SOC 389K (46395) – DEMOGRAPHY OF HEALTH AND THE LIFE COURSE SYLLABUS – FALL 2014
INSTRUCTOR: MARK D. HAYWARD

TIME AND PLACE: Monday, 12-3, CLA 3.106

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment only. Please call or e-mail for an appointment. My office is located at CLA 2.622E. My office phone number is 512-871-8382. My email is mhayward@prc.utexas.edu.

COURSE CONTENT: This course is intended to provide an in-depth introduction to the major conceptual frameworks and empirical research examining distal and proximate social factors influencing adult health. The underlying question is – “Does the body forget insults and exposures from adverse social conditions over the life course?” In grappling with this question, we will pay close attention to the intersection between the etiology of adult health conditions and the major life-course trajectories of socioeconomic status and family. Of major importance will be the assessment of key social and biological pathways linking social conditions at particular points in the life course with adult health outcomes.

REQUIREMENTS: The course is organized as a seminar. Although I will provide overviews and/or supplemental material in lecture, much instruction takes place in the context of guided discussion and exchanges focused on the readings. Students are expected to attend each class and to have read all of the assigned material thoroughly and critically before the class meeting. Reading critically means not only being able to describe the content of an assigned piece, but also to evaluate the scientific issues motivating the research question, the conceptual/theoretical strengths of the research, the adequacy of the study’s methods, the scientific implications of the study’s findings, and the study’s relation to other course material). Students are strongly encouraged to contribute to the discussion both their insights and/or questions from the readings and their own experiences.

There are two major tasks to be accomplished in this graduate seminar:

1) The first task involves preparation of the reading for class presentation and discussion. All students are responsible for all of the assigned readings. Class discussions will be oriented around informal student presentations based on the assigned readings. For each class meeting, a student will be assigned an article, and the student will informally present the scientific factors motivating a study, the key gaps in knowledge being addressed, the major findings, and the conceptual/methodological strengths and weaknesses of the study. An outline of the presentation’s key points (1 page) should be distributed to the class on the dat prior to class. The informal presentations should not be longer than 15 minutes – and 10 minutes is desirable! (20% of grade)

2) The second task is an empirical study on a topic that is relevant to the course’s overall aim. Two assignments are required in accomplishing this task: a Powerpoint presentation and a term paper. The empirical study may overlap with research being done either as part of a student’s thesis/dissertation research, in conjunction with work being done in another course (with the
The study should be original research, with the aims of making a scientific contribution to the literature and publication in a scientific outlet.

Given the time constraints imposed by the semester, I recommend that students rely on publicly accessible datasets (e.g., the Health and Retirement Survey, the National Health Interview Surveys, MIDAS, the National Longitudinal Surveys, Americans’ Changing Lives, and Aging, Status, Sense of Control). Other rich datasets are available from NACDA and ICPSR, two major electronic data archives.

Students are required to discuss their topic with me before moving forward. Students should submit 1-page abstracts on October 20th. I will use the abstract to gauge the paper’s topic relevance to the course aims, and as a basis to provide critical feedback to refine conceptual ideas and focus the analysis.

1) Powerpoint presentation: I have scheduled presentations for December 1st. These sessions will give students a chance to present their work to their colleagues, to field comments, and to refine their ideas and analysis prior to submitting the term paper. Presentations should follow the format that one would use if presenting the results at a major scientific meetings such as the Population Association of America. (30% of grade)

2) Term paper (Due December 8th): the term paper should aim to be a publishable scientific work suitable for submission to a scientific journal such as Demography. Students should review articles in Demography or other major journals for guidance on presentation styles and organizational format. (50% of grade)

NOTE: THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN PROVIDES UPON REQUEST APPROPRIATE ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENTS FOR QUALIFIED STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF STUDENTS AT 471-6259, OR 471-4641 TTY. In addition, please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability.

COURSE READINGS (Subject to change)

SEPTEMBER 8
Class Organization Meeting

SEPTEMBER 16
Introduction: Conceptual Frameworks of the Life Course and Population Health
1. Conceptual models of population health
2. Conceptual Models of the Life Course and Health
   Ben-Shlomo, Y. and D. Kuh. 2002. "A Life Course Approach to Chronic Disease Epidemiology:

**(Read for background)**

**SEPTEMBER 22**
**Trends in Adult Health**
A. Long-term Trends in the United States
B. An International Perspective on Long-term Mortality Trends

**SEPTEMBER 29**
**Trends in Adult Health (continued)**
C. A Cohort Perspective on Trends

**OCTOBER 6**
**The Persistence of the Health Disparities into Old Age**
OCTOBER 13
How Does Childhood Influence Adult Health? Conceptual Frameworks

(read for background)

OCTOBER 20
Consequences of Childhood Health for Adult Health

OCTOBER 27
Consequences of Childhood Socioeconomic Resources for Adult Health

NOVEMBER 3
Gender and Life Course Influences on Health


**(Read for background)**


**NOVEMBER 10**

Potentially Troubling Trends in Population Health in the United States


**NOVEMBER 17**

Biodemographic Approaches to Population Health

1. Biological Risk, Disease and Mortality


**(Read for background)**


**NOVEMBER 24**

2. Genetically Informed Models of Health and Complex Social Behaviors


**DECEMBER 1**
Powerpoint presentations

**DECEMBER 8**
Final research papers are due