

Sociology of Rural Schools and Communities

Fall 2007
EDLDR 597C / RSOC 597C
Penn State University

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Meeting Place and Time: 2:00-5:00, Tuesdays
Rackley, Room 409

Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

In the United States schools are the backbone of rural communities. Rural schools in a variety of both formal and informal ways help to shape the local boundaries of communities and the identity of community members. This course offers a solid theoretical foundation in community sociology, and we will use these sociological insights to investigate the interrelationships between rural communities and rural schools. Several recurring questions will be orienting our work for the semester. In what ways might we consider “rural” as a meaningful category in understanding both community and education? In what ways do schools shape (or reshape) the structure of communities? How do communities shape (or reshape) the structure of education? What are the challenges that confront the vitality of both rural schools and communities? How have these challenges changed over time, and what are the implications for educators, residents, and public policy makers? This seminar will provide a solid theoretical foundation for students interested and/or engaged in educational leadership, and/or research on the relationships between community and education across multiple contexts. The basis of the course is strongly interdisciplinary with material drawing from education, sociology and rural sociology, economics, anthropology, geography and demography. This course is designed as a graduate seminar in which students will take a major responsibility for guiding the class discussion.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. **Readings:** A rigorous selection of readings will guide our discussion. Successfully completing the course will mean carefully working through and engaging with these selections both inside and outside of class, through written work and classroom discussion.
- B. **Reading Responses:** Students should prepare a brief written response (1-1.5 pages typed, single-spaced) to the week's readings for *seven* weeks (of the student's choosing) out of the fourteen weeks in which readings are assigned. The written responses are due at the end of the class meeting in which the readings are discussed. I'll return them the following week with brief comments.

I don't expect these responses to be fully developed essays, but rather my hope is that you will use them to consider the contributions the readings make in advancing our understandings of the relationships between rural schools and rural communities. What are the central issues raised in the various selections and how do they enhance our ability to examine organization and change of rural schools and communities? What are the broader theoretical and/or intellectual connections to readings in other weeks? Where are the points of convergence across the readings? How do the readings challenge each other? In which ways do they suggest areas for needed additional research? These are just suggestions for how you might approach the reading responses. Ultimately, I'm interested in your using these writing assignments to grapple with the content of the course, our discussions, and the connections to your own personal, professional, and academic interests.

Last, please identify *at least one discussion question raised by the readings that you would like to see addressed during the class.* We will use these questions as our guide for discussion each week.

- C. **Final Paper:** Your final assignment is designed to tie the semester's readings and discussions together through the development of an essay question of interest to you that enables you to both synthesize the readings of the semester as well as focus on an area related to the topic of rural schools and communities that you find of particular interest or importance. The final paper may also take the form of a prospectus for a research proposal. A paper proposal (1 page) should be submitted to me at the beginning of class **on November 13th**. I also recommend that you talk with me outside of class to discuss this assignment. Your essay should not exceed 15 double-spaced pages (charts, figures, tables and references not included). A hard copy of your final paper will be due **one week from the last class on Tuesday, December 18th**. Papers may be placed in my mailbox, 3rd floor Rackley Building by 5 PM.

GRADING

My complete assumption is that everyone to do well in this course. However, I will use the following breakdown to determine final grades.

Participation:	30%
Weekly Response Papers (7 total):	30%
Final Paper:	40%

READINGS

Two books will be required:

- *Teaching the commons* (1997) by Paul Theobald (Boulder: Westview)
- *Learning to leave: The irony of schooling in a coastal community*. (2007) Michael Corbett (Nova Scotia, CA: Fernwood Publishing)

These books are available at the Penn State bookstore. The remaining readings are on electronic course reserve with the exception of *Wilkinson* (week two), *Peshkin* and *Cubberley* (week five), *Duncan* (week seven), and *Edmundson* (week nine). The books from which these readings are assigned are on reserve in Pattee Library.

Some weeks have additional recommended readings. You are *not* required or even expected to read these selections, but they are suggested readings for students with particular interests in the topic area.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

All students are expected to act with civility, personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights and property; and 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. Students charged with a breach of academic integrity will receive due process and, if the charge is found valid, academic sanctions may range, depending on the severity of the offense, from F for the assignment to F for the course.

The University's statement on academic integrity, from which the above statement is drawn, is available at <http://www.psu.edu/dept/oue/aappm/G-9.html>

CLASS SCHEDULE

PART I: FOUNDATIONS FOR UNDERSTANDING RURAL SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

August 28 (Week One): Introductions and Course Overview

Sept. 4 (Week Two): What is *Community*? Sociological Perspectives

- Brent, J. (2004). The desire for community: Illusion, confusion and paradox. *Community Development Journal*, 39(3), 213-223.
- Selznick, P. (1992). *The moral commonwealth*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [In search of community, pp. 357-376]
- Tonnies, F. (1996). *Community and society*. New York: Harper and Row. [Summing up, pp. 237-259]
- Wilkinson, K.P. (1991). *The community in rural America*. Greenwood. [The community: an interactional approach, pp. 13-40]
- Young, I.M. (1995). The ideal of community and the politics of difference. In P. Weiss & M. Friedman (Eds.), *Feminism and community* (pp. 233-257). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Additional Recommended Readings:

