ECO 2210Y

**Topic No. 19: Population Growth and the Economic Development of Early Modern Europe**


**The Debate in Journal Articles**


QUESTIONS:

1. Did population growth in England and western Europe during the 16th century produce a ‘Malthusian crisis’ by or sometime after ca. 1600? What did Malthus (and Ricardo) say about population growth? Were ‘diminishing returns’ the inevitable result of population growth in this era? Were technological changes sufficient to counteract the ‘law of diminishing returns’?

2. Whether or not England experienced a ‘Malthusian trap,’ what happened to real incomes and living standards during this era of population growth: for urban and rural labourers; peasants; artisans; landlords? Who gained and who lost in this era? What other factors, besides demographic ones,
determined changes in real incomes during this period?

3. Explain when, why, and how Europe's population grew during the 16th and 17th centuries, and then why it ceased to grow. If there was no ‘Malthusian trap’, why did that population growth not continue into the modern era? What role did famine, disease, warfare, and the ‘European marriage pattern’ etc. play in European demography before 1750?

4. Discuss the positive as well as the negative effects of population growth in England from 1500-1750: upon settlement, trade and overseas expansion, investment, technological change in agriculture and industry.