

**SOCIOLOGY 7720**  
*Community Theory and Research*  
Spring semester, 2016

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**Office Hours:**  
Wed. 12:30-2:30  
and by appointment

*Course Description*

This course addresses issues pertaining to one of the core theoretical constructs in the field of sociology – the concept of “community.” There is a long disciplinary legacy of both theoretical and empirical work focusing in various ways on the community and related constructs, and on the ways in which dimensions of community have shifted and evolved in conjunction with various patterns of social change. At the same time, the field is characterized by profound uncertainties and disagreements about the key attributes which define “the community,” the contexts in which communal relations may be expected to emerge and persist, and the relationships between community processes and broader patterns of social change. There is also considerable debate about the degree to which the notion of community remains relevant in advanced industrial societies characterized by high levels of urbanization, widespread geographic mobility, increased prevalence of information-age technologies, and formalization of service delivery systems. As a result, what has been referred to by some sociologists as “the community question” remains largely unresolved and a topic of considerable debate.

In this class we will also undoubtedly fail to resolve many of the questions and uncertainties that characterize community sociology. However, we will confront those questions and uncertainties from several different angles in an attempt to better understand the nature of the community as a sociological phenomenon. Attention will be focused initially on various approaches to conceptualizing the community and identifying its defining characteristics. We will then delve into such issues as the role of community in providing for individual and collective well-being; possible shifts in the nature of community structures and processes due to various forms of large-scale social change; the potential for community to foster collective action; etc. Unlike some other courses which may focus on communities as contexts within which certain sociologically interesting processes occur (e.g., looking at the “local community” as a setting for assessing social impacts of natural resource development, understanding the cultural consequences of resource dependency, or exploring changes in crime and criminal victimization), our primary focus here will be on understanding the social structures and social processes which collectively comprise “the community” as a sociological concept.

*Course Organization and Class Procedures*

This course is offered and organized as a graduate seminar. The instructor's role is therefore not primarily one of lecturer, but of a facilitator who should provide exposure to literature and direct the development, expression, and exchange of ideas among those participating in the seminar. To make this approach work, **it is essential for students to be active seminar participants** rather than passive recipients of lecture materials or reading materials.

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Each week the focus of the seminar will be taken from a set of several assigned readings which in combination address a common issue or set of related issues in the field of community sociology. **Students are expected to complete a careful reading of all assigned readings before each class meeting**, and be prepared to discuss the readings fully and systematically. Active involvement and participation by all is both a course requirement and an important component of the learning process.

### Readings

The attached course outline specifies reading assignments which are to be completed **prior to** each class meeting. Some course readings are derived from the following books, which should be available for purchase through Amazon.com or other similar on-line vendors (NOT ordered in by USU bookstore):

Warren, Roland L. 1978. *The Community in America* (3rd edition). Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America. (*on-line pricing seems to be approximately \$45-50 for used copies*).

Wilkinson, Kenneth P. 1991. *The Community in Rural America*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press. OR, the much less costly paperback reprint from Social Ecology Press. (*Paperback available NEW from International Association for Society and Natural Resources for \$15... but instructor has several "loaner" copies that may meet your needs!*)

In addition, a substantial number of the assigned readings are drawn from various books and journals. Copies of articles and chapters not included in either of the textbooks will be scanned or accessed electronically and distributed over the course of the semester. Alternatively, you should be able to obtain electronic copies of most of these materials directly from journals available via the USU library or various other on-line systems.

### Course Requirements

1. *Class Participation* (20% of grade): Each student must participate in class discussions. Students should be active and voluntary contributors to class discussion through observations, questions, critiques, etc. You should also be prepared to respond to questions, or present the class with a careful review and critique of assigned materials at any time. *Unannounced written quizzes may be administered at the instructor's discretion if broad-based participation is not occurring at a satisfactory level.*
2. *Reading summaries/discussion questions from reading assignments* (20% of grade): Each week you will be expected to prepare a brief (no more than one page) "bullet format" summary of main themes and key arguments or findings from each of the articles/chapters assigned as reading materials for that week. In addition, you are to develop, and be prepared to present, two or three "discussion questions" that pertain to major, overarching issues addressed in the readings for the week. I will randomly call upon most if not all students each week and ask them to share those questions/themes with the class and help lead the discussion. Whether or not you happen to be called on to share your questions/themes in a given week, you are required to turn in the typed reading summaries and your list of discussion questions at the end of each class period. You will be evaluated both in terms of the completion of this task and the quality and depth of insight revealed in the issues and questions you raise.
3. *Take-home essay exam* (20% of grade): This essay exam, which will involve response to several questions addressing content covered over the course of previous weeks of the semester, will be distributed on April 1<sup>st</sup> in lieu of our scheduled class meeting on that date. The exam will be sent out to students electronically by no later than 8:00 am, and responses will be due back to the instructor by no later than 11:59 pm on that same date.

