RURAL SOCIOLOGY
SOCIOLOGY 3610
Spring semester, 2016
Tuesday/Thursday 3:00-4:15
Classroom: Main 117

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Office hours:
Wed. 12:30-2:30,
OR by appointment

Course Objectives and Focus

In the context of modern-day American society rural people and places and rural social problems are often given scant attention both by policy makers and by social scientists. For nearly a century the United States has been a predominantly urban society. Over 80% of the country’s population is now concentrated in urban areas, and most of the nation’s political and economic organization and influence are centered in our largest metropolitan areas. Nevertheless, rural America remains an important focus of sociological attention, for a variety of reasons. First, about 75% of the American landscape is “rural” in character. Second, many of the cornerstone values and ideals of American society evolved in and remain linked to the nation’s small-town and agricultural traditions, and Americans continue to view rural places and rural social patterns as important elements of our national heritage and cultural identity. Third, our society as a whole and much of the world rely upon rural America as a source of critically-important agricultural commodities and food supplies as well as other key natural resources and products. And fourth, rural areas provide a unique vantage point for observing and attempting to understand a variety of contemporary social problems and social change processes, such as those involving poverty, economic and social inequality, problems and inequities associated with environmental degradation, demographic change, social conflict, and social organizational responses to changing development conditions and opportunities. In short, even in the 21st century “rural” is still deserving of sociological (and public policy) attention!

This course is designed to introduce you to various key dimensions of contemporary American rural society, and to the broad sub-discipline of Rural Sociology. Hopefully you will leave the course with a substantially different understanding of the conditions and trends confronting rural America than those associated with the “conventional wisdom” people often hold about rural people and landscapes. By examining the nature of social organization and social change in rural areas and communities you should also develop a solid foundation for comparing and contrasting the ways these fundamental social processes unfold in a variety of settings, including in particular rural sectors of advanced societies. Because Soc 3610 is listed as a Depth Social Science (DSS) course that meets USU general education requirements we will be delving in considerable detail into several major aspects of contemporary rural society – including patterns of economic and demographic change, issues of rural social inequality and poverty, and the connections between land and resource conditions and rural social conditions. To succeed in the class you will need to devote considerable time and attention to a variety of reading as well as writing assignments, including both in-class and out-of-class work.

The Sociology program has defined four programmatic Statements of Intended Educational Outcomes that outline what we intend for students to know, think, or do as they take courses in the Sociology program. Through your participation in this course and through assessment of individual student assignments, our goal is to provide you with opportunities to improve your skills in the following areas:

1) communicate more effectively, through both oral participation and written assignments
2) think critically, analytically, and reason logically about how to conceptualize and evaluate rural phenomena
3) understand and use sociological principles, concepts, and theories pertaining to the field of rural sociology
4) understand and evaluate the application of sociological methods and data to analyses of rural phenomena
Required Readings

There is not a required textbook for this course. Instead, I will make reading materials available to you either by providing a URL that will let you access things on-line, via posting on Canvas, or through email attachments sent out to students by the course instructor. The specific readings assigned for each class session are detailed in the course schedule presented later in this syllabus.

While you could read most or even all of these materials in their electronic-access format, I encourage you to consider printing them out to so that you can highlight key points and insert margin notes or questions as you are reading. In my experience doing this will help you focus in on key themes and content while reading each piece, and provide more convenient access to materials that should be reviewed before quizzes and exams. Be sure to leave yourself adequate time to access, print, and read all of the assigned reading materials well before each class period.

NOTE: I reserve the right to cancel some assigned readings and to add others in their place if more appropriate or newly-released materials are identified during the course of the semester. If such changes do occur students will be notified of the change and provided with information on how to access the newly-assigned material at least one week before the date when those readings are scheduled to be covered.

Course Organization and Grading

General Course Organization Principles

The attached course schedule identifies the topic of coverage and reading assignments for each class meeting. There’s no getting around that fact that this class requires a considerable amount of reading -- Rural Sociology is a broad field of study, and we have a lot of ground to cover over the course of the semester. Although there are no formal course prerequisites, keep in mind that this is an upper-division course. As such, I assume students will have developed sufficient background-and study habits to read and understand the materials that are assigned. My goal in organizing the graded assignments for this course is to give every student a chance to succeed both in terms of mastering the course materials and in receiving a grade they will be happy with. I’ll do my best to facilitate your success, but you will need to hold up your end of the bargain as well!

