SYLLABUS FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGY 6500
SPRING 2015
THE SOCIOLOGY OF RURAL POVERTY

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Office Hours:  Tuesdays 4:30-5:30 PM and Fridays 3:00-5:00pm and by appointment

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I.  COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course centers on the sociology of poverty in rural areas in the United States as well as in other, particularly less developed nations. The sociology of poverty is part of the broader study of stratification, a core substantive field in the discipline. The course situates the topic of rural poverty into sociological theories and research on stratification. However, sociological theory and research on poverty and inequality are often aspatial or have an urban bias. We thus go beyond conventional approaches to studying poverty and add a spatial dimension. Our focus is: “Who gets what, where and why?” Attention is to spatial inequalities in socioeconomic well-being within the U.S. and cross-nationally.

The course is organized into three parts. The first part provides the background tools needed to understand the topic of rural poverty. It deals with the nature of social stratification and poverty: definitions, empirical measurement, and profiles of the poor; and sociological theoretical perspectives on the causes, distribution, and meaning of poverty. The second and third parts, respectively, focus on the conceptual and empirical dynamics of poverty in regions of the United States and outside the U.S. in primarily third world nations.

Topics discussed include: regional differences in poverty, such as in the South and Appalachia; the manner by which jobs, industries, and other labor market forces affect poverty; farming and poverty (large-scale industrialized farms vs. family farming); rural gender and ethnic differences; and general processes of uneven development and social exclusion. The course also addresses ongoing debates in conceptual frameworks and policy. Extensive research exists on rural poverty—in the U.S and globally. There are many books, articles, and other publications on the topics above as well as other topics germane to rural poverty. Our journey through the body of literature will take us through many key areas in rural poverty research—and you will likely identify other areas as you read and develop your own independent research in this course. In-class discussions and your research term paper allow you to further customize this course to fit your specific areas of interest.

This is combination a lecture-seminar format course. There are class lectures—and the course is also centered on student discussion, critique of the readings, and presentation of class material. It is directed to graduate students and as 6000-level course, it is also open to upper-level undergraduates with a strong social science background who can devote a rigorous commitment to the class. Each class period will usually include an overview lecture by me, which provides an orientation to the material. Your questions, comments, and participation will be solicited.
continually however, so it is essential you come to class prepared. Course work is also tailored to meet your specific interests and program objectives. Graduate students are encouraged to use this course to further develop your interests for presentations at professional meetings, publications, and thesis/dissertation research. Undergraduates should find it useful to future careers — whether as a professional working with diverse populations — and/or for future graduate study.

I enjoy teaching this class and I hope to get to know you better over the semester. I am here to help you achieve your personal/professional goals in this class. Please feel free to drop by during my office hours — if those hours are not suitable for you, we can schedule an appointment at a different, mutually agreeable time!

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are: 1) to study rural poverty as part of the broader question of social stratification — or inequality across places and populations; 2) to understand the major sociological theoretical perspectives dealing with the causes and consequences of poverty; 3) to understand the social and economic factors creating and maintaining poverty and how these vary across geographic contexts and population groups; 4) to identify the unique aspects of poverty characterizing rural people and places; 5) to develop your critical skills in evaluating the theoretical and methodological approaches presented in the readings; and 6) to broaden your own professional/research interests.

III. COURSE ASSIGNMENTS, DATES, AND GRADING

This course has five sets of written requirements: (1) a term paper on a topic that is mutually agreeable, due the last day of classes April 27; (2) an abstract for the term paper due prior to selecting the term paper project — due February 16; (3) a mid-term take-home examination, assigned tentatively March 2 and due one week later; (4) and two position papers or short critical essays about the readings, due the same day as the scheduled readings for that day. In addition, each student will participate in a group assignment that involves leading discussion of readings for part of one class period. Expectations for grading in this course are different depending upon whether you are taking the course for graduate or for undergraduate credit. Graduate students are held to more demanding standards in all forms of course work and written assignments are longer and more detailed. Graduate students and undergraduate students alike complete a mid-term, final written paper, abstract, and a position paper. In lieu of the final written term paper, undergraduates may write a paper that is a detailed review of two books. Prior to beginning the term paper/book review project, the student will produce a one-page (double-spaced) abstract and give a five-minute class presentation that explains the project to be undertaken. Before handing in any written work, please be aware about university rules for plagiarism: carefully check your written work to make sure there is no evidence of plagiarism.