- Bell, C., & Newby, H. (1971). *Community studies*. New York: Praeger. [Theories of community, pp. 21-53]

Sept. 11 (Week Three): What is *Rural*? The Nature of Rurality

- Atkin, C. (2003). Rural communities: Human and symbolic capital development, fields apart. *Compare*, 33(4), 507-518.
- Bell, M. (1992). The fruit of difference: The rural-urban continuum as a system of identity. *Rural Sociology*, 57(1), 65-82.
- Dewey, R. (1960). The rural-urban continuum: Real but relatively unimportant. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 66(1), 60-66.
- Fitchen, J.M. (1991). *Endangered spaces, enduring places*. Boulder: Westview. [What then is rural? Challenges to rural and community identity, pp. 245-265]
- Halfacree, K. (2003). Rethinking rurality. In T. Champion & G. Hugo (Eds.) *New forms of industrialization: Beyond the urban-rural dichotomy* (pp. 270-283). Burlington: Ashgate.

Additional Recommended Readings:

- Berry, W. (2003). *Citizenship papers*. Washington, DC: Shoemaker & Hoard. [The prejudice against country people, Pp. 107-112].

- Brown, D.L., & Cromartie, J.B. (2003). The Nature of Rurality in Postindustrial Society. In T. Champion & G. Hugo (Eds.) *New forms of industrialization: Beyond the urban-rural dichotomy* (pp. 270-283). Burlington: Ashgate.
- Lobao, L. (1996). A sociology of the periphery versus a peripheral sociology: Rural sociology and the dimension of space. *Rural Sociology*, 61(1), 77-102.

Sept. 18 (Week Four): What is Education?

- Bauch, P. (2001). School-community partnerships in rural schools: Leadership, renewal, and a sense of place. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(2), 204-221.
- Edmundson, J., & Shannon, P. (1998). Reading education and poverty: Questioning the reading success equation. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 73(3&4), 104-126.
- Gruenewald, D.A. (2003). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 3-12.
- Starratt, R. J. (2002). Community as curriculum. In K. Leithwood & P. Hallinger (Eds.) *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 321-48). Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Strober, M.H. (2005.) Feminist economics: Implications for education. In M.A. Fineman & T. Dougherty (Eds.) *Feminism Confronts Homo Economicus* (pp. 261-291). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Additional Recommended Readings:

- Barnhardt, C. (1999). Standing their ground: The integration of community and school in Quinhagak, Alaska. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 23(1), 100-116.
- Wotherspoon, T. (1998). Education, place, and the sustainability of rural communities in Saskatchewan. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 14(3), 131-141.

Sept. 25 (Week Five): Classic Readings in Rural Education and Community

- Cubberley, E. (1922). *Rural life and education: A study of the rural-school problem as a phase of the rural-life problem*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. [Pp. 83-129; 226-235]
- Kannapel, P., & DeYoung, A. (2000). The rural school problem in 1999: A review and critique of the literature. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 15, 67-79.
- Peshkin, A. (1978). *Growing up American: Schooling and the survival of community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Pp. 1-82; 193-210]
- Vidich, A.J., & Bensman, J. (1968). *Small town in mass society*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Pp. 171-197]

Oct. 2 (Week Six): Rural Education as Social Organization: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives

Theobald, P. (1997). *Teaching the commons*. Boulder: Westview.

PART II: THE CHANGING FACE(S) OF RURAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES

Oct. 9 (Week Seven): Rural Poverty and its Impacts on Education and Communities

Berliner, D.C. (2006). Our impoverished view of educational research. *Teachers College Record*, 108(6), 949-995.

Bickel, R, Smith, C., & Eagle, T. (2002). Poor, rural neighborhoods and early school achievement. *Journal of Poverty*. 6(3), 89-108.

Fitchen, J. M. (1991). *Endangered spaces, enduring places*. Boulder: Westview. [The dynamics of rural impoverization: Causes and processes, pp. 131-152]

Khatti, N., Riley, K. W., & Kane, M. B. (1997). Students at risk in poor, rural areas: A review of the research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 13(2), 79-100.

Schafft, K. A. (2006). Poverty, residential mobility and student transiency within a rural New York school district. *Rural Sociology*, 71(2), 212-231.

Additional Recommended Readings:

Duncan, C. (1999). *Worlds Apart*. New Haven: Yale University Press. [Blackwell: Rigid classes and corrupt politics in Appalachia's coal fields, pp. 1-72]

Oct. 16 (Week Eight): Social Capital, Rural Communities and Rural Education

Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, 94, S95-S120.

Israel, G.D., & Beaulieu, L.J. (2004). Investing in communities: Social capital's role in keeping youth in school. *Journal of the Community Development Society*, 34(2), 35-57.

Elder, G.H., & Conger, R.D. (2000.) *Children of the Land: Adversity and success in rural America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Chapter 8, Lessons from school, Pp. 165-189.]

