

AECN 276/SOC 241

RURAL SOCIOLOGY

Syllabus for Spring Semester, 2009

TU 6:30 – 9:20 PM
Class Location: 19 Avery Hall
Instructor: Randy Cantrell, Ph.D.
Office: 314A Filley Hall
Office Telephone: Filley (402) 472-0919
Office Hours: Avery 19 – Tue: 5:30 – 6:30 P.M.
OR BY APPOINTMENT
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(When using e-mail, type “CLASS” in the subject line)

Rural Sociology is an introduction to sociological concepts as they relate to rural organizations, institutions, and social problems.

The course is divided into three sections with parallel tracks. The two tracks will focus on structural changes and community-level changes.

In the first track, we will examine the basic concepts, theories, and methods of sociology and how they relate to rural areas. In the second track, we'll apply sociology to current issues affecting rural people and places. And in the third section, we will apply sociology to current issues affecting the future of rural communities.

The course will be presented in lecture and discussion sections. The lecture will bring Nebraska level data and issues to the classroom. Discussion will be encouraged in order to provide students an opportunity to offer their own critiques of sociological theory and practice. It is important to view ideas critically; that is, to assess them for improper logic, lack of adequate knowledge or misunderstanding of others' points of view. It is expected that we will learn a great deal from one another.

Course Objectives

The primary learning objectives of this course are:

1. To gain an understanding of the concepts and theories of sociology, and how they can be applied to rural issues.
2. To gain an understanding of current issues and problems facing rural people and, with an emphasis on Midwestern economies and communities.

Through participation in this course and through assessment of the individual student assignments, this course will provide you with opportunities to improve your skills in the following areas:

- Communicate effectively
- Think critically, analytically and effectively about social issues or problems

- Understand and use sociological principles, concepts and theories to examine social behavior and issues
- Understand and evaluate the application of sociological methods to social behavior and issues

Specific assignments in this course will assess students' learning in one or more of the above objectives. Course objectives will be accomplished through classroom lectures and discussion, including reviews of current issues facing American agriculture and communities.

Competence in meeting course objectives will be assessed through your performance on three classroom exams and a 5-7 page paper that reviews current research on rural people or places.

Reading Assignments

The required text for this class is: Rural Communities, Legacy and Change, 3rd edition, by Cornelia Butler Flora and Jan Flora. Westview Press, 2007.

Students will also be required to make use of resources found at a variety of Internet sites as assigned by the instructor.

Additional reading assignments will appear in the Blackboard Assignments section at least one week ahead of the next class.

Expectations, Assignments and Grades

All Students will be expected to read everything that is listed in the syllabus.

For on-line readings, you can either read it on your screen or print it out and then read it in the usual fashion. Be sure to leave yourself time to access, print and read the on-line readings before each class period.

Electronic communication:

I will be posting announcements, up-dates, and reminders about this course on the UNL Blackboard Web Page for this course. During the first week of class, I will ask you for your preferred email address. You can also send me messages that I can forward to the entire class. My email address is: rcantrell1@unl.edu.

Expectations, Grading, and Exams

Students are expected to keep up with the assigned readings for each class period. While the reading load is far from excessive you will need to plan ahead to complete the readings on time.

At the beginning of each lecture I will randomly select a student or students to answer a few questions about the readings. These questions will be placed on the web page the Friday before the next week's classes so you may think about your answers. The questions are designed to guide your reading and to help you prepare for the exams.

I see lectures as equally important to the readings. At times, the lectures will help to clarify some of the reading material. At other times, however, the lectures will bring additional information about rural issues to the classroom. Class attendance is the single most important predictor for a student's success in this class.

There will be three exams. The first exam will be given on February 10. The second exam will be given on March 31. The third exam is the course final, which is scheduled for May 5. These exams will be a combination of objective questions along with one or two short essays. Each exam will count for 25 percent of your final grade.

In addition to exams, you will be asked to write a 5 to 7 page research paper focusing on a rural issue you believe to be important. A brief outline must be submitted to the professor for approval of the paper topic. The research paper is due to the professor on April 21. The paper will count for 25 percent of your final grade.