The grade you earn in this course is determined in the following way.

Midterm exam: 25 points
Term paper: 30 points
Term paper abstract: 5 points
Position paper#1: 10 points
Position paper#2: 10 points
Class participation: 20 points
Total: 100 points
Your class participation is a very important component of the grade you earn. Criteria regarding class participation will be: (1) that your class participation reflects direct and thoughtful discussion of the required readings and lectures--and clearly demonstrates your knowledge, questions, and concerns about the topics introduced in the readings for the week; (2) that your group discussion assignment is well-organized and that your individual contribution is clear and high quality; (3) that you are consistent in class participation, which also means that you are present for each class in addition to being a conscientious participant. Your decision to miss a class or to partially attend a class (arriving late, leaving early) influences the grade you earn for class participation. Please note that partial attendance of a class/missing a class disrupts our on-going discussions--and it hurts a class climate where everyone is counted upon to contribute and to be “on the same page” in terms of material discussed. Please be sure to arrange your personal schedule so that you can attend every class!

IV. WEEKLY TOPICS AND READINGS

Course Texts: All books are available at OSU book stores. A copy of each book is also on reserve at the Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences Library whose temporary location is the third floor of Howlett Hall—the building directly adjacent to main entrance (south side) of Kottman Hall; for information call 292-6125.

Duncan, Cynthia Worlds Apart (Yale University Press, second edition 2014).

Lobao, Linda, Gregory Hooks, and Ann R. Tickamyer The Sociology of Spatial Inequality (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2007). (Note: this book contains a number of articles illustrating different research designs for studying poverty, in addition to those covered below in the readings.)

Schiller, Bradley R., The Economics of Poverty and Discrimination (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2008 edition, currently the most recent version of this text).

All other readings are available for you to download electronically

Noted under each reading, is the manner by which you can download each of these readings:

1) Book chapters are located under Carmen e-reserves folder for this course see the posting for the OSU’s electronic reserve system. Go to our course on Carmen, click on contents. If you have any difficulty, please contact Carmen support or phone the Electronics Reserves office at 292-6448.

2) Journal articles are available on-line via the OSU library—go to the on-line journal article link. If you have any difficulty, please contact OSU libraries (292-6152 is the number of the Food, Agriculture, and Environmental Sciences Library).

PART I SOCIAL STRATIFICATION AND POVERTY: SOCIOLOGICAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, CONCEPTS AND MEASURES


(Note: no class January 19, Martin Luther King Day holiday)

February 2  Explanations of Poverty: Individual-Oriented Theoretical Approaches (Schiller’s general “flawed-character” approach and its corollaries: the culture of poverty; human capital theory; sociology’s classical status attainment school; and their critiques)

a. Schiller, Chapters: 5, Labor Force Participation (pp. 79-101); 6, The Working Poor (pp.102-119); 8, Family size and structure (pp.140-154); 9, The Underclass: Culture and Race (pp.155-171); 10 Education and Ability (pp.172-186)


February 9  Explanations of Poverty: Structural-Based Approaches (political economic and general structural approaches)


b. Schiller, Chapter 12, Discrimination in the Labor Market, (pp. 208-226).

c. Peet, Theories of Development, pp.115-118, “Regulation Theory” (this reading is listed in Peet volume under Chapter on Dependency Theory). Available: Carmen e-reserves

e. NELP (National Employment Law Project) *The Low-Wage Recovery, Data Brief* April 2014 (read pp. 1-7); for example of methodology, you might look at the Appendix.

