SYLLABUS FOR RURAL SOCIOLOGY 6500  
SPRING 2019  
THE SOCIOLOGY OF RURAL POVERTY

INSTRUCTOR  
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Office Hours:  
Tuesdays 4:00-5:00pm and Wednesdays 4:30-6:00pm 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/the extractive sector and poverty; rural gender and ethnic differences; and general processes of uneven development and social exclusion. The course also addresses on-going debates in conceptual frameworks and policy. Voluminous literature 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. As a rural sociological course, our readings focus on sociological pieces and also include work by geographers, regional scientists, and economists to give you a flavor of wide-ranging work. Our journey through the body of literature takes 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 will allow you to further customize this course to fit your specific areas of interest.

This class is organized in lecture-seminar format. 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 select 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.

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 relations of 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 22; (2) an abstract for the term paper due prior to selecting the term paper project—due February 11; (3) a mid-term take-home examination, assigned tentatively assigned February 25 and due one week later on March 4; (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 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 two-three 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.

- Term paper: 30 points
- Term paper abstract: 5 points
- Midterm exam: 25 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 class 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 entire 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 Books:

Optional: Chapters from the two books below are available electronically for no cost—you do not have to buy these books.

Lobao, Linda, Gregory Hooks, and Ann R. Tickamyer *The Sociology of Spatial Inequality* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 2007). This book contains a number of articles illustrating different research designs for studying poverty, in addition to those covered below in the readings. This book is available at no cost ($0) via The Ohio State library: [http://library.ohio-state.edu/record=b7159735-S7](http://library.ohio-state.edu/record=b7159735-S7)

Note: This resource is restricted from viewing outside the campus network. To access off campus, log in via the Off-Campus Sign-In ([https://library.osu.edu/borrowing/](https://library.osu.edu/borrowing/)) using your OSU Name.# and password.

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). Chapters available on Carmen for each week located under the “modules” folder.

All other readings are available for you to download electronically

1) Other chapters and journal articles are located under Carmen “modules” folder for this course under the readings for each week. Go to our course on Carmen, click on modules, then scroll to the week’s readings you would like to select. If you have any difficulty, please contact Carmen support.

2) In the case of journal articles, if they are not posted under the week’s readings, they are available online 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

January 7 and 14 (and also January 21—but no class, Martin Luther King holiday)

**Poverty and Rurality: Concepts, Definitions, Measurement**


January 28 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 4 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. 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 11 Spatial-Structural Explanations of Poverty: Uneven Development and the Geography of Poverty


ABSTRACT DUE FEBRUARY 11

February 18 Spatial-Structural and Other Spatially Sensitive Explanations: Rural Areas


d. Skim three articles below with a focus on the methodological approaches used to study rural poverty.*

Note: Irwin and Lobao et al. focus 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

February 25 Poverty in rural communities: Appalachia, the South and New England

a. Duncan, Worlds Apart, read entire book but focus on chapters 1,2, and 4.
February 25--MIDTERM TAKE-HOME EXAM WILL BE PASSED OUT –Due March 4

March 4 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).


**MARCH 11 NO CLASS SPRING BREAK**

March 18 Rural Development and Policy


March 25 Summary: What do we know about rural poverty in the U.S. and other developed nations? Research Findings and Relational Views of Poverty

**Overviews of Research**


Taking a “Relational” View of Poverty


PART III  POVERTY AND DEVELOPING NATIONS

April 1 Theoretical Perspectives and Overview of Poverty in the Third World

a. Peet and Hartwick *Theories of Development* (The Guildford Press, 2015) Sociological Modernization and related theories (pp. 138-159); Dependency and World Systems Theory and critiques (pp. 188-199 and 204-210) Feminist Theories (pp. 269-305). (These readings are listed in the Peet and Hartwick book chapters) *Note: most of these theories on international development will be a review for you.


APRIL 8 NO CLASS—your assignment-- please devote your time to working on your term paper and articles for next two classes!!!

