America has long been viewed as a highly modern, complex, and urban society. It may surprise many, but it was not until 1920 this country became predominately urban. Our society - and many of its cornerstone ideals - evolved from the very small settlements and rural environments of the colonial era. This course is intended to better acquaint you with rural society through the study of rural sociology. A central premise is that a better understanding and appreciation of the Nation’s rural roots and of ongoing changes in rural America will facilitate a more rounded perspective on the problems and opportunities facing the nation as a whole. While the focus will be largely domestic, some attention also will be paid to the rural global context.

Course Goals

The goal of this course is to introduce you to rural sociology and rural society. Along the way I hope to create an opportunity for each student to develop a perspective on American rural life which strips away preconceived notions of what rural America is (hopefully one considerably different from that associated with the painting “American Gothic”); to teach students to use two important sociological concepts – social systems and social change; to challenge each student to exchange ideas about rural life with their peers in a relatively unstructured setting; and to help you develop an ability to think and write critically about issues and topics affecting rural American society, as well as its urban and international counterparts.

Course Materials

Course material will include chapters from several textbooks, short essays and vignettes, research articles, videos/films, and various news media. Organizationally, the course contents include an overview of agricultural and rural change; an introduction to social systems theory - including its major structures and functions; and an application of systems theory to the rural community. Through the latter efforts, i.e., applying course materials to some of the more pressing social issues facing rural people and places, the typical student will better learn sociology.
Required Text

There is no required text for this course. All assigned readings can be found on ANGEL, and on reserve in Armsby room 111.

Means of Evaluation

Your final grade will be based on your performance on each of the tasks assigned as indicated below:

- Book Review 15%
- Film Review 15%
- First Exam 15%
- Second Exam 15%
- Final Exam or Term Paper 20%
- Participation (see detail below) 20%

Each student has the OPTION of taking the final exam or writing a term paper which accounts for 20% of your grade. The quality of your responses to several think pieces and your class participation will account for the remaining 20% of your grade.

I define participation broadly but attempt to measure it in multiple ways:

1. Class Discussion

Despite the size of the class, I will attempt to create an opportunity for discussion of core concepts, theories, and applications through the use of examples – both yours and mine. The degree to which you engage this exercise will reflect your currency in readings and assignments. I will facilitate this by randomly calling upon students to discuss the readings and or to respond to various questions. Being prepared is important. I will encourage discussion by asking non rhetorical questions. Your involvement in these exchanges will be recorded (in part, by the fact you will be asked to say your name when you respond).

2. Reading Responses

See Assignments section below for details

3. Attendance

On at least five (5) occasions, attendance will be taken. These may or may not overlap with film/video days or exam days and can even occur more than once during a single class session. Attendance checks will be in the form of a short thought piece or survey question on a current topic about rural America, or I may simply ask you to write your name on a piece of paper. Do not write your friends’ names down during this process. Doing that would be a form of intellectual dishonesty (see Academic Integrity section below) and actually work against you and your grade.

As always, it is better to concentrate on course content rather than waste time worrying about your final course grade. I realize this is easier said than done; in order to help allay some of your concerns, it is my policy to allow all students the opportunity to rewrite those assignments with which they are dissatisfied. All rewritten assignments (accompanied by the earlier piece with our comments on it) must be turned in within two weeks of date it was returned to you. NO rewrites will be accepted after December 2, 2010.
Each student should schedule at least one appointment with me during the first month of the semester to discuss their objectives and goals for this course. Additionally, a graduate teaching assistant will be available to provide assistance (but it will remain your responsibility to seek this aid).

**Policy on Late Assignments and Make-Up Exams**

You are required to take exams and turn in assignments as scheduled. Be forewarned that only under extraordinary circumstances (documented illness; death in the family) will I give makeup exams or accept late assignments.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Readings**

*All readings will be available on the class ANGEL site.* Multiple hardcopies of the readings will be in 111 Armsby. The readings located in 111 Armsby may be checked out, but they must be returned and put back into their proper folders by the end of the day you take them out. You may take them out overnight, but they must be returned first thing the next morning. Failure to do so will terminate your privilege of borrowing them from 111 Armsby (Staff Assistant – Ms. Susan Thompson – 865.0455)

All readings identified with an asterisk (*) are available as supplemental readings. They are suggested and optional. I urge you to at least peruse them since they provide a perspective which differs and expands upon the assigned readings. **Those readings NOT marked with an asterisk (*) are required readings.** Please see pages 7-13 for all reading assignments.