**February 16** Spatial-Structural Explanations of Poverty: Uneven Development and the Geography of Poverty


**ABSTRACT DUE FEBRUARY 16**

**February 23** Spatial-Structural Explanations of Poverty and Rural Areas


d. Michael D. Irwin, 2007, “Territories of Inequality” Chapter 4, and David A. Cotter, Joan M. Hermsen, and Reeve Vanneman, “Placing Family Poverty in Area Contexts”, *The Sociology of Spatial Inequality*. Skim with a focus on the methodologies used to study poverty explained in both articles—Irwin focuses on aggregate or place-level analyses while Cotter et al. focus on multi-level models that combine individual with place-context variables.

**PART II: RURAL POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES**

**March 2** Poverty in rural communities: Appalachia, the South and New England

**MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM WILL BE PASSED OUT—DUE MARCH 9**

**March 9 Gender, Race and Ethnicity, and Region**

a. RSS Task Force, *Persistent Poverty in Rural America*, Chapter 6, Racial and ethnic minorities, (pp. 174-199), and Chapter 7 “Women and Persistent Rural Poverty” (pp.200-229). Available: Carmen (titled RSST persistent rural poverty and racial ethnic minorities and RSST Women and Persistent Rural Poverty)


c. Saenz et al., Chapter 8,”Adios Aztlan: Mexican American Out-Migration from the Southwest,” *The Sociology of Spatial Inequality*.

**March 16, Spring Break—no class (please read articles below for discussion on March 23)**

**March 23 Rural Development and Policy**


**March 30 Summary: What do we know about rural poverty in the U.S. and other developed nations?**


**PART III POVERTY AND DEVELOPING NATIONS**

**April 6 Theoretical Perspectives and Overview of Poverty in the Third World**

a. Peet, *Theories of Development*, Sociological Theories of Modernization (pp. 71-90); Dependency and World Systems Theory and critiques (pp. 107-114, 118-122); Feminist Theories (pp163-194). Available: Carmen e-reserves—3 chapters listed under Peet (Note: most of these theories on international development will be a review for you.)


e.

**April 13 Issues in Rural Poverty Research in Developing Countries**


**April 20, no class (assignment: to finalize your term paper for submission April 27)**
April 27 Issues in Rural Poverty Research in Developing Countries and Globally


Summary: towards future research on rural poverty and broader spatial inequality

TERM PAPER DUE

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER BREAK!!!!

SELECTED SOURCES OF USEFUL MATERIAL FOR THIS CLASS AND FOR YOUR RESEARCH PAPERS/REVIEWS
Web-Based Mapping and Data Sites
http://www.measureofamerica.org/ This site has all types of interactive maps and also reports from the American Human Development Project.

http://www.mappendachi.org/index.php Mappalachia is a project of Berea College; it offers drawings that are now "primary sources" that offer revealing glimpses of Appalachia in the last half of the twentieth century.

OSU Database, the World Development Indicators Online
http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=12&id=4&CNO=2 With it you can create comparative tables and charts for countries across the world, presenting demographic, trade, economic, education, health, transportation, communication, and military statistics and data

Interesting Mapping sites for quality of life indicators (world poverty, income, health by global region)
See: http://www.sasi.group.shef.ac.uk/worldmapper/ and
http://www.gapminder.org. which includes animated slides that clearly and intuitively dramatize trends on income, poverty, and health by global region, country, and within countries

Segregation mapping: see Brown University’s website produced by John Logan. It contains lots of segregation data by city.

USDA—Economic Research Service has numerous maps that you can download and create—lots of data on rural areas. See http://www.ers.usda.gov

The Atlantic Cities Place Matters http://www.theatlanticcities.com produces continually updated news articles on places across the United States.

Web-Sites from Organizations Addressing Poverty and Other Web-Based Material
Rural Policy Institute
http://www.rupri.org  This is the website for RUPRI Rural Policy Institute, which produces reports about rural poverty. The Institute is particularly concerned with the rural Midwest.