It is very important that you read the materials assigned for each class session before coming to class, and that you keep up with assigned readings as we move through the semester. This allows students to participate by asking informed questions, offering relevant comments and observations, responding to questions posed by the instructor, etc. Material presented in class lectures, discussions and films will supplement, but not duplicate, the assigned readings. I do not post lecture notes, PowerPoint outlines, or other materials presented during class sessions for electronic access – you will be exposed to these only when you are in the classroom. Consequently, both careful reading of assigned materials and consistent attendance and note-taking are necessary if you hope to do well in the class. I have no interest in taking attendance, but based on 36 years of teaching experience at USU I’m very confident that those who hope to get by with only intermittent attendance and occasional reading will end up receiving a final course grade that will be quite disappointing.
Grading Components and Procedures

I. Exams: up to 70 points toward the final course grade (the first exam will contribute up to 20 points toward the overall course grade; the second and third exams will each contribute up to 25 points toward the course grade)

There will be three major exams. Each of these will include a combination of “objective” (multiple choice, etc.) and “subjective” (short-answer essay) questions.
- Exam #1 (20 points): Thursday, February 18
- Exam #2 (25 points): Tuesday, April 5
- Exam #3 (25 points): Final Examination Week -- Tuesday, May 3, 1:30-3:20

You MUST be in attendance on each of these exam dates! Make-up exams will be considered ONLY in cases of a clearly documented major illness or major family emergency, and then only if the instructor is notified in advance of the situation with an email or telephone message left BEFORE the time when the exam is scheduled.

II. Quizzes: up to 20 points toward the final course grade (two highest quiz scores will be counted, with each contributing up to 10 points toward the overall course grade)

Three times during the semester I will distribute an in-class ESSAY FORMAT quiz, addressing one or more issues pertaining to course readings and class presentation materials covered during the preceding two to four weeks. These will occur on Thursday, January 28; Thursday, March 17; and Thursday, April 21. The two highest quiz scores will count toward the final course grade. As with scheduled exams, make-up quizzes will be considered only in the case of a major illness/emergency, and only if the instructor is notified of a need to be absent in advance of the scheduled quiz date.

III. Film Review: up to 10 points toward the final course grade

Each student will be required to submit a detailed (minimum 3, maximum 4 double-spaced typed and printed pages) review and evaluation of one of the two different documentary films that will be shown during class sessions. The films you can choose from in completing this activity will include the following:

1. Medora. To be shown in class on Tuesday, March 15; written review due on Tuesday, March 22.
2. The Hidden America: Children of the Mountains. To be shown in class on Thursday, April 14; written review due on Thursday, April 21.

These written reviews are intended to provide you with an opportunity to develop a critical assessment of the content presented in the film, and to tie that content into materials you have been exposed to through course readings and lectures. This is NOT a simple summarization task – you will need to interpret, critique, and react to what the film presents, drawing upon ideas and concepts covered in relevant portions of this course. The film review should include the following information:

1. Bibliographic citation: at the top of the first page, include the title of the film you have reviewed.
2. Purpose/general focus of the film.
3. Key themes, ideas, and concepts presented in the film (be specific).
4. Important conclusions or implications of the information and ideas presented in the film.
5. YOUR EVALUATION: Discuss your reaction to and analysis of the film. Saying it is “good” or “bad”, or if you “liked it” is not sufficient; you need to provide a CRITICAL EVALUATION of the strengths and weaknesses of information and arguments presented in the film, and you need to identify KEY QUESTIONS or KEY INSIGHTS that you think are addressed or raised by the film.
IV. EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITIES (up to a maximum of 5 additional “points” MIGHT BE added to your end-of-semester total)

1). IN-CLASS PARTICIPATION (up to 2 extra credit points are possible): Throughout the semester I will work to create regular opportunities for discussion of core themes and concepts by asking students to respond to questions, pose their own questions, illuminate key ideas and concepts through examples and experiences, etc. The degree to which you are able to successfully engage in these activities will depend on both regular class attendance and your diligence in staying current with reading assignments.

I will facilitate participation by calling randomly upon students and asking them to respond to various questions or comment on some aspect of class readings or lecture content. Your involvement in these exchanges will be recorded (you will be asked to say your name when you respond – at least until I know who you are). At the end of the semester I will add UP TO A MAXIMUM OF TWO POINTS to the grades of students who have demonstrated regular and effective participation by volunteering comments, asking questions, or responding to my questions. Students who did participate more than rarely but not regularly may receive one extra credit point. Students who never participate or who do so rarely and/or ineffectively will receive no extra credit points.

