RURAL SOCIOLOGY 5500
DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS
Online, synchronous - Wed 5:30 – 8:00 pm
Fall Semester 2020
School of Environment & Natural Resources

COURSE OVERVIEW
INSTRUCTOR
Professor Linda Lobao
320 Kottman Hall, Room D
292-6394
e-mail: lobao.1@osu.edu (preferred contact method)
Office Hours: Virtual - Thursdays 4:00-5:00 PM and Fridays 4:00-5:00PM and by appointment

Teaching Associate: Eric Swanson
Kottman Hall Room 247
e-mail: Swanson.292@osu.edu (preferred contact method)
Office Hours: Virtual - Tuesdays 1:00-2:00 PM, Wednesdays 1:00-2:00 PM and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Examine the sociological processes involved in disseminating new ideas and technologies in U.S. and developing nations. Assess the consequences of new technologies for communities, households, and individuals particularly in rural contexts.

CREDIT HOURS: 3

PREREQUISITES: None

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES:
Why do some social groups adopt innovations such as new technologies, ideas, and behaviors more rapidly than others? What are the impacts of innovations for different social groups in the U.S. as well as globally? How can innovations better tailored to promote people’s well-being and development across communities and nations? This course addresses these questions by studying innovation-diffusion as form of social change.

The primary objectives of the course and learning goals are:
1. Objective: To examine innovation diffusion as a specific type of social change.
   Learning goal: To identify the social, economic, and cultural processes involved in the dissemination of new ideas and technology. Focus is particularly on rural populations and communities, agriculture, and the environment, in the U.S. as well as in global development settings. We also address innovation-diffusion broadly across society.

2. Objective: To understand the major conceptual approaches that analyze innovation diffusion. Much of the innovation diffusion literature centers on top-down models of social change,
whereby an organization (e.g. government entity or corporation) introduces an innovation to a recipient audience; there are also bottom-up models.

Learning goals: a) Be able to explain and apply the two, classic major top-down models: the traditional, adoption-diffusion model that focuses on the adopter-side; and the alternative approach which emphasizes the provider-side or propagator of the innovation.
b) Be able to explain and apply less "top-down" approaches such as those that address how mass populations (people/communities at large) and nonscientists actively contribute to development and diffusion of new technologies/other innovations.

3. Objective: To understand the relationship between innovation-diffusion as a change process and how it compares to other social change or “development” processes.
Learning goal: Be able to identify the major sociological theories and concepts that address social change and apply them to concrete examples of change across communities and societies. Sociologists define “social change” as transformations in social structure (society) or patterns of relationships involving statuses, roles, groups, and institutions.

4. Objective: To begin, continue, and develop your own substantive/professional interests on the topics of: innovation diffusion; social change/development; sustainable innovations; and social, economic, and environmental impacts of diffusion.
Learning goal: Be able to apply the theories and concepts in this class to professional settings and careers/fields of study that span the previous topics. For example, be able to write a report for a governmental/non-governmental organization or business entity that explains whether and why adoption of a specific innovation is likely to occur.
Learning goal: Developing your own research through a project on innovation-diffusion. For undergraduates, this involves selecting an innovation that you will study throughout the course and produce a project term paper; for graduate students, your project term paper can be adapted to your thesis/dissertation research in your field.

5. Objective: To critically examine the impacts of diffusion of innovations/technology transfer and traditional, "top-down" strategies of introducing change. Included are issues such as social class and gender differentials in the dissemination of ideas and technology, non-adoption as a form of behavior, social/economic constraints on adoption behavior, and the consequences of new technology at the individual, community, and societal levels. We also examine strategies by which social groups including the poor, indigenous people, and women may be empowered to enact their own changes. We compare "bottom-up" strategies of innovation-diffusion relative to traditional "top-down" strategies.
Learning goal: a) Be able to evaluate the social costs and benefits of innovation diffusion for different social groups.
b) Be able to evaluate the limitations of top-down as well as bottom-up strategies of innovation diffusion.

HOW THIS COURSE WORKS

MODE OF DELIVERY: 100% online delivery. Synchronous class meeting on Zoom each
Wednesday, 5:30 pm – 8:00pm. A typical class will consist of lecture/discussion, Q&A session on the class material, and session on development of your research project. For those unable to attend the Zoom meeting, all classes will be recorded and a link available to you.

PACE OF ONLINE ACTIVITIES: This course is divided into weekly modules with readings, assignments and recorded class lectures available in the modules. Students are expected to keep pace with weekly deadlines and with all class lectures (either virtually attending or viewing the recordings).

