Demographic Issues in Asia:  
Demographic Change and its Social Consequences

JSISA 431/SOC 434  
Meeting:  T-Th 1:30-3:20 in MEB 246  
Instructor:  William Lavely  
lavely@uw.edu  
Office hour:  F 9:00-10:00 in Savery 275

Course description:  In the latter half of the twentieth century most of East Asia experienced a rapid demographic transition to low mortality and fertility. This transition has profound implications for marriage, family structure, economy and society. This course will inquire into the causes of demographic change in East Asia (mainly, greater China, Japan, and Korea), as well as the consequences. It will consider the role of state-sponsored population policies in guiding demographic change, including China’s one-child policy; important contemporary trends, such as rural-to-urban migration, the retreat from marriage, very low fertility, population aging and the “missing girl” phenomenon; and the implications of female deficits for marriage markets, public health, and social order. The class format will consist of lectures, video documentaries, and discussions.

Learning Goals: The course aims to provide a basic understanding major trends in East Asian populations, and of basic concepts related to these trends, including:

- demographic transition, and how East Asian transitions differ from transitions elsewhere
- demographic and family systems; comparison of European and Chinese systems
- the role of the state in promoting fertility change in East Asia
- the retreat from marriage and the advent of very low fertility
- population aging, and its implications for social welfare and economy
- rapid urbanization in China, and the emergence of a migrant underclass
- the origins of son preference, the rise of sex ratios, and the broader social implications
- the costs and benefits of coercive family planning programs

Course requirements and grading: There will be an in-class midterm, a take-home final examination, two short papers, and occasional diagnostic quizzes and exercises. The course grade will be determined as follows: midterm 25%, final 25%, papers (2) 20% each, and diagnostic quizzes combined 10%.

Midterm. The in-class midterm is scheduled for Thursday February 2nd. It will consist of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions.

Short papers. Two short papers are assigned. The paper assignments and specifications will be introduced in more detail at a later time.

The first paper will be on a topic (of your choice) related to Asian demography. It should focus on two articles (of your choice) selected from scholarly population studies.
journals. The paper will be no more than two pages of text and one of appurtenances (tables or graphs). **Paper #1 is due in class on Thursday January 28th.**

The second paper will be a review of a book pertaining to the problem of abandoned and “hidden” children in China. It will be no more than two and one-half pages. The book in question is:


The Johnson book is available for purchase at the University Bookstore and such booksellers as Amazon.com. **Paper #2 will be due in class on Thursday February 23rd.**

*Diagnostic quizzes.* There will be several short quizzes which will not be announced in advance. The answers will form the basis for discussions.

*Final examination.* Final exam questions will be distributed in class on the last day of class, Thursday March 9th. Final exam answers should be saved in pdf format and emailed to the instructor ([lavely@uw.edu](mailto:lavely@uw.edu)) no later than Thursday March 16th at noon.

**Course readings:** Readings are available through the Libraries website via JSTOR and other electronic journals, and on the course website.

**Course website:** The website, [http://courses.washington.edu/soc434](http://courses.washington.edu/soc434), contains the syllabus, course readings, reading guides, and lecture slides (which will be posted after the lecture). A login ID and password are necessary to access the internal section of the site. These will be given out in class.

**Graduate Students:** Graduate students may substitute a longer substantive paper in lieu of the short papers and the final examination. Those who adopt the long paper option may be asked to make a brief presentation to the class on the subject of their paper. Graduate students should meet with the instructor early in the quarter to discuss their plans.

**Instructor absence:** There will be no class meeting on Tuesday February 21st. There will be no office hour on Friday February 24th. Please make an appointment.

**Important Dates:**

- Thurs 1/26: Paper #1 due
- Thurs 2/2: In-class midterm exam
- Tues 2/21: No class meeting
- Thurs 2/23: Paper #2 due
- Thurs 3/9: Take-home final distributed
- Thurs 3/16: Final exam due
Week 1: Introduction/Theory and History

1/3 Course overview

1/5 Demographic Transitions; Pre-transition Asia


**Week 2: Asian Fertility Transitions**

**1/10** Family Planning: the liberal model

**Writing workshop: discussion of paper requirements and suggestions**


**1/12** Birth Planning: coercive fertility control


Week 3: Urbanization and migration

1/17 Urbanization and public policy in China


1/19 The plight of migrants

Video: The Last Train Home. 85 minutes


Week 4: The retreat from marriage and very low fertility

1/24 The retreat from marriage


Very low fertility: a second demographic transition in Asia?  Paper #1 Due


Week 5: Age structure effects of transition: aging and labor force

1/31  Aging, welfare, and the labor market


In-class midterm examination

Week 6: Missing Girls

2/7 The rise of missing girls in East Asia [Meet in MEB 238]


Video: It’s a Girl. Shadowline Flims 2012. 58 minutes.


2/9 Family systems and gender preference [Meet in MEB 238]


Video documentary: *Keep her under control: law’s patriarchy in India*. Produced by Erin Moore, 1998. 52 minutes.

**Week 7: Son preference and sex selection in (some) Asian societies**

2/14  Family change, variation, and sex preference


2/16  Sex-differential mortality


Week 8: Critiques of the Chinese Birth Planning

2/21 Instructor Absent: No class meeting

2/23 Evaluating the one-child policy Paper #2 due


**Week 9: Effects of high sex ratios**

2/28 Marriage markets and marriage squeeze


3/2 Consequences of high sex ratios


Week 10: Adoption and Hidden Girls; Prospects

3/7 Book Discussion: Kay Ann Johnson, *China’s Hidden Children*

3/9 What’s coming? The Two-child Policy and beyond

*Take-home final examination distributed*