Introduction to Rural Sociology
RS 1500 (3 credits)
Fall 2021
Tuesdays/Thursdays 2:20pm-3:40pm
Mendenhall Lab 100

Instructor: Sarah Walton, PhD Candidate in Rural Sociology
Contact: Walton.448@osu.edu
Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5pm (via Zoom)
Office: Kottman 305

Course Description:
As the title of this course (“Introduction to Rural Sociology”) suggests, this class is centered around introducing students to key principles and concepts of rural sociology and sociology more broadly. This course is designed to be an interactive experience, and will challenge students to recognize social processes, problems, and trends across rural and urban places while considering their place in society.

Course Objectives
At the end of this course students should be able to demonstrate:
1. Basic knowledge and understanding of the concepts, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches in sociology and rural sociology.
2. An ability to apply sociological concepts to various issues and topics, including issues and topics relevant to rural and urban places in American society, and other societies around the world.
3. An ability to think critically about issues and topics affecting rural society, specifically, and American society, generally, as well as other societies around the world. Thinking critically means understanding the strengths and weaknesses of different and/or opposing points of view despite your personal inclinations.

Key Dates:
• Hometown Paper #1: September 16th
• Exam #1: September 30th (In-Class)
• Hometown Paper #2: October 28th
• Exam #2: November 23rd (Online via Carmen)
• Final Paper: December 10th
• In Class Activities: Random Dates

This course meets the following GEC requirements:

1. Diversity – Social Diversity in the United States

   Goals: Students should understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.
Expected Learning Outcomes: (a) Students should be able to describe and evaluate the roles of such categories as race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, disability, class, and religion across institutions and cultures in the United States. (b) Students should be able to recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

2. Social Sciences – Organizations and Politics

Goals: Students should understand: the systematic study of human behavior and cognition; the structure of human societies, cultures, and institutions; and the processes by which individuals, groups, and societies interact, communicate, and use human, natural, and economic resources.

Expected Learning Outcomes: (a) Students should understand the theories and methods of social scientific inquiry as they apply to the study of organizations and political bodies. (b) Students should understand the formation and durability of political, economic and social organizing principles and their differences and similarities across contexts. (c) Students should be able to comprehend and assess the nature and values of organization and polities, and their importance in solving social problems and forming policy.

Class Readings

All of the class readings will come from the required textbook (see below) and/or documents posted online via Carmen. Every reading is expected to be completed by the class period under which the reading is listed. For example, if a chapter from the textbook is listed on the syllabus under the October 16th class meeting, then the chapter should have been completed by October 16th to understand and engage with the lecture materials to be discussed during that class meeting. If anyone has any difficulties accessing any of the online materials, please let me know as soon as possible and we will work out a solution.

*Introduction to Sociology 3e* (2021) by OpenStax. (Note: This textbook is available for free and can be accessed online using this link: [https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-3e](https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-3e). It can also be downloaded in its entirety as a PDF). This book will be primarily used in the first weeks of class and will also be a useful reference for your projects.


The following books are not required for this class, but would make for helpful supplemental reading:

*Rural America in a Globalizing World* (2014) edited by Bailey, Jensen, and Ransom

*Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (2016) by Flora, Flora, and Gasteyer (This book will be particularly helpful for your second paper and is [available as an eBook](https://openstax.org/details/books/introduction-sociology-3e) through the OSU library.)
Course Requirements

Participation (10%): As this is a larger class and everyone has a slightly different participation style and comfort level in this type of setting, your participation grade will primarily be based upon graded, in-class activities. On 4-6 occasions throughout the semester, we will complete a fun in-class activity or “pop quiz.” If you are in class for the activity and submit the activity, you will receive full credit. You are allowed one free absence, as the lowest of your in-class activity grades will be dropped. These in-class activities will not be eligible for “make-up” unless you contact me and provide documentation for your absence. However, as most of your grade is based on exams and a holistic, synthetic paper project, attending lecture and completing the readings are critically important for your success in this class, as lecture is the time where you can ask questions and solidify important concepts, which will help you get better exam grades and write better synthetic essays.