2). QUIZ BOWL EVENTS (up to 3 extra credit points are possible): On three occasions during the semester (Thursday, February 11; Thursday, March 31; and Thursday April 28) we will have a “quiz bowl” competition during a portion of the class period. These are designed primarily to provide useful review of key concepts and course content prior to a scheduled examination. At the same time, they will also provide a chance to earn a small amount of extra credit.

Students who are in attendance on those dates will be divided more or less randomly into 3-4 person teams. The instructor will present a series of questions related to course readings, lecture materials, etc. Teams will compete to be the first to correctly answer each question; the team with the most points at the end of the competition will be the winner of the competition.

Following each of the quiz bowl events, members of the “winning team” will each receive 1 extra credit point toward their final course grade. Members of the second-place team will receive 0.75 extra credit points; those on the third-place team will receive 0.50 extra credit points; those on the fourth-place team will receive 0.25 extra credit points. No extra credit will be assigned to teams that place below fourth place. Thus, if you are on the “winning team” on all three occasions, you will receive 3 extra credit points. If you are on the second-place team once and the fourth-place team twice, you will receive 1.25 extra credit points – and so forth.

V. FINAL GRADE CALCULATION

Each of the three primary grade components listed above will be added together; the combined total of all graded components will have a maximum value of 100 points. Extra credit points, if earned, will then be added to that total. Final grades will be based on the following scale:

A 94 points or higher
A- 91-93 points
B+ 88-90 points
B 84-87 points
B- 81-83 points
C+ 78-80 points
C 74-77 points
C- 71-73 points
D+ 68-70 points
D 64-67 points
F below 64 points

Other Procedural Issues, Policies and “Ground Rules”
1. Make-up exam/quizzes and late submission of assignments will be allowed only in extreme circumstances. Without written proof of a medical emergency, death in the family, or other extenuating circumstances, no make-up examinations/quizzes or late submissions of other assigned materials will be allowed. In addition, you MUST contact me regarding such circumstances BEFORE the scheduled exam/quiz date or due date. If you cannot contact me personally, you must leave a voice mail message (797-1241), or send an email (richard.kranich@usu.edu) that provides your name and explains in detail the nature of your emergency. Unless you follow these procedures, missing an examination or quiz or failure to turn in an assignment on the scheduled date will result in a grade of "0 points" for that part of the course grade.

2. I do not give incomplete grades for students wishing to avoid an unsatisfactory course grade. University policy states that incomplete grades are to be assigned only when "a student may be unable to complete all work in a course due to extenuating circumstances, but not due to poor performance." If emergency circumstances require consideration of an incomplete grade, the situation MUST be cleared by me before the end of the last class period (Thursday, April 28). Any approved incompletes MUST BE RESOLVED WITHIN 10 WEEKS of the end of the semester. You will be expected to sign a contract specifying how the incomplete grade is to be resolved.

3. Electronic messaging from the instructor. I will post announcements, reminders, and other important information regarding this course to students via email on a regular basis. PLEASE BE SURE YOU PROVIDE ME WITH A WORKING EMAIL ADDRESS, AND CHECK IT ON A DAILY BASIS. During the first week of class I will ask you for your preferred email address, and will create an email distribution list that I will use to share information and news with all of you.

4. Questions about grades. I will not discuss grades over the telephone or via email. Students have 10 days from the posting of scores for an exam, quiz or assignment to review the assigned grade and raise questions or present an argument as to why the number of points earned should possibly be reconsidered. You will need to arrange to meet with me in my office if you have questions or concerns about grading.

5. Classroom civility. I expect your full attention and expect you to act respectfully toward me and other students, when we meet in class. Differing viewpoints are encouraged, but personal attacks or disrespectful behavior directed toward other students or the instructor will not be tolerated. Respect for all is both expected and required; this includes (a) treating everyone with civility, including listening without interrupting; (b) avoiding insulting terms and stereotypes when describing people or groups; (c) attempting to understand other people’s viewpoints or behaviors; and (d) focusing your critiques on ideas, not on the persons who might express them.

