Hist 184: Modern China

Dr. Daniel Meissner

**“Who Counts?” Mathematical Reasoning Assignment**

**Objective:**

Mathematical reasoning is an important skill for critical interpretation and analysis of historical data, statistics and graphs. This assignment is designed to assess those skills – in conjunction with your knowledge of Modern China’s social, economic and political development – through the exploration of a hypothetical scenario.

**Task:**

As we have studied in class, China’s population since 1949 has been seriously affected by political policies that have resulted in tremendous demographic consequences – both intentional and unintentional. Land Reform purges, Korean War casualties, the Great Leap Forward famine, Cultural Revolution attacks, and the One-child policy have all negatively impacted China’s growth rate. Your task in this mathematical reasoning/historical analysis assignment is threefold:

1) calculate China’s current population (Fall 2008) ***if*** these major decreases in population had not occurred

2) graphically represent this population in comparison with China’s present population

3) write an analytical paper that critically assesses the possible consequences this increased population might pose to the social, economic, and political situation of China and the world today. That is, based upon your knowledge of modern Chinese history, what might be a *likely outcome* of the population projection you have calculated?

**Specifics:**

1) Assume that China’s population growth rate remains constant throughout the period (2.3% increase per year)

2) Disregard emigration/immigration factors and rural/urban birth rate disparity

3) Determine China’s population in 1950

4) Calculate China’s **compounded population growth** for the past 58 years.

5) Graphically represent your findings in comparison to China’s present population. You should

decide which type of graph (pie, bar, linear) most effectively illustrates the differences in

population.

**Assessment:**

This assignment requires mathematical reasoning, historical knowledge and imagination. Your finished work will be assessed according to accuracy and creativity. However, your analysis must be based on **informed** opinion – not wild speculation. Include in your analysis, *reference* to the major policy decisions made primarily during the Mao era that negatively affected the population growth rate, and provide approximate numerical figures for these losses. You should also include reference to post-Maoist reforms that seriously affected (both positively and negatively) China’s population growth rate.

These political policies provide a context for your analysis, however, I am most interested in possible scenarios or outcomes of unrestricted population growth in China. That is, what effect might China’s expanded population have on national and international priorities such as political and social control, food supplies, health care, the environment, military decisions, or employment? What do you consider to be the most likely scenario for China’s theoretical historical development?

**Length:**

The final paper should be at least five double-spaced, one-inch margin typed pages.

**Due:**

The final calculations, graph and paper are due next Friday, November 21.

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An individual should not have too much freedom.

A nation should have absolute freedom.   
***Sun Yat-sen***

**Key Concepts, People, and Events for Week 6 from Lectures and Readings**

Spheres of Influence

Guangxu Emperor (1875-1908)

Empress Cixi (d. 1908)

100 Days of Reform (1898)

Yuan Shikai (1859-1916)

China’s debt

Rights Recovery Movement

Boxer Rebellion (1898-1900)

Open Door Notes (1898, 1900)

Sun Yatsen (1866-1925)

Guomingdang

Three Principles of the People

Wuchang Incident (October 10,1911)

Qing Dynasty Collapse (2/12/12)

**“Who Counts?”**

**Compound Growth**

In order to refresh your mathematical reasoning skills, this course will include a major assignment on calculating and graphing growth rates. One of the most important concepts to understand is how compounding produces exponential (rather than linear) growth. Compound growth calculates the cumulative sum of percentage increase (which we briefly covered earlier).

For example, compound growth can determine how much you would earn if you deposited $1,000 in a bank account at 5% per year interest for 20 years. The equation for determining compound growth is:

**S = P(1 + i)n**

S = the final amount

P = your original deposit ($1,000)

i = interest rate (5percent/year)

n = number of years (20 years)

S = 1000 x (1 + .05)20

S = 1000 x (1.05)20

S = $2653.30