**Reading Responses**

You will write a brief response (1.5 to 2 pages typed, double-spaced) to the class readings for two (2) sections of your choosing from the seven (7) sections identified on the reading list. These responses are designed to aid your integration of course content – assigned readings, class discussions, and connections to your own personal, professional, and academic interests. You should use these responses to consider the contributions the readings make in advancing our understanding of the role and place of rural society.

Please see section **Important Dates** for the due dates for reading responses on each section.

**Book and Film Reviews**

In order to meet the objectives of this course each student will need to complete one book and one film/video review (an outline for this review is part of this syllabus). Therefore, you will need to purchase (or borrow) one of the following books (you may be able to find them in the campus bookstore or at one of the downtown merchants – Barnes and Noble at the Nittany Mall may have them; you can also check Amazon.com and Webster’s Bookstore).


Also, you will need to review one film or video shown during class (as indicated on the attached outline).

**Guidelines for Book and Film Review**

Your execution of written assignments – both on exams and in papers – is central in this course. I place great weight on the quality of such material. These efforts need to be well organized and researched, clearly written, and reflective of original and critical thought. Merely indicating what others have found or said is inadequate. Rather, *the written assignments will allow you to critique and apply* what you have learned in the class throughout the semester. Guidelines for the reviews and term paper follow.

Both reviews are designed to be a critical assessment of the content of what you have read or viewed and an opportunity for you to react to this material. They *are not* Book or Film Reports where a simple reporting/regurgitation of material generally suffice.

Use the outline below to help identify what is needed for inclusion in your reviews. *All reviews must be in essay format, i.e., no topical outline reviews will be graded; reviews should be no more than three nor less than two typed, double-spaced pages.* What is provided below is to help you frame your written response.

1. **Bibliographic note:** At the top of the first page of your Book Review and Film Review you should include the following information (of course you will only have access to some of this information for the review of the film/video – use common sense on including the relevant data here):
   - Author(s)
   - Title
   - Publisher and Place of Publication
   - Date or Publication
   - Number of pages

2. **Purpose**
   - This is often stated in the preface, forward, or introductory chapter.

3. **Theory**
   - ‘Theory’ may merely be major ideas, concepts, and hypotheses (or set of explicitly stated and logically interrelated propositions).

4. **Method**
   - Techniques by which author obtained the data, conducted the analysis, etc.

5. **Summary**
   - The most important ideas – abstract of what the author says in the book
VI. Conclusions

- Conclusion of the author emerging from her/his analysis and/or presentation of material

VII. Your Evaluation

- Discuss your reaction and analysis of the book or film/video – Don’t just say it was good or bad. See some professional book reviews in *Society and Natural Resources*, *Community Development*, or *Rural Sociology* for format and style.

Your Book Review is due **October 19, 2010**

Your Film Review is due **December 09, 2010**

**Guidelines for Term Paper**

If you choose this option (as opposed to taking a final examination), the **Term Paper** becomes the major writing assignment for the course. The choice of topic is left to the student. Explore an area of interest to you. I strongly urge you to begin thinking about this paper and begin work on it as soon as possible. This paper will be due in class on the last day we meet – **December 09, 2010**. If you want feedback on this paper prior to submitting it for a grade, you must hand in a draft before Thanksgiving break.

This exercise is designed to familiarize you with the current literature on rural conditions, opportunities, and problems. To accomplish this task, I suggest that you become acquainted with the *Journal of the Community Development Society*, *Rural Sociology*, and publications of Greenwood, Praeger, Penn State, and/or Iowa State Presses.

Form: Maximum length is 10-12 typed, double-spaced pages. References and style as required by the journal *Rural Sociology*. Your sources must be drawn primarily from scientific journals, monographs, and or books.

Content: Students should write a review and critical analysis of scientific studies of one of the following aspects of rural society and/or communal organization:

- Population changes and shifts
- Effects of industrialization
- Globalization of rural areas
- Changes in levels of voluntary participation
- Effects of changes in agricultural technology on rural society
- Urbanization of rural areas
- Impact of natural resources in rural areas
- Rural homelessness
- Any other topic approved by the Instructor no later than **September 16, 2010**.