This is an upper division course, and I expect that you already understand why various forms of in-class disruption are not conducive to learning. Please avoid disruptive behaviors such as chatting with others, reading newspapers in class, sleeping, texting, emailing, web surfing, etc. If you consider it important to do these things during the time when this course is scheduled to meet, you will be asked to find a place other than the classroom setting to do so.

Coming to class late and leaving early are particularly distracting, and disrespectful both to the instructor and to other students who are attempting to pay attention. If for some unavoidable reason you must arrive after the start of a class session, enter the room as quietly as possible and make every effort to choose a seat that will not require you to step in front of the instructor or other students. Barring a sudden and extreme illness, please do NOT leave class early unless you have made prior arrangements with me so that I will be aware of the reasons for your departure, and so you can select a seat nearest to the door.

Students who fail to adhere to these classroom civility policies may be asked to leave the class for the day; repeated violations may lead to an instructor-initiated drop of your registration for the course.

6. Cell phones and computers. Cell phones need to be turned off at the beginning of class, and texting or other cell phone use during the class period is strictly prohibited. While I would prefer that you not use a laptop for taking notes, those who
choose to do so will be expected to use your laptop only for class purposes, and must agree not to check or send emails, surf the web, or otherwise disengage from class activities. Violations of this policy will result in loss of laptop privileges for the remainder of the semester. Any evidence of cell phone, laptop, or other electronic device use during the times when in-class quizzes or exams are being administered will result in an automatic grade of “0 points” for that quiz or exam.

7. Academic Dishonesty. Acts of academic dishonesty (i.e. cheating, falsification, plagiarism) will not be tolerated in this class. I will follow University guidelines regarding my academic dishonesty policy (details can be found in Article V and Article VI of the Code of Policies and Procedures for Students at Utah State University).

All assignments and exam responses must represent your own work, and your own original words. If you are citing, quoting, or deriving some of your material from other sources when preparing a written assignment, be sure to use appropriate citations and references. Use of text written by others without proper citation to the source of such work is a common form of plagiarism, and a serious form of academic dishonesty.

Students who participate in serious academically dishonesty – cheating on exams, copying other students’ work, plagiarizing work from other published sources or the internet, etc. – will receive an F for the course (at minimum). Additional penalties can also be imposed at the Dean’s discretion; these may include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, and other appropriate disciplinary actions.

8. Accommodation of students with disabilities. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course material may be provided in alternative formats -- e.g., large print, audio, diskette, or Braille upon request. Any student who has a documented disability that will likely require some accommodation should contact the instructor as early in the semester as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Additional supportive services are available through the Disability Resource Center.

9. The Family Education Right to Privacy Act (FERPA) affords students certain rights concerning their academic records, including some control over disclosure of information from educational records to both university personnel and the general public. “Personally identifiable information” that makes a student’s identity traceable is protected by FERPA. Because of this, all graded materials will be returned to each student individually.
# Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

## Part I: Orientation and Context

**Tues. 1/12**  
Introduction and course overview

**Thurs. 1/14**  
What is ‘rural’... and is ‘rural’ really relevant in the 21st century? Changing dimensions of rurality in modern America

Cromartie and Buckholz, “Defining the ‘rural’ in rural America.”  
[www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June08/Features/RuralAmerica.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June08/Features/RuralAmerica.htm)

**Tues. 1/19**  
The multiple dimensions of “Community Capital”: A framework for evaluating conditions and prospects in rural communities

Beaulieu, L.J. 2014. “Promoting community vitality & sustainability: The community capitals framework.” Center for Regional Development, Purdue University. (PDF to be provided by instructor)


**Thurs. 1/21**  
Human capital, rural population change, and community capacity

Glasgow and Brown, “Grey gold: do older in-migrants benefit rural communities?”  
[http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=earsev](http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1057&context=earsev)

McGranahan and Wojan, “The creative class: a key to rural growth.”  
[www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/April07/Features/Creative.htm](http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/April07/Features/Creative.htm)

**Tues. 1/26**  
Social capital: The role of civic engagement and social connectedness

Dillon and Young, “Community strength and economic challenge: civic attitudes and community involvement in rural America.”  
[http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1136&context=earsev](http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1136&context=earsev)


**Thurs. 1/28**  
Catch-up and review; followed by in-class Essay Quiz #1
PART II: THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY OF RURAL AMERICA

Tues. 2/2  Historical overview: Rural population trends and shifts in 20th century America

Johnson, *Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America*, pages 8-12
http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=carsey


Thurs. 2/4  America’s rural population in the 2000s

Johnson, *Demographic Trends in Rural and Small Town America*, pages 13-26
http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1004&context=carsey


Cromartie, “Nonmetro areas as a whole experience first period of population loss.”

