

First-Year Seminar – Fall 2015

Longer Lives, Fewer Babies, and the Extraordinary Rise of Living Alone:
How Demographic Transformations Determine our Present and Shape our Future

Professor: Tony Underwood

Office: Althouse 216

Phone: 717-245-1782

Email: underwoa@dickinson.edu

I check my email very frequently. If you are unable to meet with me during my scheduled office hours, please email me to schedule an alternative time to meet. My door is (almost) always open!

Office Hours: Monday & Thursday, 3-4pm; Wednesday, 9:30-10:30am; or by am145.3125 529.2cm BT 50

Course Description and Learning Goals

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) introduces students to Dickinson as a “community of inquiry” by developing habits of mind essential to liberal learning. Through the study of demographic change and its implications for economic, social, and environmental sustainability, students will:

- critically analyze information and ideas in the texts we discuss;
- examine issues from multiple perspectives;
- discuss, debate and defend ideas, including one’s own views, with clarity and reason;
- learn to find, evaluate, and correctly incorporate outside sources so as to avoid plagiarism; and
- create clear academic writing.

This seminar’s topic investigates how demographic transformations determine our present and shape our future through a lens of sustainable development. In 1950, four million American adults lived alone, accounting for 9 percent of all households. Today 33 million – roughly one in every seven adults – live alone, accounting for 28 percent of all U.S. households. One million people live alone in New York City, and in Manhattan, nearly half of all residences are one-person dwellings. Average life expectancy at birth in the U.S. has increased from 62 years in 1935 to 79 years today to a projected 85 years in 2050. Longer life spans beget lower birthrates. As living standards improve and people become more confident that their children will survive into adulthood, succeeding generations reduce the number of children they have. As a result, the population grows more slowly – which is good news for the planet – but what does it mean for society? What does it mean for the future of the U.S. economy? These demographic transformations are dramas in slow motion. They unfold incrementally, almost imperceptibly, but have real consequences; some of them good, others maybe not. Through a variety of readings in demography, economics, environmental science, and sociology we will explore the demographic changes occurring in the United States and elsewhere and discuss their consequences. Why are so many adults living alone? Why are people having fewer babies? Why are adults waiting so long to get married, or not getting married at all? Meanwhile, 10,000 baby

2. **RISK.** Be open with your opinions and your questions. Listen to and encourage everyone's ideas so they can take risks too.
3. **RELAX.** Don't take criticism of your own ideas personally. Change your mind when the evidence shows that you should.
4. **RESPECT**

All incoming Dickinson students are required to complete the Academic Integrity Tutorial posted on Moodle by **Monday, September 21, 2015 no later than 8 AM**. Students who do not complete this tutorial will not be able to request spring classes during the registration period in October.

Instructions:

-

- You are present and engaged

relevant professor prior to any accommodations being implemented. These meetings should occur as soon as possible in the semester, and at least five days before any testing accommodations. Disability Services is located in Biddle House. Address inquiries to Stephanie Anderberg at 717-245-1734 or email disabilityservices@dickinson.edu. For more information, see the Disability Services website: www.dickinson.edu/disabilityservices.