CREDIT HOURS AND WORK EXPECTATIONS: This is a 3-credit-hour course. According to Ohio State policy, students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS: Because this is an online course, your attendance is based on your online activity and participation. The following is a summary of everyone's expected participation:

- **Participating in online activities for attendance: at least once per week**
  You are expected to log in to the course in Carmen every week. (During most weeks you will probably log in many times.) If you have a situation that might cause you to miss an entire week of class, discuss it with me as soon as possible.

- **Office hours and live sessions**: Office hours are optional. Attendance at the virtual live class meetings is highly encouraged; sessions are recorded if you need to miss class.

- **Participating in class discussion/reaction assignments**: As part of your participation, each week you can expect to post at least once, either as part of our substantive class discussion on the week's topics or by turning in an assignment due that week.

COURSE MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGIES

REQUIRED BOOKS AND OTHER READINGS

Course Texts: (all books are available at the OSU book store, Barnes & Noble. A copy of each of the books is also on reserve at the Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences Library in the Agricultural Administration Building (across the street from Kottman Hall). For information call 292-6125 or see Rural Sociology 5500: https://guides.osu.edu/c.php?g=821076

3) All other readings are available for you to download electronically from Carmen
https://carmen.osu.edu. If for some reason you do not find a journal article uploaded for you on Carmen, you can download it via the OSU library’s online journal system.

COURSE TECHNOLOGY
For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at https://ocio.osu.edu/help(hours, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

• Carmen Help: https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmencanvas
• Self-Service and Chat support: http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice
• Phone: 614-688-HELP (4357)
• Email: 8help@osu.edu
• TDD: 614-688-8743

Baseline technical skills for online courses
• Basic computer and web-browsing skills
• Navigating Carmen

Technology skills necessary for this specific course
• CarmenConnect text, audio, and video chat
• Recording a slide presentation with audio narration
• Recording, editing, and uploading video

Required equipment
• Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
• Webcam: built-in or external webcam, fully installed and tested
• Microphone: built-in laptop or tablet mic or external microphone

Required software
Microsoft Office 365: All Ohio State students are now eligible for free Microsoft Office 365 ProPlus through Microsoft’s Student Advantage program. Full instructions for downloading and installation can be found https://ocio.osu.edu/kb04733.

GRADING AND FACULTY RESPONSE
HOW YOUR GRADE IS CALCULATED
The grade you earn for the course is based on your following contributions (1000 points total):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract (for project paper)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First exam</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second exam</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project paper</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly performance</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(includes 10 reaction/class input assignments, quizzes @ 20 points each)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total points</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grading scale: A 930 and above; A- 900-929; B+ 870-899; B 830-869; B- 800-829; C+770-799; C 730-769; C- 700-729; D+ 670-699; D 600-669; E below 600.

Differential Expectations for Undergraduate & Graduate Students
Students may take the course for undergraduate credit or graduate credit, with different expectations. Exam questions and the term paper assignment are tailored differently to graduate and undergraduate students. Graduate students must also complete additional readings which are noted in the syllabus.

**Written Assignments:**

Research project paper and abstract: A large part of this course involves a research project where you select an innovation, conduct research on the innovation, and complete a research project paper which involves answering a series of key questions about your innovation. This is explained in more detail in the file “Research Project Paper.” An abstract for your research paper is due October 7 with the completed research paper due November 4. For the research project paper, undergraduate students will be asked to choose an innovation and conduct research to answer a set of questions about it. Graduate students are also asked to choose an innovation or an issue related to the course content (preferably an innovation/topic related to their thesis or dissertation) and to write a research paper on this topic. Prior to beginning the research project, the student will produce a one-page abstract (instructions are denoted in the file “Research Project Paper”)—on October 7. Based upon this, I will provide comments to help you to decide if the innovation is appropriate for use as a project for the final paper.

Two exams:

For students taking the class for undergraduate credit: (1) a midterm exam given October 21; This exam will be mainly multiple choice (2) the second is a take-home exam due to me on Monday December 7. The second exam will be given to you on December 2 (our last day of class). This is an essay exam that will consist of several essay questions from which you will choose two questions.

For graduate students, both of the above exams will be take-home. Both are essay exams that will consist of three to four questions, from which you will choose two questions. (1) Your first exam is due October 21 and you will receive it on October 14. (2) The second is due to me on Monday December 7. The second exam will be given to you on December 2 (our last day of class).

