POPULATION CONTROL POLICY: HISTORY, ETHICS, AND GLOBAL IMPLEMENTATION

A MASTERS LEVEL COURSE CURRICULUM

By Joanna Davis

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Approved by:

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Advisor

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Reader
It is tempting to view issues surrounding population control as relatively new phenomena, as we note the contentious debates surrounding abortion, resource inequalities, and environmental degradation as top concerns of the twenty-first century. However, the “issue of population control” dates back thousands of years, to the scholars of Greece, China, and Rome as they theorized appropriate population sizes. Population control, as we know it, began in the late 1700’s, as Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus described the ill-effects of unchecked population growth on food supply, arguing “Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio.” He believed that it was impossible for the world to sustain this exponential growth without tragedy in the form of mass starvation. In the 1960’s, when the world’s population reached three billion and Paul Ehrlich wrote the best-selling “The Population Bomb” which warned of overpopulation leading to global disaster, many started to support the idea of curbing population growth. Globally, the concept that government intervention in the form of public campaigns and mandates could influence human fertility was also catching on. The world saw changes in how governments reacted to population growth. In India, the response to a rapidly growing and impoverished population included incentivizing sterilization; in Singapore, a post-war baby boom saw the promotion of delayed marriage and the liberalization of abortion restrictions. Perhaps most famously, in China, the newly sovereign nation went from a pro-natalist view under Mao Zedong, who saw a large population as a building block for economic development, to the coercive and unevenly enforced “One Child Policy.”

Programs that limit population growth in particular areas of the world have sparked some of the largest public health controversies of our time, dividing factions of people who believe that it is our responsibility to limit the exponential growth of earth’s people to sustain human life, and those who believe that fertility choices should be individually mandated. Efforts to control population via direct mandates and indirect influences have caused both distal and proximal effects beyond the scope of what Malthus might have imagined.

These effects of population control policies are explored in this course, as students compare and contrast the programmatic approaches of countries in Asia, Africa, North and South America to

3 Ehrlich P. The population bomb. New York: Sierra Club-Ballantine; 1968: 201
7 China’s one child policy: The policy that changed the world. The BMJ. 2006;333:361-362.
control population. This course includes an examination of how population policies result in economic, environmental, social, and cultural changes. Often times, this link is neither clear nor linear, as shifts in population and demographics transversely affect these factors as well.

The idea of fertility manipulation through population control is critical in the study of Maternal and Child Health, which encompasses the care for women’s reproductive health. The consequences of coercive, forced, or poorly enforced family planning programs unequally affect women. With the current shift towards a human-rights based approach to fertility control, and a focus on family planning, public health practitioners are creating, advocating for, and monitoring family-planning programs that allocate the decision of fertility to the individual. However, there is still much that needs to be done in this arena, including creating programs in which birth control is accessible, affordable, and the decision to receive either short-term or long-term contraceptives is made by the individual. This course explains these problems, and looks towards the future in assessing how viable and long-term solutions might be achieved.
MCH791: POPULATION CONTROL POLICY: HISTORY, ETHICS, AND GLOBAL IMPLEMENTATION

Class Meeting Time: Wednesdays 9:00-12:00pm, Fall 2015

Course Overview

This course is divided into three distinct parts. The first part contains classes that overview major underlying themes in population control, such as the ethics behind controlling population and the economic factors that affect population trends. These broad topics will create a foundation for understanding individual case studies of population control policies. In the second section of the course, students will examine population control policies in individual countries and will compare and contrast these efforts on a larger scale. Finally, students will explore both the indirect and direct effects of population control on other issues, including the environment, migration, and gender, and abortion as well as learn how current trends contribute to the future of family planning. Students will explore patterns noted in DHS data from countries outside the US, as well as examine global population control policies that have been successful historically to make predictions and recommendations for the future of family planning.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1) Identify how demographic transition and economic development are related to population trends

2) Compare and contrast population control policies in modern-day Asian, African, North and South American countries

3) Explore the relationship between human population and the environment

4) Discuss ethical considerations of controlling population from a human rights perspective

