

Sociology 230: Rural Society in Transition

Fall 2017

Tues/Thurs 8:00 – 9:20 AM

119 East Hall

Instructor

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Office hours: Tues/Thurs 1- 2 PM, and by appointment

I. Course Description

Rural America, its people and its natural resources play an essential role in the U.S. economy and society. Yet, rural people and places have remained largely invisible. The major issues and challenges facing rural communities have received little attention from policy makers or the national media. However, the 2016 US Presidential election brought rural America into the national spotlight as many rural people responded positively to Donald Trump’s message of “America first”, economic populism, and nationalism. The 2016 election results have inspired efforts to better understand rural America, the rural-urban divide, and spatial inequality within the US.

This course utilizes a sociological perspective to critically examine and better understand some of the key issues and concerns facing rural America. Many of society’s social problems related to social mobility, economic development, or sustainable food production, have an important rural dimension. As an introduction to rural sociology, this course will introduce you to key sociological concepts, including social stratification, social structure, inequality, and the sociological imagination, to examine a range of social phenomena, such as population growth and change, immigration, poverty, and food insecurity, and its implications for social inequality in rural America.

II. Course Objectives

The specific course objectives are to:

1. Increase students understanding of some of the most pressing social problems facing rural America.
2. Provide students with key sociological concepts that are necessary to understand and critically examine social structures, social change, inequalities and social relationships within rural society from a sociological perspective.
3. Provide students with opportunities to develop their critical thinking skills through reading, writing, class presentations, and class discussion.

III. Learning Objectives

By the end of this course students will be able to:

1. Define rural America and the rural-urban continuum.

2. Describe the major changes taking place in rural America and the key social problems facing rural people and places.
3. Explain key sociological concepts, such as social and spatial inequality, and provide examples related to rural America.
4. Identify academic and nonacademic sources and databases to find reliable and factual information on rural America.
5. Use a sociological perspective to analyze a contemporary problem facing rural communities.

IV. Course Overview

The course is divided into three major parts.

Part I has two objectives: 1) To introduce students to the sociological perspective. Key questions that we will consider include: What is sociology? How do sociologists analyze social phenomena? 2) To understand what is rural America and to consider rural places as places of diversity and change. Here we will consider the challenge of defining 'rural', and examine some of the key demographic changes taking place. Key questions that we will consider include: What do we mean by 'rural'? Are rural and urban fundamentally different or two sides of the same coin? Who lives in rural America? How are rural communities changing and why?

Part II focuses on how rural peoples make a living and how this is changing. Key questions that we will consider include: What is the rural economy? How does the rural economy differ from the urban economy? How has the structure of agriculture changed and what has been the effect on family farmers, farmworkers, and rural communities? How does the structure of the rural economy effect rural communities?

Part III considers the socio-economic wellbeing of rural Americans in the context of the changes we have discussed in Part I and Part II. Here we will draw on the sociological concepts of social stratification, inequality and social class. Key questions that we will consider include: What factors contribute to the persistence of social problems, such as rural poverty, drug abuse, hunger, and food insecurity in rural America? How do these problems affect rural communities? What policy options exist to deal with these social problems? We will end the course by considering how these issues influenced rural voters in the 2016 Presidential election.

V. Course Materials Readings

- There is no textbook. All reading materials are available on Blackboard (see info below)

VI. Course Requirements 1) Blackboard

We will be using the on-line Blackboard website

<https://bb.its.iastate.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp> All readings are available on Blackboard.

You must check the site regularly for emails, updates, announcements, course changes, grades, etc. If you do not know how to use Blackboard or the university email system, or you have other questions regarding technology, contact the **Solution Center on campus: 294-4000.**

2) Preparation, Attendance & Active Participation

Education is a collective endeavor – you get out of it what you put into it – **active participation** and engagement is the way that most of us learn best. Therefore, I expect all students to have completed all assigned readings **before** coming to class, bring the readings to class, and be prepared to discuss. Most of the material from your assigned readings will not be covered in lectures and the lectures will cover material that is not in your assigned readings.

Undergraduate students are expected to spend two hours in preparation outside of class for each credit hour. Therefore, for this 3-credit course I expect that you will spend an average of **6 hours per week outside of class** on activities such as reading, note taking, participation assignments, reviewing lecture notes, etc.