Class Reaction/Discussion Assignments and Quizzes

Ten short-answer reaction pieces and/or quizzes will be given. Reaction pieces entail your response to the readings, lectures, and discussion points made in class. These assignments will be given the day of each class with approximately one-week for return.

Late assignments

Late assignments are not accepted unless accompanied by a doctor’s note. I will also consider (not necessarily accept) other serious reasons with notification in advance. Not giving yourself enough time to complete an assignment does not qualify as a “serious” reason.
Instructor feedback and response time
I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call 614-688-HELP at any time if you have a technical problem.)

- Email: I will reply to emails and messages within 24 hours on school days.
- Weekly discussion/reaction assignments will generally be graded within one week; the course project paper and the exams will be graded as soon as possible.

OTHER COURSE POLICIES

DISCUSSION AND COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES
The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- Writing style: While there is no need to participate in class discussions as if you were writing a research paper, you should remember to write using good grammar, spelling, and punctuation. A more conversational tone is fine for non-academic topics.
- Tone and civility: Let's maintain a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. Remember that sarcasm doesn't always come across online.
- Citing your sources: When we have academic discussions, please cite your sources to back up what you say. For the textbook or other course materials, list at least the title and page numbers. For online sources, include a link.
- Backing up your work: Consider composing your academic posts in a word processor, where you can save your work, and then copying into the Carmen discussion.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY
Policies for this course

- Exams and Quizzes: You must complete the midterm and final exams yourself, without any external help or communication.
- Written assignments: Your written assignments, including your course project paper should be your own original work.
- Reusing past work: In general, you are prohibited in university courses from turning in work from a past class to your current class, even if you modify it. If you want to build on past research or revisit a topic you've explored in previous courses, please discuss the situation with me.
- Falsifying research or results: All research you will conduct in this course is intended to be a learning experience; you should never feel tempted to make your results or your library research look more successful than it was.
- Collaboration: While study groups are encouraged, remember that comparing answers on a quiz or assignment is not permitted. If you're unsure about a particular situation, please feel free just to ask ahead of time.
Ohio State’s academic integrity policy

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University’s Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.”

The Ohio State University’s Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s Code of Student Conduct is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:
- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages (COAM Home)
- Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity (Ten Suggestions)
- Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity (www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm)

Copyright disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

Statement on Title IX

All students and employees at Ohio State have the right to work and learn in an environment free from harassment and discrimination based on sex or gender, and the university can arrange interim measures, provide support resources, and explain investigation options, including referral to confidential resources.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or discriminated against based on your sex or
gender, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual exploitation, you may find information about your rights and options at titleix.osu.edu or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu. Title IX is part of the Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) at Ohio State, which responds to all bias-motivated incidents of harassment and discrimination, such as race, religion, national origin and disability. For more information on OIE, visit equity.osu.edu or email equity@osu.edu.

Diversity at Ohio State
The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

Your mental health
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 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at (614) 292-5766 and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Prevention Hotline at 1-(800)-273-TALK or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

ACCESSIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS
The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability including mental health, chronic
or temporary medical conditions, please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

**ACCESSIBILITY OF COURSE TECHNOLOGY**
This online course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State’s learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.

- [CarmenCanvas accessibility](#)
- Streaming audio and video
- [CarmenZoom accessibility](#)
- Collaborative course tools

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS**
RS5500 is a combination of lecture and class discussion. At the beginning, to orient you toward the material, much of the class is lecture. The focus each week will be on the topics covered in the assigned readings, outlined below. We will also have guest lectures. For most weeks, you will also have a reaction piece assignment pertaining to the course readings or lectures.

**PART I: THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

**WEEK 1 (August 26)**
**Introduction to the Course: Welcome to RS5500!**
Grading, administrative procedures, assignments, and selecting a topic for your course project and paper.

**WEEK 2 (September 2)**
**Social Change, U.S. Society, and the Adoption-Diffusion Model as a Type of Change**
Readings from, Harper/Leicht: Chapter 1, By Way of Introduction; Chapter 2, The Causes and Patterns of Change; Chapter 4, American Social Trends.

WEEK 3 (September 9)
Sociological Concepts and Theories: Illustrating Social Change
1) Readings from Harper/Leicht, Chapter 3, Social Theory and Social Change.


WEEK 4 (September 16)
The McDonaldization of Society 9th edition (2019) by Ritzer, Chapter 1 (An Introduction); Chapter 2 (McDonaldization Past and Present); Chapter 4 (Predictability and Control: Consumers); Chapter 6 (Predictability and Control: McJobs and other McDonaldized Occupations 2); Chapter 7 (The Irrationality of Rationality).