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4. *Term paper* (40% of grade): This manuscript-length (approx. 20-30 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font, 1" margins) paper should reflect substantial independent investigation into some theme or issue in the field of community studies. It may derive directly from a topic addressed in the seminar, or may diverge into areas that we did not have an opportunity to explore in this course. In any case, the paper must involve an effort to delve into relevant social science literature in a fashion that moves you substantially beyond the assigned seminar reading materials. Papers may be based on a critical review of literature, a conceptual or theoretical discussion of community issues, an analysis of data that are relevant to community themes, or some combination of the above. Papers should be organized in a manner consistent with standard social science citation and reference guidelines, such as those used by the *American Sociological Review*.

Be aware that the term paper is to reflect your own, original work. Any evidence of plagiarism, or of inclusion of "recycled" content from papers that have been submitted for another class, will result in assignment of an "F" for this course. If you do not fully and clearly understand what plagiarism is or how to avoid it, look it up in a dictionary or see me during office hours.

All students will make a brief (15 minute) oral presentation of their paper to the class during our last class meeting, on April 29<sup>th</sup>. This is to be a well-organized, concise, focused presentation – consistent with the kind of presentation you would expect to make at professional meetings. I'm hopeful that at least some of your papers will be the foundations for what will eventually become peer-reviewed journal articles. Use of PowerPoint or other visual technology is encouraged as a means of helping to guide and organize the presentation. The quality of your presentation will influence the grade for the term paper by up to one letter grade -- in other words, an "A" quality paper that is not accompanied by a complete and coherent verbal presentation will receive a "B" grade, etc. Final copies of the papers must be delivered to the instructor no later than Wednesday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. Earlier delivery is encouraged and will be appreciated. Late papers will NOT be accepted unless extenuating circumstances involving health, injury, or major family emergency are documented.

### **Other Procedural Issues**

I do not give incomplete grades for students who fail to complete assignments, miss deadlines, or wish to avoid an unsatisfactory course grade. University policy states that incomplete grades are to be assigned only in those instances when "a student may be unable to complete all of the work in a course due to extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance." Moreover, the implied contract between student and instructor calls for the instructor to organize a course that can be completed during the semester it is scheduled, and for the student to complete course work during that same period of time. The bottom line, therefore, is that you should plan to be in class every time we are scheduled to meet, and be sure to get everything done and turned in by the scheduled due dates.

If you have questions about readings, lectures, term paper topics, or other matters that cannot be dealt with in the context of class discussions, please arrange to see me during office hours. If you cannot see me during scheduled office hours I will be happy to make an appointment at some other convenient time.

The Department of Sociology, Social Work and Anthropology is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to cooperation with the USU Disability Resource Center. If you have a documented disability and need reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, please visit with me immediately so we can arrange the necessary accommodation.

**Soc 7720, Spring 2016**  
**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**Week 1 (January 15): Introduction and Orientation (NO READINGS ASSIGNED)**

**Week 2 (January 22): Perspectives on the Meanings of 'Community'**

Hillery, G.A. 1955. "Definitions of community: Areas of agreement." *Rural Sociology* 55 (June): 111-123.

Bender, T. 1978. "Introduction: The meanings of community." Chapter 1 in T. Bender, *Community and Social Change in America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

R. Warren, *The Community in America*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Effrat, M. P. 1974. "Approaches to community: Conflicts and complementarities." *Sociological Inquiry* 43 (3/4): 1-32.

Fairbrother, P., M. Tyler, A. Hart, B. Mees, R. Phillips, J. Stratford and K. Toh. 2013. "Creating 'community': Preparing for bushfire in rural Victoria." *Rural Sociology* 78 (2): 186-209.

Goodsell, T.L., J. Flaherty and R.B. Brown. 2014. "Community as moral proximity: Theorizing community in a global economy." Pp. 626-641 in C. Bailey, L. Jensen and E. Ransom (eds.), *Rural America in a Globalizing World*. Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press.