Attending **all** lectures, completing the assigned readings, participating in classroom discussions, and conscientiously completing the course assignments is essential for **earning** the grade you desire.

Note that the lecture outlines posted on Blackboard are a compliment to, not a substitute for, the notes you take in class. ***Therefore, you need to take complete notes during the lecture.***

- Attend office hours. I am happy to meet with you outside of class. If you cannot attend the scheduled office hours, let me know and I can organize another time to meet. Please note, however, that office hours will not be used to cover material that students miss when voluntarily deciding not to attend class.

3) Class Policies: Professionalism, Mutual Respect, Inclusivity

Classroom learning is a group activity and the behavior of each person in class affects the learning outcomes of others. The following rules are designed to ensure that the classroom experience is a positive one for everyone involved.

- It is expected that students arrive to class on time and remain for the entire class period.
- It is expected that students give their full attention for the entire class. Please do not sleep, chit-chat, read the newspaper or other materials, or engage in any other kind of disruptive behavior in the classroom.
- Laptops/iPads may be used for note-taking and class-related activities only.
- All phones, as well as the internet on your electronic devices, must be turned off during the entire lecture. No exceptions.
- You are expected to treat myself and all other participants in the course with courtesy and respect. Your comments to others should be factual, constructive, and free from harassing statements. You are encouraged to disagree with other students, but such disagreements need to be based upon facts and documentation (rather than prejudices and personalities). It is my goal to promote an atmosphere of mutual respect in the classroom. Please contact me if you have suggestions for improving the classroom environment.
- If you are absent, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. You should obtain notes from a fellow classmate and inquire about any announcements made in class.

Sociology code of ethics for human relations: The Department of Sociology is committed to providing a professional and educational environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. The Department's Code of Ethics for Human Relations and the Procedures for Filing Complaints of Discrimination or Harassment are posted on the bulletin boards on all five floors of East Hall.

Learning disabilities students: If you have a learning disability and need special accommodations, make this known to me at the beginning of the semester. You will also need to contact the Disability Resources (DR) office, located on the main floor of the Student Services Building, Room 1076 or call them at 515-294-6624.

VII. Course Assessment

1) Active Class Participation (15%)

NB: You will not be allowed to make-up participation grades for any reason.

Every class period will provide students the opportunity to engage with, discuss, and reflect on the material presented in the lectures and readings. **Active participation** in class is worth a total of 15 percent of your final grade. Each week points will be assigned (see schedule below for specific points) to a variety of activities, which may include quizzes on the lecture and reading material, preparation and involvement in discussions, individual (i.e., reading summaries/demographic analysis) and group assignments, etc. In calculating your final grade, I will drop your **three** lowest grades. This means that you can miss three classes and three participation assignments without your grade being penalized. **NB: you must attend class to receive active participation points** (i.e. you cannot complete a quiz if you do not attend class).

2) Exams (15% each)

There will be a multiple choice and short-answer exam following the completion of each unit (three exams in total). Exams will cover material from lectures, films, and assigned reading materials.

PLEASE NOTE: Make up exams will not be given except under unavoidable and exceptional circumstances (e.g. major illness, serious family crisis), where I am notified **PRIOR** to the exam.

3) Library Data Assignment (10%)

This assignment is intended to help you understand how to access and use the USDA-ERS database on rural communities *Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America*.

4) Group Research Project (30%)

To consider the challenges and opportunities confronting rural people and places, you will conduct a group research project on a social issue or social problem (e.g. immigration, meth/opiate epidemic, farm concentration, fracking, poverty, school consolidation) in a place of your choosing (e.g. McDowell County, West Virginia; Lone Pine Indian Reservation, California). As part of the project, you will be required to research, review the literature, collect data, write about, and give a class presentation on your topic. More information will be provided in class. You will hand in sections of the project throughout the semester.

Grading and Evaluation

Due Date	Assignment	Points	%	Grading Scale
Sept 21	Exam 1	30	15	As (A, A-) (90-100%) Bs (B+, B, B-) (80-89%) Cs (C+, C, C-) (70-79%) Ds (D+, D, D-) (60-69%) F (<60%)
Oct 24	Exam 2	30	15	
Dec 11 (8 am)	Exam 3	30	15	
Sept 28	Library Project	20	10	
	Research Project		30	
Sept 12	Part I	10	5	
Oct 19	Part II	10	5	
Nov 30	Part III	30	15	
Dec 5	Presentation	10	5	
	Active Participation	230	15	
	Total	400	100	

Academic Integrity

If you are caught cheating you will not only fail the exam/assignment but also the entire course. No exceptions. Plagiarism involves misrepresenting someone else's work as you own. This may include, but is not limited to, improper citations and bibliographies in your papers and copying another person's paper, including material taken from the internet. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense that will not be tolerated. Any type of academic dishonesty that is discovered will result in a 0.0 for that assignment and possibly a 0.0 for the course.