Two Exams (20% each, 40% total): There will be two exams. Exam #1 will take place on September 30 and Exam #2 will take place on November 23. Each exam will assess students’ comprehension of the material presented up until that point and consists of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Three-Part Hometown Assignment (Hometown Paper (10%) + Hometown “Community Capitals” Analysis (15%) + Final Holistic Paper (25%) = 50%). Each student will conduct a multi-part project that uses their hometown as a case study for a rural sociological case study. The assignment consists of three parts completed over the course of the semester. First, students will write a short, descriptive paper about their hometown. For the second part of the project, students will conduct an analysis of their hometown, specifically using the community capitals framework. Lastly, students will write a holistic, final essay that analyzes their hometown, bringing in theoretical and conceptual insights from the course, beyond the community capitals framework and reflecting on how their own identities and experiences in this place were shaped by these social-structural factors (i.e. the “Sociological Imagination”). More detailed instructions will be provided separately. The Final Paper is due on December 10th, by 5:45PM and submitted electronically via Carmen. As there is no final exam in this class, this final project is due at the end of what would be our final exam slot.

While everyone will have to submit the first “Hometown Paper,” and I strongly recommend you do the whole “Hometown Project” sequence, there is flexibility to write Parts II & III of this paper assignment on a different topic than your hometown, such as your current neighborhood/place of residence or another topic of interest to you. This will be discussed further in class and clarified on Carmen.
The following is the total grading breakdown based on the course requirements:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLASS PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXAM #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>EXAM #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>THREE-PART PROJECT</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOMETOWN PAPER</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNITY CAPITALS ANALYSIS</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>FINAL HOLISTIC PAPER</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
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**Extra Credit**

There are two extra credit options open to everyone, which you can complete and submit at any time up until the end of the final exam slot (December 10th, by 5:45PM). These assignments are intended to be fun, creative ways for students to interact with course material and media (i.e. art and music) and provide a boost to their grade in the process. More details for both of these options can be found on Carmen:

1) **“See, Think, Wonder”** – This option involves visiting the Columbus Museum of Art downtown, choosing a piece of art, and following the “See, Think, Wonder” method. In addition to applying the “See, Think, Wonder” method to their chosen piece of art, students will also need to choose a piece of art that somehow relates to course concepts and write a reflective essay that describes their experience with the method as well as connects the piece of art’s themes to course materials. Note: OSU students can get free general admission tickets to the CMA at the DTix desk at the Union (and Sundays are always free.)

2) **Critical Media Analysis** – For this option, students will need to choose a song, preferably of the country music genre, and conduct a critical analysis both of the song lyrics and its music video using the rural sociological theories and concepts we’ve discussed in class. Note: An interesting variation of this assignment could be to do a compare/contrast of a country music song and a song from another genre! (Alternatively, students may also conduct a critical film analysis of a film that somehow relates to rural topics/issues, if that is preferred. However, any films must be approved by me.)

**A Note on Communication and Grading Timelines**

During the week (M-F), I will aim to respond to emails within 24 hours. Over the weekend, I will aim to respond to emails within 48 hours. I will aim to return/grade assignments in 7-10 days after they are submitted.

**Late Assignment Policy**

While I expect assignments to be submitted on their due date, I also understand that life happens. **If you contact me before the assignment due date, I am very open to discussing and considering extensions, based on your circumstances. However, if you do not discuss with me**
before the due date, and you submit an assignment late, I will assess a late penalty of one letter grade per 24 hour period the assignment is late.

**Note on Classroom Conduct**

The classroom is a place for exchanging facts, ideas, knowledge, and viewpoints in the pursuit of intellectual development. In the spirit of this purpose, our classroom will be an open one, meaning each person and their respective voices stand on equal footing. I certainly do not expect everyone to share the same beliefs, perspectives, and values. Differences of opinion are inevitable, and it is through constructive discussion that we will be able to express our views openly and learn to better understand others’ viewpoints as well as one’s own. Each student should feel free to express their viewpoints so long as they do so in a respectful manner.