5) Understand current trends in family planning

Course Learning Objectives and MCH Competencies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Learning Objective</th>
<th>Competency Addressed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate effective written and oral health communication skills appropriately adapted to professional and lay audiences with varying knowledge and skills in interpreting health information.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize information technology tools and effective core public health functions such as retrieval of institutional and online public</td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Competency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engage in collective information sharing, discussion, and problem solving.</td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>Show effective and productive skills in working with diverse individuals.</td>
<td>Diversity and Cultural Competency</td>
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<td>Demonstrate basic team building, negotiation, and conflict management skills.</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Create a climate of trust, transparency, mutual cooperation, continuous learning, and openness for suggestion and input with co-workers, partners, other stakeholders, and/or clients.</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Exercise productive organizational, time-management, and administrative skills.</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Develop knowledge of one’s individual strengths and challenges, as well as mechanisms for continued personal and professional development.</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Respond to identified public health needs within their appropriate contextual setting.</td>
<td>Systems Thinking</td>
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<td>Apply evidence-based concepts in public health decision-making.</td>
<td>Professionalism &amp; Ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consider the effect of public health decisions on social justice and equity.</td>
<td>Professionalism &amp; Ethics</td>
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<td>Identify needed resources for public health programs or research.</td>
<td>Program Planning</td>
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**Requirements**

Requirements for this course aim to measure the five key competencies listed above. Requirements include in-class, individual, and group-based assignments. The Class Participation requirement measures Communication, Leadership, and Diversity and Cultural competency, as students will be expected to lead discussions and include alternative opinions and attitudes towards population control policies and ethics as they work to create a climate of mutual respect and acceptance. The individual assignments, including the Midterm and Individual Paper, will measure Professionalism and Ethics, Program Planning, and Communication skills, as students will examine the effects of population control methods proximally and distally, as well as develop family planning programs by using real life examples and best practices to respond to public health needs. Finally, group-based assignments will measure Leadership, Communication, and Diversity and Cultural Competency as students work together to review real public health data to examine family planning policies and make future recommendations. Students will have to manage their time individually and as a group, and cooperate to turn in a finished product that includes both oral communication, in the form of a class presentation, as well as a written paper.
**Class Participation:** Each student will be responsible for leading a 5 – 10 minute discussion on the week’s reading at the beginning of each class. This should include questions that arose, and teaching points from the readings. In addition, students are responsible for class attendance, unless otherwise excused. Students should come to class having done the reading for that week. Students should participate openly to class discussions and debate.

**Midterm In-Class Exam:** Students will have 90 minutes to complete an in-class exam in the middle of the semester. Students will answer three questions, each with multiple components, in order to apply concepts that have been taught thus far. Students will be required to think critically and solve problems of overpopulation, dissect individual country’s population control policies, and consider the health consequences of these policies.

**Individual Paper:** Students will respond to the following prompt. Paper’s will be submitted via e-mail, and should be approximately 2,000 words. Papers should use Times New Roman font, be double-spaced, and include the student’s PID number in the upper right hand corner of each page.

*Prompt:*

From an ethics perspective, explore the topic of sex selection as outlined in Mara Hvistendahl’s book “Unnatural Selection.” Be sure to include the following in your discussion:

- *Should* women be allowed to know the sex of their baby before birth, given that we have the technology to do so?
  - Does it make a difference that many women are able to bribe providers into telling them the sex of the fetus?
- What regulations *should* be in place to restrict sex-selective abortions, if any?
- What responsibility do the government, society, and the individual have to help eradicate the gender disparity?

**Final Group Presentation:** Students will form class groups in the middle of the semester. Each group will work to create a 20 minute presentation as well as a 20 page final paper based on one country that we have not specifically mentioned in class to present on. Students will review the DHS fertility data for that country. Presentations should provide historical background, including development trends and how they influence fertility. Presentations should analyze trends in fertility, using real sources about family planning or government interventions related to population control. Students should suggest the future of the country in terms of population growth, and present solutions or options for maximizing the country’s economic, environmental, and public health success.

**Final Group Paper:** Presentation groups will be responsible for providing a 20 page paper based on the research they have done on the historical population trends, and predicted future trends of the country of their choosing. Papers should address all points delivered in the group
presentation in great detail. Students will use the AMA style to cite their resources, and will properly attribute their work.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Presentation</td>
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<td>Group Paper</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>H</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>80-93</td>
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<td>70-80</td>
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**Resources:**

**Books:**


**Articles:**

Articles are presented under each week’s topic. Articles can be found in PDF version on Sakai.

**Weekly Topics and Schedule**

**August 19th: Introductions**

*Objectives:*

Review course objectives, assignments, and exam format; provide information on where to find assigned books and readings; discuss honor code regarding class exams and papers; personal introductions

*Assignment:*

Students will select one week to lead class discussion on readings. Sign-up sheet will be emailed out by the professor via Google Docs.

**August 26th: An Overview of Population Control**

*Objectives:*

Review historical support and opposition of population control, considering ancient perspectives from the Greeks (Plato, Aristotle), Chinese (Confucius), and Romans (Augustus);
discuss Malthusian perspective of population vs. subsistence, and positive/preventative checks; explain the population control “movement” beginning in 1920’s Margaret Sanger efforts to support birth control in form of sterilization, as well as 1950’s and 60’s fears of population explosion after world population reached 3 billion; discuss lobby to limit human fertility; review reproductive rights based approach beginning in 1980’s, and currently shifting towards decreasing effects of overpopulation.

