

Rural Community Economics

AECN 376

Spring 2009

Website: Blackboard will be used <http://my.unl.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

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Course Outline

Course Description:

The investigation of 1) economic and social concepts relevant to understanding rural communities and the issues and problems they face and 2) the public decision-making process and the skills necessary for constructive participation in community affairs.

Prerequisites: Ag Economics 141 or Economics 210 or 212

Performance Objectives: Upon completion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Understand contemporary rural economic development issues and challenges.
2. Identify and explain principles and concepts from the fields of economics and sociology which affect the viability of communities and their evolution over time.
3. Recognize and evaluate selected community economic problems and issues in operational terms including familiarity with analytical tools, informational acquisition, and procedures for effective policy action.
4. Understand the context of economic development in operational terms and the means for effective engagement in the process.
5. Articulate a vision for “sustainable communities” in a holistic perspective with practical implications.

Performance Measures:

Assignments: Written & Oral	20%
Two Hour Exams (20% each)	40%
Major Research Paper	15%
Class Engagement, including team assignments, contributions of ideas, info, etc.	10%
<u>Final Exam</u>	<u>15%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Assigned Reading:

Text: Community Economics: Linking Theory and Practice, 2nd Edition, Ron Shaffer, Steve Deller, and Dave Marcoviller, Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Items to download from Internet:

– Community Economic Analysis: A How to Manual

<http://www.ncrcrd.iastate.edu/pubs/contents/rrd186-readonly.pdf>

Focus:

All class members will probably have some direct ties to a particular rural community. Some of you may even be returning to a rural community to live and /or work. Consequently, course concepts will be applied to location-specific areas.

Each student will choose a particular community or cluster or communities (regional community) to use as a case study focus. As concepts, informational series, analytical techniques, and development methodologies are studied during the semester, you will need to apply these elements to the context of your respective community. In the process, each person will carry out a comprehensive study of that community and compile a substantive document of information, analysis, and recommendations for action. In so doing, each of you will essentially be “interning” as a community development professional for your respective community.

Class Policy:

Given the size of the class and nature of the subject matter, a more informal, interactive approach will be used as much as possible. This means regular class attendance and active student participation in classroom discussion is a must. Informal interaction will also tend to simulate the decision-making environment, where you can test your thinking against that of others.

This approach requires that you read assigned materials carefully and down-load the lecture notes ahead of time so that as much of the class time as possible will be spent in spirited discussion and exploring new ideas.

One major research paper will be assigned. You will identify a topic of particular interest to your respective community and carry out an in-depth study. Findings will be presented in a formal written report. An abstract of the report will also be prepared for distribution to other class members at the end of the semester.

Team projects will also be assigned. Community-relevant topics will be identified to make these projects as applied as possible. This will require working as teams. Performance will be evaluated on basis of the team effort.

Useful Internet Web Sites:

Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) - valuable site for information/data for the state, counties and communities. Note particularly the "Databook" Resource.

www.neded.org

American Community Survey (ACS) – A wealth of current statistics and table formulations.
<http://www.census.gov/acs/www/index.html>

Nebraska Department of Natural Resources - wealth of technical information for the state and sub-state areas.
www.dnr.state.ne.us

Rural Information Center (USDA) - major USDA site for rural data/information/analysis.
www.nal.usda.gov/ric/

A dedicated USDA site to rural development.
www.rurdev.usda.gov

U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) - a primary economic data source for U.S., state, and sub-state economic analysis.
www.BEA.DOC.GOV

Center for Rural Affairs, Walthill, NE. A nationally recognized rural advocacy group with a broad program focused on agriculture and rural communities. Monthly electronic newsletter available.
www.cfra.org

Nebraska Department of Labor - labor and wage data for the state and sub-state areas.
www.dol.state.ne.us

U.S. Census of Governments - a useful census which provides detail down to the county detail.
www.census.gov/govs/www/

U.S. Census - The complete array of census topics providing a wealth of information at the state, county, and municipality levels.
www.census.gov/epcd/www/econ97.html

Nebraska Rural Initiative – An arm of the University of Nebraska addressing rural issues.
<http://ruralinitiative.nebraska.edu>