**However**, maintaining a classroom as such **DOES NOT** mean that people are permitted to say things that are hurtful to specific persons or groups. There is a significant difference between expressing one’s viewpoints, no matter how disagreeable they may be to someone else and using language to intentionally demean and insult someone else. In addition, even without the use of hurtful language, conveying one’s argument and/or opinion is problematic when it involves finger-pointing, yelling, and other types of aggressive behavior.

Therefore, our classroom will not permit abusive language, finger-pointing, screaming, and the like. I will request to speak with any students who engage in this type of behavior, informing them of what they did/said that violated the policy of classroom conduct and warning them not do it again. If the students continue to engage in such behavior, I will see to it that the proper disciplinary action is applied.

**GRADING SCALE:**
The minimum percentages needed to achieve a given grade are as follows:
- 93 percent A
- 90 percent A-
- 87 percent B+
- 83 percent B
- 80 percent B-
- 77 percent C+
- 73 percent C
- 70 percent C
- 67 percent D+
- 60 percent D
- Less than 60 percent F

**Technology Use in Class:**

USE OF CELL PHONES/TEXTING/SURFING are not appropriate during class. If you choose to make a call or have to accept a call, please leave the room quietly. You may use your laptop/IPad for taking notes. However, please do not text or browse the internet during class.

**Students with Disabilities:**

ACCESSIBILITY IS A PRIORITY. I will promote universal access to the course. While I fully respect your privacy, I want students to feel comfortable discussing suggestions, requirements, or improvements that could make a more responsive classroom and help them learn better. I
strongly recommend contacting the Disability Services Main Office to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students of different abilities and reaching out to me at the beginning of class so I can help you learn as well as possible. Please contact the Disability Services Main Office at 614-292-3307 in Room 098 Baker Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Or visit the website of this office at http://www.ods.ohiostate.edu for more information.

**Counseling and Consultation Services:**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life Counseling and Consultation Services (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 4th Floor of the PAES Building. 24 hour emergency help is also available through the National 24/7 Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

**Title IX:**

Title IX is a portion of the United States Education Amendments of 1972, Public Law No. 92-318, 86 Stat. 235 (June 23, 1972), codified at 20 U.S.C. Section 1681-1688. It was renamed the Patsy Mink Equal Opportunity in Education Act in 2002. It states (in part) that: No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at http://titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at titleix@osu.

**Academic Misconduct:**

For all assignments for this course, the Code of Student Conduct of The Ohio State University applies. Academic misconduct is defined as any activity that compromises the academic integrity of the university or subverts the educational goals of this course, including plagiarism. Specifically, plagiarism is the representation of another’s work or ideas as one’s own, including the unacknowledged word-for-word and/or paraphrasing of another person’s work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person’s ideas. It also includes submitting substantially the same work to satisfy requirements for one course that has been submitted in satisfaction of requirements for another course, without permission of the instructor of the course
for which the work is being submitted. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct at http://studentconduct.osu.edu

**Tentative Class Schedule** (I reserve the right to adjust this schedule if necessary. Any updates to topics or required readings will be posted on Carmen Modules)

***Part I – Core Theories and Concepts in Sociology***

**Week 1 – Introduction to the Course/Thinking Sociologically**

August 24 - Tuesday – Introduction to the Course

August 26 – Thursday– What is Sociology?

Readings: 1) *Introduction to Sociology* – Chapter 1, Sections 1.1, 1.2, and 1.4, Chapter 4, Section 4.1., 2) The Sociological Imagination (1959) - The Promise – by C. Wright Mills

**Week 2 – Sociological Theory & Methods**

August 31 – Tuesday – “The Big Three”

Readings: 1) *Introduction to Sociology* – Chapter 1, Section 1.3 and Chapter 4, Section 4.2. “Emile Durkheim and Functionalism” and “Karl Marx and Conflict Theory,” *Introduction to Sociology* – Chapter 4, Sections 4.2, 4.3. “Max Weber and Symbolic Interactionism” and “Social Constructions of Reality.”