**Week 3 (January 29): A Social Systems Approach to Community Studies (NOTE: CLASS MEETING TIME WILL NEED TO CHANGE DUE TO SOCIOLOGY FACULTY RETREAT)**

R. Warren, *The Community in America*, Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9.

**Week 4 (February 5): Effects of the "Great Change" on Community Systems**

R. Warren, *The Community in America*, Chapters 3 and 4.

Warren, R.L. 1975. "External forces affecting local communities: Bad news and good news." *Journal of the Community Development Society* 6 (Fall): 1-13.

Loomis, C.P. 1958. "El Cerrito, New Mexico: A changing village." *New Mexico Historical Review* 22: 53-75.

Eastman, C. and R.S. Krannich. 1995. "Community change and persistence: The case of El Cerrito, New Mexico." *Journal of the Community Development Society* 26 (1): 41-51.

Bridger, J.C., A.E. Luloff and R.S. Krannich. 2002. "Community change and community theory." Pp. 9-21 in A.E. Luloff and R.S. Krannich (eds.), *Persistence and Change in Rural Communities*. New York: CABI Publishing.

### **Week 5 (February 12): Considering (and reconsidering) the "Community Lost" Perspective**

Wirth, L. 1938. "Urbanism as a way of life." *American Journal of Sociology* 44: 1-24.

Hunter, A. 1975. "The loss of community: An empirical test through replication." *American Sociological Review* 40 (October): 537-552.

White, Katherine J.C. and Avery M. Guest. 2003. "Community lost or transformed? Urbanization and social ties." *City and Community* 2 (3): 239-259.

Ryle, R.R. and R.V. Robinson. 2006. "Ideology, moral cosmology, and community in the United States." *City and Community* 5 (1): 53-69.

### **Week 6 (February 19): A Social Networks Approach to Community Studies**

B. Wellman and B. Leighton, 1979. "Networks, neighborhoods and communities: Approaches to the study of the community question." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 14: 363-390.

Fischer, C.S. and C.A. Stueve. 1977. "'Authentic community': The role of place in modern life." Pp. 163-186 in C. Fischer et al., *Networks and Places: Social Relations in the Urban Setting*. New York: The Free Press.

Wellman, B., P.J. Carrington and A. Hall. 1988. "Networks as personal communities." Pp. 130-184 in B. Wellman and S. Berkowitz (eds.), *Social Structures: A Network Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wellman, B. and S. Wortley. 1990. "Different strokes from different folks: Community ties and social support." *American Journal of Sociology* 96: 558-588.

### **Week 7 (February 26): An Interactional Field Perspective on Community**

Kaufman, H. 1959. "Toward an interactional conception of community." *Social Forces* 38 (Oct.): 9-17.

K. Wilkinson, 1972. "A field-theory perspective for community development research." *Rural Sociology* 37: 43-52.

K. Wilkinson, *The Community in Rural America*, Introduction, and Chapter 1.

Theodori, G.L. 2005. "Community and community development in resource-based areas: Operational definitions rooted in an interactional perspective." *Society and Natural Resources* 18: 661-669.

Flint, C.G., A.E. Luloff and G.L. Theodori. 2009. "Extending the concept of community interaction to explore regional community fields." *Southern Rural Sociology* 24: 1-16.

### **Week 8 (March 4): Community and Social Well- Being**

Wilkinson, K.P. 1979. "Social well-being and community." *Journal of the Community Development Society* 10 (Spring): 5-16.

K. Wilkinson, *The Community in Rural America*, Chapter 3.

Krannich, Richard S. and Clyde Eastman. 2002. "Community and social well-being in contemporary El Cerrito." Pp. 117-141 in A.E. Luloff and R.S. Krannich (eds.), *Persistence and Change in Rural Communities*. Wallingford, UK: CABI Publishing.

Larson, E.C., A.E. Luloff, J.C. Bridger and M. Brennan. 2015. "Community as a mechanism for transcending wellbeing at the individual, social and ecological levels." *Community Development* (in press).

Van Gundy, K.T., N.F. Stracuzzi, C.J. Rebellion, C.J. Tucker and E.S. Cohn. 2011. "Perceived community cohesion and the stress process in youth." *Rural Sociology* 76 (3): 293-318.

Wallace, G. 2013. "African-American mothers' community social capital and parenting quality: Does personal outlook make a difference?" *Sociological Perspectives* 56 (2): 261-285.

### **Week 9 (March 11): USU SPRING BREAK WEEK – NO CLASS**

### **Week 10 (March 18): Community Attachment: Linear Development, Systemic and Other Perspectives**

Kasarda, J. and M. Janowitz. 1974. "Community attachment in mass society." *American Sociological Review* 39 (June): 328-339.