****The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus in the course of the semester as necessary. I will inform the class of any changes as far in advance as possible.****

Course Outline

Part 1: What is Rural America?

Topic and Readings	Participation Assignment	Points
Aug 22 (T): Course Introduction Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • Discussion 	
Aug 24 (Th): The Sociological Perspective Barkan, S. 2017. Sociology and the Sociological Perspective. pp. 1-11 in <i>Sociology Brief Edition v. 2.0</i> [Excerpt] Taub, A. 2017. Why American's vote 'against their interest': Partisanship. <i>New York Times</i> . April 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying the sociological perspective 	10
Aug 29 (T): The Sociological Perspective Barkan, S. 2017. Sociology and the Sociological Perspective. pp. 12-15 in <i>Sociology Brief Edition v. 2.0</i> [Excerpt] Beil, L. 2015. Small Towns Face Rising Suicide Rates. <i>New York Times</i> . November 3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Syllabus • Applying Durkheim's theory of suicide 	10
Aug 31 (Th): What is Rural America? Lichter, D and J. Ziliak. 2017. The rural-urban interface: New patterns of spatial interdependence and inequality in America. <i>Annals, AAPSS</i> . 672. July. Pp.6-15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: readings 	10
Sept 5 (T): What is Rural America? Lichter, D and J. Ziliak. 2017. The rural-urban interface: New patterns of spatial interdependence and inequality in America. <i>Annals, AAPSS</i> . 672. July. Pp. 16-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: reading 	10
Sept 7 (Th): Rural Demographics Carr & Kefalas. 2009. The heartland and the rural youth exodus. In <i>Hollowing Out the Middle. The Rural Brain Drain and What it Means for America</i> . pp. 1-12 and 17-19 [Excerpt]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Week's readings • Discussion: reading 	10
Sept 12 (T): Rural Demographics Brown & Schafft, 2011. Racial and ethnic minorities in rural Areas. In <i>Rural People & Communities</i> . pp. 122-145	Research Project Part I Due <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: reading 	10
Sept 14 (Th): Immigrants in Rural America. Postville Jensen, E. 2014. Mexican-born farmworkers in US agriculture. In <i>Rural America in a Globalizing World</i> . pp. 69-81 Baxter, A. 2017. How an immigration raid threw a small Iowa town into economic crisis. <i>Marketplace. NPR</i> . Aug 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film Questions 	10
Sept 19 (T): Immigrants in Rural America Cohen, P. 2017. Immigrants keep an Iowa meatpacking town alive and growing. <i>New York Times</i> , May 29. Sacchetti, M. and E. Guskin. 2017. In rural America, fewer immigrants and less tolerance. <i>The Washington Post</i> . June 17.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Week's readings • Discussion: film and readings 	10
Sept 21 (Th): Research Project: Atlas of Rural and Small-Town America (with librarian Lorrie Pellack)	Meet in Room 134, Parks Library	10
Sept 26 (T): Exam I		