Tues. 2/9  Rural population growth and decline: Causes and implications

McGranahan and Beale, “Understanding rural population loss.”
http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/562371/ra174a_1_.pdf
(OR, go to www.ers.usda.gov/publications/ruralamerica/ra174 and click on article title to open)

Johnson and Beale, “Nonmetro recreation counties: their identification and rapid growth.”
http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/562413/ra174b_1_.pdf
(OR, go to www.ers.usda.gov/publications/ruralamerica/ra174 and click on article title to open)

Daily Yonder, “Boomers migrating to rural America.”

Thurs. 2/11  Discussion/Catch-up/Review; followed by Quiz Bowl #1

Tues. 2/16  NO CLASS (Monday classes meet on Tuesday)

Thurs. 2/18  EXAM #1
Tues. 2/23 Exams returned/reviewed

Race and ethnicity in rural America, Part I: African American and Native American populations


Thurs. 2/25 Race and ethnicity in rural America, Part II: Hispanic populations


www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/June04/Features/RuralHispanic.htm

Johnson and Lichter, “Population growth in new Hispanic destinations.”


Tues. 3/1 Problems of poverty in rural America

Lichter and Parisi, “Concentrated Rural Poverty and the Geography of Exclusion”
http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1054&context=carsey


Thurs. 3/3  Poverty in rural America: Recent trends and implications

Daily Yonder, “Poor people are moving to already poor, rural communities.”

Ulrich, “Education in chronically poor rural areas lags across generations.”
http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1131&context=carsey

McGranahan, “Understanding the geography of growth in rural child poverty.”

Lichter, Sanders and Johnson, “Behind at the starting line: Poverty among Hispanic infants.”
http://scholars.unh.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1250&context=carsey

Tues. 3/8 & Thurs. 3/10  NO CLASS — USU Spring Break Week

Tues. 3/15  Some implications of poverty and economic decline in rural America: Hope and hopelessness in a declining rural community

FILM: Medora

Thurs. 3/17  Film discussion and review of content from recent class periods; followed by in-class Essay Quiz #2

PART IV: AMERICA’S RURAL ECONOMY: CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES

Tues. 3/22  Changing patterns of economic activity in rural America


Thurs. 3/24  Agriculture in Rural America: Trends and Prospects

Ghelfi and McGranahan, “One in five counties depends on farming.”
http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/129626/1/findings_oncinfive.pdf

Hoppe, “U.S. farm structure: Declining-but-persistent small commercial farms.”
Tues. 3/29 The globalization and restructuring of American agriculture and food Systems
(short in-class video: As We Sow Part I: Where Are the Farmers?)


Thurs. 3/31 Discussion/Catch-up/Review; followed by Quiz Bowl #2

Tues. 4/5 EXAM #2

PART V: NATURAL RESOURCES, NATURAL AMENITIES, AND LAND USE ISSUES:
TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGES IN RURAL AMERICA

Thurs. 4/7 Problems of natural resource dependency in rural America

Krannich, R.S. and A.E. Luloff, “Problems of resource dependency in U.S. rural communities.” (PDF document to be provided by instructor)


Tues. 4/12 Implications of resource-based economies for rural communities: Understanding the poverty/dependency relationship

Freudenburg and Gramling, “Natural resources and rural poverty: A closer look.” (PDF document to be provided by instructor)

Daily Yonder, “What happens when you don’t own the land?”

Thurs. 4/14 Film: The Hidden America: Children of the Mountains
Tues. 4/19  21st-century natural resource development trends: Implications for rural America

Jacquet, J.B.  “Review of risks to communities from shale energy development.”  *Environmental Science & Technology* 48 (15): 8321-8333 (PDF document to be provided by instructor).


Thurs. 4/21  Catch up and review, followed by in-class Essay Quiz #3

Tues. 4/26  Linking natural amenities and rural socio-economic change

Ingraham, C. 2015. “Every county in America, ranked by scenery and climate.”  


Thurs. 4/28  Discussion/Catch-up and review; followed by *Quiz Bowl #3*

TUESDAY, MAY 3 (FINALS WEEK): EXAM #3 (1:30-3:20 pm)