

CFPR SEMINAR SERIES (JAN-APR 2025)

POLITICAL DEMOGRAPHY: HOW DO STRUCTURAL POPULATION SHIFTS SHAPE DEMOCRATIC PROGRESS AND DECLINE



04 April 2025
10AM - 11AM (SGT)
Zoom



Session chaired by:
Assistant Prof. Zheng Mu
(CFPR Co-Deputy Director & Department of
Sociology and Anthropology)

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The past half century has witnessed substantial demographic changes and democratic transformations worldwide, reshaping the social and political landscapes of many countries. How do structural demographic shifts influence the democratic trajectories of societies? Our study assesses the role of key demographic factors in the processes of democratization and democratic backsliding, using an original longitudinal dataset covering 152 countries from 1975 to 2020. The results demonstrate that demography has powerful and multifaceted political implications. Factors related to population composition and distribution, such as migration and age structure, exert a more pronounced impact on democracy than mere population size or growth. Importantly, demography is not destiny: its influence on democracy is often nonlinear, interacting with pre-existing socioeconomic and political conditions in complex ways. As demographic shifts continue to unfold globally, the findings underscore the critical need to understand these dynamics. The field of political demography remains a promising area for scholarly inquiry, offering valuable insights into the connections between demographic trends and democratic governance.

OUR SPEAKER



Professor Yao Lu
PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY

Yao Lu is a Professor of Sociology and Faculty Affiliate at the Columbia Population Research Center, the Data Science Institute, the Weatherhead East Asian Institute, and the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy at Columbia University. Her research centers at the intersection of inequality, demography, and political sociology. Her current work primarily focuses on 1) the influence of structural demographic forces on political processes, 2) the sources of inequality by gender, race/ethnicity, and nativity in the high-skilled labor markets, and 3) the broader social and political consequences of unemployment and underemployment among college graduates in multiple contexts.