Part II: Making a Living in Rural America

<p>Sept 28 (Th): The Rural Economy Greenblatt, A. 2017. Reviving rural economies. <i>CQ Researcher</i>. March 31. Pp. 267-271</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Project Due 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 3 (T): The Rural Economy. Walmart Brown & Schafft, 2011. Is Walmart good for rural communities? In <i>Rural People & Communities</i>. pp. 161 Turkewitz, J. 2017. Who wants to run that Mom-and-Pop market? Almost no-one. <i>The New York Times</i>. July 26.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film Questions 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 5 (Th): The Rural Economy Mitchell, S. 2006. Community life. In <i>Big-Box Swindle</i>. pp. 73-87.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Week’s readings 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 10 (T): Farms, Farmers and Farming. Brown & Schafft, 2011. Farms, farmers, and farming in Contemporary Rural Society. In <i>Rural People & Communities</i>. pp. 167-179</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: readings 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 12 (Th): Farms. Farmers and Farming Eller, D. 2017. Will rural Iowa wither as big agriculture becomes bigger, squeezing out farms in the middle? <i>Des Moines</i> <i>Register</i>. Aug 10</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: Week’s readings 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 17 (T): Farms. Farmers and Farming King Corn Kardel, A. 2014. We are still here: Tracing US agricultural change through the Kardel multigenerational farm. <i>Culture, Agriculture,</i> <i>Food and Environment</i>.36:2 142-152</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film Questions 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 19 (Th): Farms. Farmers and Farming Brown & Schafft, 2011. Farms, Farmers, and Farming in Contemporary Rural Society. In <i>Rural People & Communities</i>. pp. 179-189</p>	<p>Research Project Part II Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: film and readings 	<p align="center">10</p>
<p>Oct 24 (T): Exam II</p>		

Part III: Rural Socioeconomic Wellbeing

<p>Oct 26 (Th): Social Stratification Sherman, J. 2014. Rural Poverty. <i>Rural America in a Globalizing World</i>. pp. 523-539 Gabriel, T. 2014. 50 Years into the War on Poverty, Hardship Hits Back. <i>New York Times</i> Tankersley, J. 2017. Getting ahead in the city is hard. In rural America, it's even harder. <i>Vox</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: Readings 	10
<p>Oct 31 (T): Rural Poverty <i>Winter's Bone</i> Reding, N. 2009. Kant's Lament. pp. 21-39. <i>The Most American Drug</i>. In <i>Methland: The Death and Life of An American Small Town</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film questions 	10
<p>Nov 2 (Th): Rural Poverty Reding, N. 2009. The most American drug. In <i>Methland: The Death and Life of An American Small Town</i>. pp. 40-57. Runyon, L. 2017. Why is the opioid epidemic hitting rural American's especially hard? <i>NPR</i>. Jan 4.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz: readings • Discussion: Film and readings 	10
<p>Nov 7 (T): Rural Food Insecurity <i>A Place at the Table</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film questions 	10
<p>Nov 9 (Th): Rural Food Insecurity Tanaka et.al, 2011. Food Insecurity and Obesity in Rural America: Paradoxes of the Modern Agrifood System. Pp.642-656 in <i>Rural America in a Globalizing World</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: Film and reading 	10
<p>Nov 14 (T): Rural Food Insecurity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: Reading 	10
Nov 16 (Th): Group Project Work		
Nov 20-24 **Thanksgiving Break – No Classes**		
<p>Nov 28 (T): Rural America and the 2016 Election Cramer, K. 2016. <i>The Politics of Resentment</i>. [Excerpt]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion: Reading 	10
<p>Nov 30 (Th): Rural America and the 2016 Election Cramer, K. 2016. <i>The Politics of Resentment</i>. [Excerpt]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Project Part III Due • Discussion: Reading 	10
<p>Dec 5 (T): Class Presentations</p>		10
<p>Dec 7 (Th): Class Presentations</p>		10
Dec 11: (8 am): Exam III [Preliminary Schedule]		

ISU Principles of Community

Respect: We seek to foster an open-minded understanding among individuals, organizations and groups. We support this understanding through outreach, increasing opportunities for collaboration, formal education programs and strategies for resolving disagreement.

Purpose: We are encouraged to be engaged in the university community. Thus, we strive to build a genuine community that promotes the advancement of knowledge, cooperation and leadership.

Cooperation: We recognize that the mission of the university is enhanced when we work together to achieve the goals of the university. Therefore, we value each member of the Iowa State University community for his or her insights and efforts, collective and individual, to enhance the quality of campus life.

Richness of Diversity: We recognize and cherish the richness of diversity in our university experience. Furthermore, we strive to increase the diversity of ideas, cultures and experiences throughout the university community.

Freedom from discrimination: We recognize that we must strive to overcome historical and divisive biases in our society. Therefore, we commit ourselves to create and maintain a community in which all students, staff, faculty and administrators can work together in an atmosphere free from discrimination, and to respond appropriately to all acts of discrimination.

Honest and respectful expression of ideas: We affirm the right to and the importance of a free exchange of ideas at Iowa State University within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity and respect. We work together to promote awareness of various ideas through education and constructive strategies to consider and engage in honest disagreements.