Readings:

Audio:

September 2nd: Population Control and the Economy

Objectives:
Discuss the economic considerations of overpopulation, including the “chicken/egg” question of overpopulation/fertility increases and bad economy; consider if there are economic benefits to large or dense populations, taking into account the theories of Casey Mulligan and Julian Simon from the readings; examine demographic transitions in populations, in which countries with demographic transitions see declines in birth rates and consider why; discuss fertility changes and links to changes between dependent/active population; analyze whether investing in family planning has economic benefits

Readings:

September 9th: Ethics of Population Control

Objectives:
Analyze the ethics of discussed government implementation of population control methods: coercive population control methods (extreme paternalism, social welfare principle) vs passive population control mechanisms; consider if the benefits to society are worth the burden of restricting personal fertility choices; discuss the parties that benefit by population control, and whether it is the better-off or worse-off; class personal freedom debate: does the right for women to control her own body (reproductive freedoms) include the right to choose whether or not to bear children and how many? At what expense is this to society?; examine direct vs indirect
population policies: rewards for having fewer children vs. paid maternity leaves, for example and discuss if either are more coercive or in violation of human rights

Readings:

September 16th: A History of Population Control in North Carolina

Objectives:
Define eugenics as racist theory advocating for selective breeding to improve gene pool; discuss forced sterilization occurring in NC from 1929-74 in which 7,600 “socially/mentally unfit” women were sterilized; consider NC law that allowed this practice; review actions being taken towards surviving families identified by the state; discuss victim compensation under the 2010 NC Justice for Sterilization Victims Foundation formed by Governor Bev Perdue; debate ethics of $10 million allowance, and whether this is acceptable reparation; consider alternate actions that might be taken

Readings:

September 23rd: China’s Approach to Population Control: “The One Child Policy”

Objectives:
Overview brief history of Chinese views on population, from Mao’s strength-in-numbers approach to the later shift to fertility control; examine the regulations constructed by the “one-child policy,” including which groups were formally omitted from the restrictions on childbearing; discuss implications of the policy, including reduction in fertility, use of forced/coerced abortions and sterilization, and gender implications and a male-dominated generation; review global reactions to the policy; discuss updated policy as of 2013; consider ethics of government-regulation over human fertility, if this is a human rights violation, whether there are humane alternatives to this approach

Readings:

**September 30th: Population Control in Singapore**

*Objectives:*

Discuss Singapore’s post-war population boom and subsequent “Stop at Two” program enacted by the People’s Action party where women were encouraged to become sterilized after birth of the second child; review disincentives such as financial penalties and lack of maternity leave for having more than two children, as well as financial advantages given to women of lower education to become sterilized; overview the negative effects of this policy, including public reaction to similarities to eugenics, an aging population, and workforce shortage; discuss pro-natalist changes, including the “baby bonus scheme” in which families are encouraged to procreate, the “romancing Singapore” campaign that encourages marriage, and the Social Development Network; class discuss whether birth rate would have changed naturally due to economic advancement

*Readings:*


**October 7th: Population Control in India**

*Objectives:*

Examine lead-up to Indira Gandhi’s Forced Sterilization Program, including President Johnson making family planning a condition of food aid, analyze restrictions of the program, such as men with two or more children being subject to sterilization; discuss forced sterilization of those outside the regulated groups; examine “sterilization camps” in terms of class reading, as well as global and national criticism of camps; discuss current trends in sterilization, including forced/incentivized sterilization today; assess gender imbalances due to restrictive policy, compare with China, and review the effects on society

*Readings:*

October 14th: In Class Midterm

To view midterm questions, see Appendix a.

October 21st: Population Control in Africa

Objectives:
Discuss fertility rate increases using Nigeria as a case study; review projected population estimates for Nigeria from end of century and the call for birth control as a strategy for population reduction; examine food crises as a potential result of overpopulation, using Niger as a case study; review different theories explaining high fertility rates in Africa, including the unmet need for contraception, early marriage and increased reproductive years, high infant mortality, low levels of education for girls and women, cultural norms favoring large families and leaving contraceptive decisions to males; discuss global responses to overpopulation, including educating girls, reducing child mortality, development of new vaccines, and investment in female empowerment

Readings:
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6uTz-Rvsi0

October 28th: Population Control and the Environment

Objectives:
Raise the question: Can we ‘fix’ the environment by curbing population growth; discuss if sustainability can be reached by limiting fertility, or if there is any scenario in which human population growth can be limited enough to cause immediate effects on environment; analyze how public education plays into the ability of our population to use natural resources more effectively; evaluate viable land resources in terms of demand for land to produce agriculture and maintain human life; consider threats to water resources that result from waste disposal and inadequate water sources; discuss overpopulation/over-consumption concerns such as air pollution, overcrowding, and government ability to fund public services; debate earth’s capacity for sustaining human life and if population control or new technologies are the answer to conservation

Readings:

**Assignment:**
Students will propose country they are choosing for the final presentation, and decide on groups. Groups will support this decision with a ½ page explanation of why they have chosen this country, mentioning history, demographic changes, and population trends.

