fertility in the nineteenth century: Evidence from South Carolina. *The Journal of Economic History*, *72*(1), 168-196.

**Suggested** (for final project)

Morgan, S. Philip, Susan Cotts Watkins, and Douglas Ewbank. 1994. "Generating Americans: Ethnic Differences in Fertility." In *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census*, edited by Susan Cotts Watkins, 83–124.

Preston, Samuel H., et al. 1994. "Child Mortality Differences by Ethnicity and Race in the United States: 1900–1910." In *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census*, edited by Susan Cotts Watkins, 35–82.

## Course Policies

Northwestern University Syllabus Standards

This course follows the Northwestern University Syllabus Standards. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with this information.