Stinner, W.F., M. Van Loon, Seh-Woong Chung, and Yongchan Byun. 1990. "Community size, individual social position, and community attachment." *Rural Sociology* 55 (Winter): 494-521 .

Sampson, R.J. 1988. "Local friendship ties and community attachment in mass society: A multilevel systemic model." *American Sociological Review* 53: 766-779.

Flaherty, J. and R.B. Brown. 2010. "A multilevel systemic model of community attachment: Assessing the relative importance of the community and individual levels." *American Journal of Sociology* 116: 503-542.

Sundblad, D.R. and S.G. Sapp. 2011. "The persistence of neighboring as a determinant of community attachment: A community field perspective." *Rural Sociology* 76: 511-534.

Jennings, B. and R.S. Krannich. 2013. "A multidimensional exploration of the foundations of community attachment among seasonal and year-round residents." *Rural Sociology* 78:498-527.

### **Week 11 (March 25): The Role of Community in Preserving the Social Order**

Sampson, R.J. and W.B. Groves. 1989. "Community structure and crime: testing social disorganization theory." *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (January): 774-802.

Sampson, R.J. 1991. "Linking the micro- and macrolevel dimensions of community social organization." *Social Forces* 70 (1): 43-64.

Freudenburg, W.R. 1986. "The density of acquaintanceship: An overlooked variable in community research?" *American Journal of Sociology* 92 (July): 27-63.

Putnam, Robert D. 2007. "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30 (2): 137-174.

Tran, V.C., C. Graif, A.D. Jones, M.L. Small and C. Winship. 2013. "Participation in context: Neighborhood diversity and organizational involvement in Boston." *City & Community* 12: 187-210.

### **Week 12 (April 1): Essay examination (take-home, open-book/open-note)**

Exam will be distributed electronically to students at 8:00 am on this date; completed responses will be due to instructor by no later than 11:59 pm that same day

### **Week 13 (April 8): Do Communities "Act"??**

Tilly, C. 1973. "Do communities act?" *Sociological Inquiry* 43 (3/4): 209-240.

K. Wilkinson, *The Community in Rural America*, Chapter 4.

Molotch, H. 1976. "The city as a growth machine: Toward a political economy of place." *American Journal of Sociology* 82: 309-330.

**Week 14 (April 15): Collective Response to Local Issues: Empirical Evidence and Scholarly Debates Regarding Whether (and How) Communities Might “Act”**

Sampson, R.J., D. McAdam, H. MacIndoe and S. Weffer-Elizondo. 2005. “Civil society reconsidered: The durable nature and community structure of collective civic action.” *American Journal of Sociology* 111 (3): 673-714.

Hein, J. 2014. “The urban ethnic community and collective action: Politics, protest, and civic engagement by Hmong Americans in Minneapolis-St. Paul.” *City & Community* 13: 119-139.

Messer, C.M., T.E. Shriver and A.E. Adams. 2015. “Collective identity and memory: A comparative analysis of community response to environmental hazards.” *Rural Sociology* 80: 314-339.

Cope, M.R., A. Currit, J. Flaherty and R.B. Brown. 2016. “Making sense of community action and voluntary participation – A multilevel test of multilevel hypotheses: Do communities act? Forthcoming, *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 81.

Theodori, G.L., A.E. Luloff, M.A. Brennan and J.C. Bridger. 2016. “Making sense of ‘Making Sense’: A critical response.” Forthcoming, *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 81.

**Week 15 (April 22): The enduring relevance of “place” and “context” as elements of community life**

Alkon, A.H. and M. Traugot. 2008. “Place matters, but how? Rural identity, environmental decision-making, and the social construction of place.” *City and Community* 7 (2): 97-112.

Trentelman, C.K. 2009. “Place attachment and community attachment: A primer grounded in the lived experience of a community sociologist.” *Society and Natural Resources* 22 (3): 191-210.

Stedman, R. C. 2006. “Understanding place attachment among second home owners.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 50 (2): 187-205.

Brehm, J., B.W. Eisenhauer and R.S. Krannich. 2004. “Dimensions of community attachment and their relationship to well-being in the amenity-rich rural West.” *Rural Sociology* 69: 405-429.

Long, D.A. and D.D. Perkins. 2007. “Community social and place predictors of sense of community: A multilevel and longitudinal analysis.” *Journal of Community Psychology* 35 (5): 563-581.

**Week 16 (April 29): Student Paper Presentations**