**November 4th: Migration and Population Control**

**Objectives:**
Explore internal migration, including the benefits and drawbacks of relieving pressures caused by overpopulation in highly populated areas with migration to rural farmlands; discuss considerations for human settlement and the question “can compensation motivate people to move to sparsely populated areas?”; examine urban migration using Brazil and Mexico as case studies for developing countries; assess idea of Government Sponsored Migration using Indonesia as case study for government encouraged development in sparsely population islands and the results of this migration; debate internal and external migration as means of population control

**Readings:**

**Video:**

**November 11th: Abortion**

**Objectives:**
Discuss overview of historical views on abortion: from “war against human society,” to questions of morality, to trends towards legalization of abortion laws, to existing barriers to abortion; overview sex-selective abortion practices in Indian and China and the resultant gender imbalance; consider why these societies favor male heirs, and consequences of a society that is heavily male; discuss balance between legalized abortion and illegal sex-selective abortions; class debate on whether abortion the prohibition of late-term abortion in these countries is ethical and if it is reducing the sex selection problem; discuss instances of coercive abortion in China and the ethical considerations of such vs “societal good”

**Readings:**

**November 18th: Focus on Family Planning**

*Objectives:*

Examine The International Conference on Population and Development, “Cairo,” 1994; evaluate which countries attended, what issues were brought up like birth control, unsafe abortion, gender empowerment; the four discussed goals of the conference; definition of reproductive health and fact that it did not include abortion access; discuss results of the conference; deliberate on the influence of Cairo, from “population control” in which governments attempt to control fertility and family size to improvement of lives of women to slow population growth; discuss the social determinants that were thought to influence overpopulation and how they were addressed; evaluate the US and family planning, including the Title X of the Public Services Act which provided comprehensive family planning other than abortion; discuss the future of family planning and the reduction of unintended pregnancies

*Readings:*


**December 2nd: Brazil’s Model of Population Control**

*Objectives:*

Define machismo as the typical school of thought: more people more power; describe falling birth rates in Brazil: In 1980, women were having an estimated 4.3 children. Around 2010 this level fell below the replacement rate of 2 children; discuss reasons for this decline: urbanization, women in the workplace, access to family planning; examine the practice of female sterilization as commonly used contraception: clinics reimburse for the procedure, 1 in 2 women are estimated to have been sterilized; discuss criticisms of the practice as an ineffective way to combat poverty; consider the power of media in Brazil, as *telenovas* are credited with showing strong female leads and small families as desirable; consider the future of family planning in Brazil with a focus on reducing adolescent pregnancy, and the abortion discussion

*Readings:*

Assignment:
Final papers due.

December 9th: Group Class Presentations
Objectives:
Students will demonstrate effective oral communication by presenting a 30 minute group presentation using the following prompt:

Choose one country that we have not specifically mentioned in class, and review the DHS fertility data for that country. Provide historical background, including development trends and how they influence fertility. Analyze trends in fertility, using real sources about family planning or government interventions related to population control. Suggest the future of the country in terms of population growth, and present solutions or options for maximizing the country’s economic, environmental, and public health success.
Appendix a.

In Class Midterm Exam

You will have 90 minutes to answer the following questions.

1. Choose one distal and one proximal effect of government regulated population control policies.
   i. Describe why these are potential results of the policy.
   ii. Examine the implications of this result on the individual, family, community, and societal level.
   iii. Examine what checks might need to be implemented in order to lessen this effect

2. Pretend that you are the director of Health and Human Services for the country Zorp, located in the continent of your choosing. Provide an argument for why investing in family planning would benefit the country.
   i. Include economic, environmental, and social considerations
   ii. Briefly overview what services you might suggest investing in, or creating in order to benefit your citizens
   iii. Describe what opposition you might face

3. Compare the population control policies of India and China
   i. How are the two countries similar in their approach to population control? How are they different?
   ii. Which country had the “better” policy, and for what reasons?
   iii. Did either country achieve its intended results? What might be a few “lessons learned” from both countries?