

# Topics in Economic Demography --- Spring Semester 2024

**Instructor: Prof. Philipp Ager, University of Mannheim and CEPR**

**Email: [philipp.ager@uni-mannheim.de](mailto:philipp.ager@uni-mannheim.de)**

**Goals and contents of the module:** This course will discuss the main triggers that led to a fertility decline in Europe and North America during the 19th and 20th centuries. The historical fertility transition that countries in North America and Europe experienced is regarded as one of the most important determinants of rapid and sustainable long-run growth. Falling fertility rates allowed the transition from a Malthusian regime, where income per capita was roughly constant, to a regime with lower population growth and higher living standards. The focus of this course is on empirical studies. We will discuss the role of different factors that contributed to this transition, such as structural change, technological progress, health improvements, the rise in female labor force participation, education, and culture. The material covered in the course is grounded in the field of economic history and demography.

**Grading:** Seminar paper (50 %), presentation (40%), and in-class participation (10%)

**Requirements:** Students are required to select one paper from the list for the in-class presentations on April 20/27, 2024. Allocation of the paper is on a first-come, first-served basis (please pick 3 articles and indicate what you prefer to present).

**Presentation:** The presentation should be 30 minutes long, containing a detailed summary of the presented article including a critical evaluation (80%) and an open discussion at the end of the presentation which the student is leading (20%).

**Seminar paper:** All students need to write a term paper (max. 10 pages incl. Tables/Figures and References) based on their paper presented in class. Students are expected to critically assess the paper. It is important to identify the central research question and to evaluate the paper's relevance to the field. The term paper should include a critical assessment of the estimation approach and include an independent but related research idea based on the topics discussed in class. The proposed idea could be used as a topic for the master thesis.

## Format:

Max 10 pages (incl. Tables/Figures)

Format: one-sided DIN A4

Font Size: 12 pt

Line Spread: 1.5 pt

Alignment: justified ("Blocksatz")

Left and right margin: 3 cm

Hand-in date: May 25, 2024

## **List of papers for in-class presentations**

### **The role of education for the fertility transition:**

Bleakley, H. and Lange, F., 2009. Chronic disease burden and the interaction of education, fertility, and growth. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 91(1), pp.52-65.

Aaronson, D., Lange, F. and Mazumder, B., 2014. Fertility transitions along the extensive and intensive margins. *American Economic Review* 104(11), pp. 3701-24.

Fernihough, A., 2017. Human capital and the quantity-quality trade-off during the demographic transition. *Journal of Economic Growth*, 22(1), pp.35-65.

Cummins, N., 2022. "The causal effects of education on age at marriage and marital fertility." Working Paper. <https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/115400/1/WP341.pdf>

### **Health/Fertility Control:**

Ager, P., Worm Hansen, C. and Sandholt Jensen, P., 2018. Fertility and early-life mortality: Evidence from smallpox vaccination in Sweden. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 16(2), pp.487-521.

Bhalotra, S., Venkataramani, A. and Walther, S., 2023. Women's Fertility and Labor Market Responses to a Health Innovation. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, p.jvac072.

Lahey, J.N., and Wanamaker, M. H., 2022. Effects of Restrictive Abortion Legislation on Cohort Mortality Evidence from 19th Century Law Variation. NBER Working Paper 30201. <https://www.nber.org/papers/w30201>

Bauernschuster, S., Grimm, M. and Hajo, C., 2023. The Impact of Margaret Sanger's Birth Control Clinics on Early 20th Century US Fertility and Mortality. IZA Discussion Paper 16118. <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/272745/1/dp16118.pdf>

### **Structural Change/Technological Progress**

Ager, P., Herz, B. and Brueckner, M., 2020. Structural change and the fertility transition. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 102(4), pp.806-822.

Lewis, J., 2018. Infant health, women's fertility, and rural electrification in the United States, 1930–1960. *Journal of Economic History*, 78(1), pp.118-154.

Vidart, D., 2024. Revisiting the Link between Electrification and Fertility: Evidence from the Early 20th Century United States. Unpublished Working Paper. [https://www.dropbox.com/s/i6pt1juryloevxg/Vidart\\_FertilityElectrification.pdf?raw=1](https://www.dropbox.com/s/i6pt1juryloevxg/Vidart_FertilityElectrification.pdf?raw=1)

## Female Labor Force Participation

Schultz, T.P., 1985. Changing world prices, women's wages, and the fertility transition: Sweden, 1860-1910. *Journal of Political Economy*, 93(6), pp.1126-1154.

Aaronson, D., Dehejia, R., Jordan, A., Pop-Eleches, C., Samii, C. and Schulze, K., 2021. The effect of fertility on mothers' labor supply over the last two centuries. *The Economic Journal*, 131(633), pp.1-32.

Kitchens, C.T. and Rodgers, L.P., 2023. The impact of the WWI agricultural boom and bust on female opportunity cost and fertility. *The Economic Journal*, 133(656), pp.2978-3006.

## Culture

Beach, B. and Hanlon, W.W., 2023. Culture and the historical fertility transition. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 90(4), pp.1669-1700.

Spolaore, E. and Wacziarg, R., 2022. Fertility and modernity. *The Economic Journal*, 132(642), pp.796-833.

Blanc, G., 2022. The Cultural Origins of the Demographic Transition in France. Job Market Paper. [https://www.guillaumeblanc.com/files/theme/Blanc\\_secularization.pdf](https://www.guillaumeblanc.com/files/theme/Blanc_secularization.pdf)

## Institutions

Gay, V., Gobbi, P.E. and Goñi, M., 2023. Revolutionary transition: Inheritance change and fertility decline. CEPR Discussion Paper 18607. <https://hal.science/hal-04285818/document>