Institute for Poverty Research, Madison Wisconsin
http://www.irp.wisc.edu  This institute is perhaps the county’s top research center for poverty researchers. Graduate students will find it particularly useful for its depth of coverage of poverty issues, particularly poverty and methodological issues.

University of Kentucky Center for Poverty Research – has data and reports http://www.ukcpr.org/data

Institute for Women’s Policy Research
http://iwpr.org  This organization’s website contains much information about women’s work and well-being, family well-being, and child care

Carsey Institute
University of New Hampshire Institute for studying rural poverty which produces numerous reports, many dealing with Rural Poverty.

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Southern Rural Development Center
This organization produces a variety of reports on rural areas, such as The Role of Education: Promoting the Economic and Social Vitality of Rural America see .http://srdc.msstate.edu

Population Reference Bureau www.prb.org has numerous reports on demographic change, well-being, and a recent series of reports on Appalachia.

USDA—ERS particularly http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves  site contains a wealth of current information and reports about well-being in rural America. It also contains material on global agricultural trade.

Health data and services: Area Resource File, Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration—extensive data from AMA, American Hospital Association, and many other secondary sources contains health care system data and health status measures—across U.S. counties. http://arf.hrsa.gov

Child Trends
http://www.childtrends.org  This site contains many sources for adult and child social indicators

United for a Fair Economy (Responsible Wealth)
http://www.faireconomy.org/issues/responsible_wealth/archives  This is an organization that includes wealthy people who argue for a view that “they didn’t do it alone”—that they were successful because of public schools and help from their local community and government. They lobby for the need to keep the estate tax.

Good Jobs First
http://www.goodjobsfirst.org
A non-profit organization which produces reports on the effects of business on communities, tax incentives and hidden tax payer costs to recruit new businesses, build stadiums etc.; effects of Wal-Mart and other businesses on community poverty rates, health insurance, etc.

Global Hunger, See the Hunger Report, Bread for the World website: http://www.bread.org
Coalition on Housing and Homelessness--Ohio
Poverty and well-being updates and policy news for the state of Ohio.
www.cohhio.org

Pew Research Center, Social and Demographic Trends
www.pewsocialtrends.org Current reports on indicators of well-being, the Great Recession politics and public opinions.


Debates about the Effects of Globalization on Poverty and Income Inequality: See the journal World Development, various issues.

Articles/Reports Addressing Often Discussed Issues Related to Poverty Useful For Research Papers

“Heavy Weather: How Climate Destruction Harms Middle- and Lower-Income Americans”


“Poverty over Time and Location: An Explanation of Metro-Nonmetro Differences” by John M. Ulimwengu and David S. Kraybill. American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 86, 2004 pp. 1281-1288. This article uses housing costs to adjust for cost-of-living differences. In doing so, the authors find that income to needs is actually higher in nonmetro areas and long term probability of remaining poor is less in nonmetro areas. See also The National Poverty Center, Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, University of Michigan, How Sensitive is the Geographic Distribution of Poverty to Cost of Living Differences? Working Paper #04-13, August 2004 By Dean Jolliffe available on-line at http://www.umich.edu/publications


Social Capital and Community Development, see the special issue in *Community Development* (journal), volume 37 (1) 2006 for a number of articles.

“The Increasing Risk of Poverty across the Life Course.” *Demography* Nov 2009 by Sandoval, Rank, Hirschl. This article elaborates on life course-poverty issues.


**Books of Interest (those with ** are particularly appropriate for book reviews)**


**Methland: The Death and Life of An American Small Town. Reding, N. 2009**


**Poverty or Development: Global Restructuring and Regional Transformations in the U.S. South and the Mexican South**, Richard Tardanico and Mark Rosenberg (editors), Routledge 2000.


***Nickel and Dimed: On Not Getting by In America*** and other books by Barbara Ehrenreich