**FOR ALL ASSIGNMENTS, PLEASE REMEMBER TO HAND IN A COPY AND KEEP YOUR ORIGINAL IN YOUR FILES!!**
ANGEL, Penn State’s course management system (CMS), enables faculty to use the web to enhance student learning and facilitate communication, through the use of features such as lesson space, online quizzes, drop boxes, discussion boards, and chat rooms. To use ANGEL, you will need a Penn State Access Account, a computer with Internet access, and a web browser compatible with ANGEL (for a complete list of browser and computer requirements please see “First Time Users” in the “Help” section of the ANGEL website. Penn State campus computer labs are equipped to use ANGEL). To access this course in ANGEL, go to the ANGEL website (https://cms.psu.edu) and log in with your Penn State user ID and password.

If you require technical assistance, please go to the ANGEL website and then select the “Help” link in the left frame on the screen. There you will find ANGEL support documentation, including a Quick Start Guide for students under “Student Documentation.” You may also contact the Help Desk – you can submit a question via the ANGEL Help Forum or call the Help Desk at 814.863.2494 between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to: (1) act with civility and personal integrity; (2) respect other students’ dignity, rights and property; and (3) help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for self and others and a civil community. Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another persons’ work as one’s own, using Internet sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, “ghosting” (taking or having another student take an exam), stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students’ acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

The University’s statement on academic integrity, which is paraphrased in the above statement, is available at http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html

Additional Information

NOTE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University’s educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office of Disability further information regarding ODS, please visit their website at www.equity.psu.edu/ods/ instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable academic adjustments.

NOTE ABOUT CELL PHONES: As a courtesy to me and your fellow students, PLEASE REMEMBER TO TURN OFF ALL YOUR CELL PHONES, TEXT MESSAGING DEVICES, PDAS, IPODS, ETC. I will do my best to remember to turn mine off as well. Please do not use your laptops for instant messaging during class – it is annoying to those sitting around you and disrespectful to the instructors of the course. When caught, I will ask you to leave the room for the balance of that day. Repeat offenses will result in a drop in one full course grade and could lead to my asking you to drop the course.

Other Websites You May Find Useful During the Semester:

Undergraduate Writing Center http://www.psu.edu/dept/cew/writingcenter/UWC/students2.htm
Tentative Class Outline and Readings

Introduction, Course Overview, and Rural Sociology as Science

Week 1 (08.24.10 through 08.26.10):


Section I Rural History and Sociodemographics: An Overview

Week 2 (08.31.10 through 09.02.10)


Section II Systems, Institutions, and Culture: A Functional Perspective

Weeks 3 and 4 (09.07.10 through 09.14.10)


09.09.10: FILM 1: Devil’s Playground

09.16.10: Preliminary Examination Number 1

Section III Social Inequality and Poverty

Weeks 5 and 6 (09.21.10 through 09.30.10)


Section IV Changes in Agriculture

Weeks 7 and 8 (10.05.10 through 10.12.10)


10.14.10: Preliminary Examination Number 2

Section V Small and Rural Communities: Prospects and Problems

Weeks 9 and 10 (10.19.10 through 10.26.10)


10.19.10: Book Reviews Dues in Class

10.28.10: Film 2: Black Diamonds

Section VI The Rural Environment

Weeks 11 and 12 (11.02.10 through 11.09.10)


Section VII Rural Development and Change

Weeks 12, 13, 14 (11.11.20 through 11.18.10; 12.02.10)


11.23.10: Thanksgiving Holiday – No class

11.25.10: Thanksgiving Holiday – No class

11.30.10: **Film 3: Haynesville**

12.02.10: *Last Day to turn in Rewrites*

12.07.10: Course Review

12.09.10: Final Class General Discussion – **Film Review Due in Class; Term Paper Due in Class**
IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

August 24  First day of class
September 02  Section I Reading Response Due in Class
September 14  Film 1: Devil’s Playground; Section II Reading Response Due in Class
September 16  Preliminary Exam #1
September 30  Section III Reading Response Due in Class
October 12  Section IV Reading Response Due in Class
October 14  Preliminary Exam #2
October 19  Book Review Due in Class
October 26  Section V Reading Response Due in Class
October 28  Film 2: Black Diamonds
November 09  Section VI Reading Response Due in Class
November 23  Holiday – No Class
November 25  Holiday – No Class
November 30  Film 3: Haynesville; Section VII Reading Response Due in Class
December 02  Final day to turn in assignment rewrites
December 09  Final Class; Film Review Due in Class; Term Paper Due in Class