Nebraska Rural Development Commission - a state organization focusing on rural issues.
www.rdc.state.ne.us

UNL Center for Applied Rural Innovation (CARI) - a UNL program with numerous projects.
<http://cari.unl.edu/>

U.S. Small Business Administration - a national information source for small businesses.
www.sba.gov/regions/states/ne

Nebraska Community Foundation - An organization facilitating the development of community foundation programs across the state.
www.necommfound.org

ASPEN Institute - news and resources for small town and rural development
www.aspeninst.org/csg

Hubert Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota: State and Local Policy Programs in Economic Development website - good information and linkages.

www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slpledweb

Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) - A source of information and analysis of variety of policy issues facing rural America.

www.rupri.org/

Welfare Information Network - Covers a wide range of rural issues and organizations with valuable links.

<http://welfareinfo.org/rural.htm>

The National Rural Education Association - organized to focus on rural school viability.

www.colostate.edu/

Local Government Guide to the Internet - Useful sites for economic development practitioners.

www.rural.org/lgg/lggurls.html

Joslyn Castle Institute for Sustainable Communities – A new foundation with creative concepts of development for rural areas. Also, good links to sustainability sites.

<http://www.ecospheres.com>

EconData.Net – Access to sites providing economic, demographic, and other regional data. A good 1st stop in data searches.

<http://www.ecodata.net/>

Guide to On-Line Sources for Economic Development Data - Good links to state and federal sources:

<http://www.hhh.umn.edu/centers/slp/ed/>

County Business Patterns – Good data source for studying economic activity of small areas

<http://www.census.gov/epcd/cbp/view/cbpview.html>

Regional Economic Information Systems (REIS) – state and county income and employment data, with breakdowns by industry and income by source.

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/data.htm>

Bureau of Labor Statistics – Good source of workforce and employment data.

<http://www.bls.gov/bls/reghome.htm>

Social and Economic Trend Analysis (SETA) – a collection of information on social, economic, and democratic trends in support of community and regional analysis. <http://www.seta.iastate.edu/>

FED Stats – Current state, county and city data on population, business, labor, etc.

<http://www.fedstats.gov/qf/states>

Course Outline

- I. Community Economic Analysis and Development Text, Chp 1
 - A. Community Text, pp 202-205
 - B. Community Economic Development Text, pp 236-241
 - C. Community Economic Analysis

Class Notes #1A

- II. Defining Community and Community Economic Development

Class Notes # 1B

- III. Economic Fundamentals in Development
 - A. Economic Efficiency
 - B. Social Optimality
 - C. Marginality and Market Allocation
 - D. Market Failure
 - E. Economies of Size (scale) & Niche Economics

Class Notes # 2

- IV. Economic Growth Theories Text, Ch. 2

Class Notes #3

- V. Technology--Innovation--Entrepreneurship Text, Ch 8

Class Notes #4

- VI. Spacial and Location Economies Text, Ch. 3
 - A. Profit Maximization Approach
 - B. Behavioral Approach
 - C. Institutional Approach

Class Notes #5

- VII. Amenities and Spacial Location Text, Ch. 9
 - The Nebraska Perspective
 - Analysis Population

- VIII. Community Market Dynamics Text, Chs. 4 & 14
 - A. External Markets: Export Base Theory
 - B. Tools for Analysis
 - C. Internal Markets: Central Place Theory
 - Demand Threshold
 - Trade Even Analysis

Class Notes #6

Class Notes #7

- IX. The Agricultural Sector: Materials Posted
 - Basic Industry?
 - Sustainable Industry?

- X. Labor Market Dynamics Text, Ch. 6
Class Notes #8
- XI. Public Infrastructure, Goods, and Services Text, Ch. 10
A. Why Government Involvement?
B. Public Services and Quality of Life
 – Education
 – Health Care
 – Public Safety
C. Tax Issues
D. Government Efficiency
Class Notes #10
- XII. Towards Sustainable Communities: Policy and Economic Development
in the Future Text, Ch 12 & 17
Class Notes #11