

Ph.D. in “Life Course Research” – Socio-demographic curriculum

Academic Year 2024-2025

Contemporary Fertility across Wealthy Countries

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Objectives

The aim of the course is to introduce students to macro-level theories of fertility change, micro-level theories of fertility behaviour and the micro-macro interactions. Fertility and childlessness are introduced as related, but distinct phenomena. At the end of the courses, students should comprehend the major theories that explain the trends and patterns of fertility. These theories are situated within the overarching framework of the human life course, embedded in institutional contexts that reflect economic, social, cultural and historical conditions. In addition, students should understand the fertility response to situational changes such as technological change, economic development, and rising uncertainty. Students should be able to apply these theories to interpret data on levels and differentials in fertility and childlessness and their drivers.

Program

1. Day 1, 16/12, 10:30-13:30

Contemporary Fertility: Trends and Explanations

2. Day 2, 17/12, 10:30-13:30

2.1 Policies and Fertility

2.2 The gender equality debate (students reflect and discuss on the *Demographic Research* debate: “Should governments in Europe be more aggressive in pushing for gender equality to raise fertility?”)

3. Day 3, 18/12, 10:30-13:30

3.1 Childlessness (in collaboration with Valentina Tocchioni)

3.2 The declining fertility debate (students reflect and discuss on the question: “Over the past few decades, economic uncertainty has been raised as a potential factor in lowering fertility rates. Do you think this is the case? What about other types of uncertainty, such as climate change, social uncertainty, or armed conflict? Are other factors important?”)

4. Day 4, 19/12 10:30-13:30

4.1 Topics in Contemporary Fertility Research: Conference-Style Seminars (20-minute presentation + 10-minute Q&A with students):

- Giammarco Alderotti: Health issues and fertility
- Elisa Brini: Childcare and fertility
- Marco Cozzani: Climate change and fertility

4.2 The low fertility debate (students reflect on the question: “Is very low fertility good or bad for the family, gender and society?”)

Suggested readings

Day 1

- Alderotti, Giammarco, Daniele Vignoli, Michela Baccini, Anna Matysiak (2021). Employment Instability and Fertility in Europe: A Meta-Analysis. *Demography*, 58(3): 871-900.
- Esping-Andersen, G., Billari, F. 2015, Re-theorizing Family Demographics. *Population and Development Review* 41(1): 1–31
- Goldscheider, F., Bernhardt, E. Lappegard, T. (2015). The Gender Revolution: A Framework for Understanding Changing Family and Demographic Behavior. *Population and Development Review*, 41(2), 207–239
- Goldstein J.R., Sobotka T., Jasilioniene A. 2009. The end of lowest-low fertility? *Population and Development Review* 35(4): 663-699.
- Matysiak, Anna, Daniele Vignoli (2024). Family Life Courses, Uncertain Futures, and the Changing World of Work: State-of-the-art and Prospects. *European Journal of Population*, 40.
- Vignoli, Daniele, Raffaele Guetto, Giacomo Bazzani, Elena Pirani, Alessandra Minello (2020). A Reflection on Economic Uncertainty and Fertility in Europe: The Narrative Framework. *Genus*, 78(28).

Day 2

- Alderotti, Giammarco, Raffaele Guetto, Paolo Barbieri, Stefani Scherer, Daniele Vignoli (2024). Unstable employment careers and (quasi-)completed fertility: evidence from the labour market deregulation in Italy. *European Sociological Review*.
- Gauthier, A. H. (2007). The impact of family policies on fertility in industrialized countries: a review of the literature. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 26, 323-346.
- Gauthier, A. H. (2008). Some theoretical and methodological comments on the impact of policies on fertility. *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*, 6, 25-28.
- Guetto, Raffaele, Giammarco Alderotti, Daniele Vignoli (in press). Can Family Policies Enhance Fertility? An Ex-Ante Evaluation through Factorial Survey Experiments. *Demography*.
- Wesolowski, K. and Ferrarini, T. (2018) 'Family policies and fertility: Examining the link between family policy institutions and fertility rates in 33 countries 1995-2011', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 38(11/12), 1057–1070.
- Hoem, J. M. (2008). Overview Chapter 8: The impact of public policies on European fertility. *Demographic Research*, 19, 249-260.

Day 2 Debate

Demographic Research debate on Should governments in Europe be more aggressive in pushing for gender equality to raise fertility?: <https://www.demographic-research.org/articles/special/9>

- Laurent Toulemon: The first YES
- Dimiter Philipov: The first NO
- Livia Sz. Oláh: The second YES
- Gerda Neyer: The second NO

Day 3

- Kreyenfeld, M., & Konietzka, D. (2017). Childlessness in Europe: Contexts, causes, and consequences (p. 367). Springer Nature.
- Tanturri, L. et al. (2015) State of the art report: Childlessness in Europe. Families and Societies Working Paper n. 32.