**PART II: INNOVATION-DIFFUSION RESEARCH: TWO CLASSICAL MODELS OF STUDYING “TOP-DOWN” PROCESSES OF DIFFUSION**

WEEK 5 (September 23)
Diffusion of Innovations from the "Adopter-side" Model
Rogers, Chapter 1, Elements of Diffusion, pp. 1-37. Available on Carmen titled, Rogers, Elements of Diffusion.

WEEK 6 (September 30)
Planning Workshop for Your Research Project
This class is a workshop that will help you finalize your research project. Consultation on your innovation and the information needed for your abstract and course paper will be provided.

WEEK 7 (October 7)
Diffusion of Innovations from the “Provider-side" Model


DUE OCTOBER 7: ABSTRACT FOR YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT.
WEEK 8 (October 14) Extending the Two Models
1) Harper/Leicht, Chapter 10, Technology, Innovations and Networks


GRADUATE STUDENTS’ TAKE-HOME MIDTERM QUESTIONS GIVEN OCT. 14

WEEK 9 (October 21)
UNDERGRADUATE MIDTERM
GRADUATE STUDENTS’ TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE

PART III. SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF “TOP-DOWN” INNOVATION-DIFFUSION
WEEK 10 (October 28)
Consequences of Innovation Diffusion: Issues of Social and Economic Inequality
1) Brown, Chapter 8, The Development Perspective II, pp. 229-277 Available on Carmen/Canvas, titled: Brown, Development Perspective II (focus on pp. 270-277, skim the remaining pages).

2) Rogers, Chapter 11, pp. 405-442 Available on Carmen titled: Rogers, Consequences of Innovations


GUEST LECTURE: Dr. Joseph Campbell, Impacts of social change in less developed countries.
PART IV. MOVING RESEARCH FORWARD: QUESTIONING/ELABORATING INNOVATION-DIFFUSION MODELS AND SUSTAINABILITY

WEEK 11 (November 4)


For Graduate Students: German, Mowo, and Kingamkono, “A Methodology for Tracking the ‘Fate’ of Technological Interventions in Agriculture.” Agriculture and Human Values, Volume, 23, 2006: 352-369. Available on Carmen/Canvas or through the OSU library on-line journal system.

COURSE PAPER DUE: NOVEMBER 4

NOVEMBER 11—NO CLASS VETERAN’S DAY

WEEK 12 (November 18)


GUEST LECTURE: Sarah Walton, Diffusion of the Growth of Jails across the U.S.

PART V. DEVELOPMENT IN THE GLOBAL SYSTEM AND BOTTOM-UP DIFFUSION

WEEK 13 (November 25)

Globalization/Development, Technology, the Poor, and Gender

1) Harper/Leicht, The Emerging Global System: Development and Globalization, Chapter 11;


**GUEST LECTURE:** Dr. Mark Erbaugh, Professor Emeritus, Development Theory and the Diffusion of Innovations.

**WEEK 14 (December 2)**

"Bottom-Up" Approaches to Social Change: Participatory Approaches and Diffusion across Communities


*For Graduate Students* Harper/Leicht, Chapter 7, “Social Movements.”

**SECOND EXAM ——— this is a take-home exam with two essay questions for you to complete.**

It will be given to you December 2 and due Monday December 7.

**HAVE A GREAT HOLIDAY BREAK!!!**

**ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF REFERENCE THAT MAY BE OF INTEREST TO YOU!**

**DIFFERENT APPLICATIONS OF INNOVATION-DIFFUSION MODELS**

See particularly journals such as:

*Rural Sociology*
*Agriculture and Human Values*
*Technology and Society*
*American Behavioral Scientist*, Volume 53 Issue # 9 2010 is an entire issue devoted to rural/urban differences in technology.


Sautter, Tippett, and Morgan. 2010 “The Social Demography of Internet Dating.” *Social Science Quarterly* 91 (2)


**SOCIAL IMPACTS OF TECHNOLOGY**

See particularly journals such as:

*Science, Technology and Human Values*
*Rural Sociology*
*Agriculture and Human Values*
*Sociologia Rurals*

For rural urban differences, see series of articles in the *American Behavioral Scientist* 2010, Volume 53 (9).
Ryan Gunderson Explaining technological impacts without determinism: Fred Cottrell’s sociology of technology and energy *Energy Research & Social Science* volume 42, August 2018, Pages 127-133