A presentation of approximately 20 minutes can be substituted for the final exam. Students wishing to do this will need to schedule a presentation time April 7.

Only exceptional excuses for missing exams will be considered. Makeup exams will consist of long answer essay questions.

In summary, there are 400 points available in this course:

First midterm exam	100 points
Second midterm exam	100 points
Final exam	100 points
Paper	100 points

Grading:

Grades are based on cumulative points for the required activities in the class (participation, research paper, and exams). Based on percent of total points, students will be assigned grades using the following ranges:

94-100%	=A
90-93%	=A-
87-89%	=B+
84-86%	=B
80-83%	=B-
77-79	=C+
73-76	=C
70-72%	=C-
67-69%	=D+
63-66%	=D
60-62%	=D-
<60	=F

Extra Credit: Extra credit is not given.

Incompletes: University policy states that incomplete grades are not to be given for poor performance in class. All incompletes **MUST** be cleared with me before the end of the last week of class (April 17). All approved incompletes must be completed **WITHIN 12 WEEKS** of the end of the semester. You will be expected to sign a contract specifying the terms of the incomplete grade.

Questions about Grades:

I will not discuss grades over the phone. Students have 10 days from posting of scores for an exam or research paper to review and argue the number of points they should have received. I expect the argument to be written with a justification statement attached.

Students with Disabilities:

The Department of Sociology is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to cooperate with UNL Services for Students with Disabilities. If you have a documented disability and need reasonable accommodation to participate in this class, please visit with the instructor immediately and we can arrange the necessary accommodation. Course materials may be requested in alternative formats. Please let me know how I can assist you in succeeding in this course.

Academic Dishonesty:

Acts of academic dishonesty (i.e. cheating, falsification, plagiarism) will not be tolerated in this class. I will follow University guidelines regarding academic dishonesty policy (details can be found in Section 4 of the UNL Student Code of Conduct). Plagiarism includes knowingly “representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one’s own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in selling of term papers or other academic materials” The penalties for plagiarism are severe. As found in Article 4.2.b of the UNL Student Code of Conduct:

“In cases where an instructor finds that a student has committed any act of academic dishonesty, the instructor may in the exercise of his or her professional judgment impose an academic sanction as severe as giving the student a failing grade in the course.”

Students who participate in serious academically dishonest activities-cheating on exams, copying other students’ work, plagiarizing work from other published work or the internet, etc.—will receive an F for the course (at minimum).

All assignments must be your own work.

Class Schedule

The schedule is subject to change as additional topics are identified through in-class discussions.

Section 1. Sociological Theory and Concepts

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1-12	Introduction – Organization of the Course Sociology and Rural Sociology Defining “Rural”
1-19	Dominant theories in rural sociology Rural Nebraska Flora and Flora – Chapters 1 and 2
1-26	Social Structure and Interaction Groups and Organizations Flora and Flora – Chapter 3
2-3	Deviance and Social Control

2-10 Social Class
Flora and Flora – Chapter 4
Race, Ethnicity, Age and Gender
First Midterm Exam

Section 2. Structure of Rural Systems

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
2-17	The Nature of Farming Structure of Agriculture in Nebraska Flora and Flora – Chapter 5
2-24	Agricultural Industries Mining/Forestry/Fishing Flora and Flora – Chapter 6
3-3	Adoption/Diffusion of Innovations Rural Power Structure Flora and Flora – Chapter 7
3-10	Agriculture and Environmental Quality Rural Policy Flora and Flora – Chapter 8
3-17	Spring Break
3-24	Rural Development in America International Development Flora and Flora – Chapter 9
3-31	Tourism Second Midterm Exam

Section 3. Rural Communities

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
4-7	Rural Communities: Introduction Rural Community Development Community Change Flora and Flora – Chapter 10
4-14	Rural Community Services Rural Poverty, Rural Development & Rural Health Flora and Flora – Chapter 11
4-21	The Rural Church Rural Families Flora and Flora – Chapter 12
4-28	Papers Due – Review Semester
5-5	Final Exam: 8:15 P.M.