September 2 – Thursday– Sociological Research Methods

Readings: 1) *Introduction to Sociology* – Chapter 2.

**Week 3 – Introduction to Rural Sociology**

September 7 – Tuesday – What is Rural Sociology? “Rural America?”

September 9 – Thursday – Rural vs. Urban

Readings: 1) Brown and Schafft (2019) Chapter 1

***Demographics, Migration, Community, and Institutions***

Week 4 – Population Change, Demography, Migration

September 14 – Tuesday – Population Change in Rural America


Readings: 1) “Rural America is the New Inner City,” The Wall Street Journal; In-Class Movie: Hollow

***DUE: Hometown Paper***

Week 5 – Socialization & Rural Community

September 21 – Tuesday – Socialization – Aging, Family, Community


September 23 – Thursday – Community in Rural America, Community Capitals Framework

Readings: 1) Brown and Schafft: Chapter 4, 2) Selection from Rural Communities: Legacy + Change (available as eBook through OSU library)

Week 6 – Migration/Exam #1

September 28 – Tuesday – Migration, Rural Diversification; Exam Review

Readings: 1) Brown and Schafft, Chapter 8 (only pages 193 to end of chapter)

September 30 – Thursday - Exam #1 (In Class)
Week 7 – Institutions & Politics

October 5 – Tuesday – Rural Institutions
   Readings: 1) Brown and Schafft, Chapter 5, 2) *Introduction to Sociology* Chapters 14-16 (skim)

October 7 – Thursday – Rural Politics

*****Social Stratification*****

Week 8 – Rural Economies & Fall Break

October 12 – Tuesday - Rural Economies, Deindustrialization, Economic Restructuring
   Readings: 1) Brown & Schafft Chapter 9

October 14 – Thursday – No Class! (Fall Break)

Week 9 – Rural Poverty & Race, Ethnicity

October 19 – Tuesday - Rural Poverty, Spatial Inequality

October 21 – Thursday – Racial & Ethnic Stratification

Readings: 1) 1) Brown and Schafft, Chapter 8, 2) Skim the following: 1) “Twice Invisible,” First Nations Development Institute, 2) “There were nearly a million black farmers in 1920. Why have they disappeared?” *The Guardian*, 3) “Mexican Americans seek atonement for ancestral lands that were taken over generations” *ABC News*. 4) *Introduction to Sociology* Chapter 11
Week 10 – Inequality & Rural Economies – Mass Incarceration

October 26 – Tuesday – Mass Incarceration and Rural Areas


In-class Film: Prison Town, USA

***DUE: Hometown Community Capitals Paper***

Week 11 – Inequality & Rural Economies – Natural Resources & Agriculture

November 2 – Tuesday – “Boom & Bust” Economies; Case study – Natural Resources


November 4 – Thursday - Introduction to Sociology of Food and Agriculture, the “Goldschmidt Hypothesis”


Week 12 – Impacts of Changes in Agricultural Production

November 9 – Tuesday - Applied Discussions of Farming Trends


November 11 – Thursday– NO CLASS (Veteran’s Day)

Week 13 – Agriculture & Environment

November 16 – Tuesday – The Local Food Movement & Food Justice – A Response to Shifts in Agricultural Production.

November 18 – Thursday – Introduction to Environmental Sociology

Week 14 – Exam 2 & Thanksgiving Break
November 23 – Tuesday – Exam #2 (Online via Carmen)

November 25 – Thursday– NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break!)

Week 15 – Current Issues in Rural America
November 30 – Tuesday – Amenities and Rural Development, Exurban Development

December 2 – Thursday – Challenges and Opportunities for Rural Areas Looking Forward

Week 16 – Last Day of Class
December 7 – Tuesday – Last Day of Class!
Readings: TBD

*******FINAL PAPER DUE BY 5:45PM ON FRIDAY DECEMBER 10th*******