April 15 Issues in Rural Poverty Research in Developing Countries (articles focus on farming, land, food, and gender)


d. Manzanera-Ruiz, Roser et al.  “Gender Inequality, Processes of Adaptation, and Female Local Initiatives in Cash Crop Production in Northern Tanzania.” *Rural Sociology* 81(2), 2016, pp. 143–171

April 22 Issues in Rural Poverty Research in Developing Countries and Globally (articles focus on policy, theory, the environment—and future research)

a. Andres Rodríguez-Pose and Daniel Hardy. “Addressing poverty and inequality in the rural economy


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

Lobao et al. Chapter 11 “Conclusion: An Agenda for Moving a Spatial Sociology Forward” (pp. 253-264) in *The Sociology of Spatial Inequality*.

**TERM PAPER DUE—APRIL 22 ---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/](http://www.measureofamerica.org/) This site has all types of interactive maps and also reports from the American Human Development Project.

*Dimensions of Poverty, The North Central Region, Purdue University has a new series of maps* [https://prcd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=34477a8f9bf4d6cd8310a5780af2d2e2](https://prcd.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=34477a8f9bf4d6cd8310a5780af2d2e2)

[http://www.mappalachia.org/index.php](http://www.mappalachia.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](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 site for quality of life indicators* (world poverty, income, health by global region) [http://www.gapminder.org](http://www.gapminder.org) 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](http://www.ers.usda.gov)


**Web-Sites from Organizations Addressing Poverty and Other Web-Based Material**

**U.S. Census**

[http://www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) The main source of population data for the U.S.

**The Luxembourg Income Study**

[http://www.lisproject.org](http://www.lisproject.org) For international data on income and poverty.
The Brookings Institution  
http://www.brookings.edu  
For up-to-date policy, population, and other trends.  You can also subscribe to their newsletters.

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  
https://iwpr.org  
This organization’s website contains much information about women’s work and well-being, family well-being, and child care

Carsey Institute  
https://carsey.unh.edu/publications  
University of New Hampshire Institute for studying demographic change which produces numerous reports, many dealing with rural America

Annie E. Casey Foundation  
http://www.aecf.org  
This organization’s website contains a variety of reports about children and families. A report dealing with low income workers is: Working Hard and Falling Short, America’s Working Families and the Pursuit of Economic Security.

Southern Rural Development Center  
This organization produces a variety of reports on rural areas, particularly the U.S. south 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  
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 [www.cohhio.org](http://www.cohhio.org) Poverty and well-being updates and policy news for the state of Ohio


Russell Sage Foundation [https://www.russellsage.org/](https://www.russellsage.org/) Produces varies series on inequality, jobs, the economy in the U.S.

**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**


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
Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, Matthew Desmond (2016).


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

The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time, by Jeffrey Sachs, Penguin Press

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.


Night Comes to the Cumberlands, by Harry M. Caudill, Jesse Stuart Foundation, 1963 A classic, historical book on Appalachia.


Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities, Kendall Thu and E. Paul Durrenberger, SUNY Press, Sept. 1998,

Making Ends Meet, Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, Russell Sage Foundation, March 1997


Children of the Land, Glen Elder and Rand Conger, University of Chicago Press, 2000

Debt and Dispossession: Farm Loss in America’s Heartland, Kathryn Marie Dudley, University of Chicago Press 2002

Working Hard and Making Do, Joan Smith and Margaret Nelson, University of California Press, May 1999


Indian Reservations in the United States: Territory, Sovereignty and Socioeconomic Change, Klaus Frantz and Frantz Frantz, University of Chicago Press, Aug. 1999

Learning to Labor, Paul E. Willis, Columbia University Press, 1981—a classic volume on the working class


Waltzing with the Ghost of Tom Joad: Poverty, Myth, and Low Wage Labor, Robert Lee Maril, University of Oklahoma Press, 2000


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