Tocchioni, V., Rybińska, A., Mynarska, M., Matysiak, A., & Vignoli, D. (2022). Life-course trajectories of childless women: Country-specific or universal? *European Journal of Population*, 38(5), 1315-1332.

Brini, E. (2020). Childlessness and low fertility in context: evidence from a multilevel analysis on 20 European countries. *Genus*, 76(1), 1-38.

Day 3 Debate

Vignoli, D. et al. 2020. A Reflection on Economic Uncertainty and Fertility in Europe: The Narrative Framework. *Genus* 76(1): 28.

Comolli, C. L. (2023). Social Climate, Uncertainty and Fertility Intentions: from the Great Recession to the Covid-19 Crisis. *European Journal of Population*, 39(1).

Bastianelli, E. (2024). Climate change worries and fertility intentions: Insights from three EU countries. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 1–17.

Perelli-Harris, B., Gerber, T., & Hilevych, Y. (2024). Uncertainty and Fertility in Ukraine on the Eve of Russia's Full-Scale Invasion: The Impact of Armed Conflict and Economic Crisis. *European Journal of Population*, 40(1), 28.

Additional suggested readings on contemporary fertility research

Albertini, M., & Brini, E. (2021). I've changed my mind. The intentions to be childless, their stability and realisation. *European Societies*, 23(1), 119-160.

Barbieri, Paolo, R. Bozzon, S. Scherer with R. Grotti and M. Lugo (2015) The Rise of a Latin Model? Family and Fertility Consequences of Employment Instability in Italy and Spain, *European Societies*, 17(4), 423-446.

Barbieri, Paolo; Bozzon, Rossella (2016) Welfare, labour market deregulation and households' poverty risks: An analysis of the risk of entering poverty at childbirth in different European welfare clusters, *Journal of European Social Policy*, 26(2).

Bernardi, L., Huinink, J., Settersten R.A. (2019). The life course cube. A tool for studying lives. *Advances in life course research*, 41.

Chudnovskaya, M. (2019). Trends in childlessness among highly educated men in Sweden. *European Journal of Population*, 35(5), 939-958.

De Graaf, ND, Wiertz, D (2019): *Societal Problems as social bads*. Routledge. Chapter 2 <https://www.routledge.com/Societal-Problems-as-Public-Bads-1st-Edition/de-Graaf-Wiertz/p/book/9781138480216>

Guetto, R., Tocchioni, V., Vignoli, D. (2023b). The social impact of labour market flexibilization and its fertility consequences in Italy. *Societal Impacts*, 1(1-2).

Guetto, Raffaele, Maria Francesca Morabito, Matthias Vollbracht, Daniele Vignoli (2023). Fertility and Media Narratives of the Economy: Evidence from the Italian News Coverage. *Demography*, 60(2): 607-630.

Kalter, F., Kronenberg, C. (2014). Between Mechanism Talk and Mechanism Cult: New Emphases in Explanatory Sociology and Empirical Research. *Koelner Zeitschrift fuer Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*. 66:91–115.

Kohler H.-P., Billari F.C., Ortega J.A. 2002. The emergence of lowest-low fertility in Europe during the 1990s. *Population and Development Review* 28: 641-680.

Kreyenfeld, M. (2021). Causal Modelling in Fertility Research: A Review of the Literature and an Application to a Parental Leave Policy Reform**Comparative Population Studies*, Vol. 46 (2021): 269-302

- Matysiak, Anna, Tomas Sobotka, Daniele Vignoli (2021). The Great Recession and Fertility in Europe: A Sub-national Analysis. *European Journal of Population* 37(1): 29-64.
- Raab, Marcel, and Emanuela Struffolino. "The heterogeneity of partnership trajectories to childlessness in Germany." *European Journal of Population* 36, no. 1 (2020): 53-70.
- Rybińska, A. (2021). Trends in intentions to remain childless in the United States. *Population Research and Policy Review*, 40(4), 661-672.
- Stegen, H., Switsers, L., & De Donder, L. (2021). Life stories of voluntarily childless older people: a retrospective view on their reasons and experiences. *Journal of Family Issues*, 42(7), 1536-1558.
- Van Winkle, Zachary (2020) Family policies and family life course complexity across 20th-century Europe. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 1. 30(3) 320–338.
- Vignoli, Daniele, Letizia Mencarini, Giammarco Alderotti (2020). Is the Effect of Job Uncertainty on Fertility Intentions Channeled by Subjective Well-Being? *Advances in Life Course Research*, 46, 100343.
- Vignoli, Daniele, Alessandra Minello, Giacomo Bazzani, Camilla Matera, Chiara Rapallini (2022). Narratives of the Future Affect Fertility: Evidence from a Laboratory Experiment. *European Journal of Population*, 38: 93-124.