Schafft, K.A., & Brown, D.L. (2003). Social capital, social networks and social power. *Social Epistemology*, 17, 329-342.

Singh, K., & Dika, S. (2003). The educational effects of rural adolescents' social networks. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 18(2), 114-128.

Additional Recommended Readings:

Portes, A. (2000). The two meanings of social capital. *Sociological Forum*, 15, 1-12.

Oct. 23 (Week Nine): Changing Communities, Changing Populations

- Bushnell, M. (1999). Imagining rural life: Schooling as a sense of place. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 15, 80-89.
- Edmondson, J. (2001). *Prairie Town: Redefining Rural Life in the Age of Globalization*. New York: Littlefield & Rowman. [Pp. 95-125]
- Grey, M.A. (1997). Secondary labor in the meatpacking industry: Demographic changes and student mobility in rural Iowa schools. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 13(3), 153-164.
- Miller, B.A. (1993). Rural distress and survival: The school and the importance of 'community'. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 9, 84-103.
- Salamon, S. (2003). *Newcomers to old towns*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Upscale suburbanization: Prairieview, pp. 74-92]

Oct. 30 (Week Ten): Rural Schools and Community Development

- Harmon, H.L. (2000). Linking school-to-work and rural development. *FORUM for applied research and public policy*, 15(1), 97-100.
- Hobbs, D. (1992). The rural context for education: Adjusting the images. In M.W. Galbraith (Ed.) *Education in the Rural American Community* (pp. 21-44). Malabar: Krieger.
- Howley, C. (1991). The rural education dilemma as part of the rural dilemma: Rural education and economics. In A.J. DeYoung (Ed.) *Rural Education: Issues and Practices* (pp. 73-145). New York: Garland.
- Miller, B.A. (1995). The role of rural schools in community development: Policy issues and implications. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 11(3), 163-172.
- Schafft, K. A., Alter, T. R., & Bridger, J. (2006). Bringing the community along: A case study of a school district's information technology rural development initiative. *The Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 21(8), 1-10.

Nov. 6 (Week Eleven): Human Capital, Migration and the Survival of Rural Communities

- Cushing, B. (1999). Migration and persistent poverty in rural America. In K. Pandit & S.D. Withers (Eds.) *Migration and restructuring in the United States: A geographic perspective* (pp. 15-36). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Gibbs, R.M. (1998). College completion and return migration among rural youth. In R.M. Gibbs, P.L. Swaim, & R. Teixeira (Eds.) *Rural education and training in the new economy* (pp. 61-80). Ames: Iowa State University Press.
- Hektner, J.M. (1995). When moving up implies moving out: Rural adolescent conflict in the transition to adulthood. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 11(1), 3-14.
- Howley, C.B., Harmon, H.L., & Leopold, G.D. (1996). Rural scholars or bright rednecks? Aspirations for a sense of place among rural youth in Appalachia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 12(3), 150-160.
- Lichter, D.T., McLaughlin, D.K., & Cornwell, G. (1995). Migration and the loss of human resources in rural America. In L.J. Beaulieu & D. Mulkey (Eds.), *Investing in people: The human capital needs of rural America* (pp. 235-256). Boulder: Westview.

Nov. 13 (Week Twelve): Human Capital, Migration and the Survival of Rural Communities, Part II

- Corbett, M. (2007). *Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal Community*. Nova Scotia, CA: Fernwood Publishing.

Fall Break, No Classes Nov, 19-23

PART III: RURAL EDUCATION, RURAL COMMUNITIES AND PUBLIC POLICY

Nov. 27 (Week Thirteen): Rural Schools and *No Child Left Behind*

~ Paper Proposals Due for Final Paper ~

- Apple, M.W. (2007). Ideological successes, educational failure? On the politics of No Child Left Behind. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 58(2), 108-116
- Goetz, S.J. (2005). Random variation in student performance by class size: Implications for NCLB in rural Pennsylvania. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 20(13), 1-8.
- Paige, R. (2006). No Child Left Behind: The ongoing movement for public education reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 76(4), 461-473.
- Woodrum, A. (2004). State-mandated testing and cultural resistance in Appalachian schools: Competing values and expectations. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 19, 1-10.
- United States Government Accountability Office. (2004). *No Child Left Behind Act: Additional Assistance and Research Would Help Small Rural Districts*. (Publication No. GAO-04-909). Retrieved June 1, 2005 from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04909.pdf>

Additional Recommended Readings:

- Beck, F.D., & Shoffstall, G.W. (2005.) How do rural schools fare under a high stakes testing regime? *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 20(14), 1-12.
- Nichols, S.L., & Berliner, D.C. (2007). *Collateral Damage*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. [Chapter One: A Short History of High-Stakes Testing, Pp. 1-31.]

Dec. 4 (Week Fourteen): School Size, Community, and Consolidation

- DeYoung, A.J., & Howley C.B. (1992). The political economy of rural school consolidation. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 67, 63-89.
- Howley, C.B. (1996). Compounding disadvantage: The effects of school and district size on student achievement in West Virginia. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 12, 25-32.
- Lyson, T.A. (2002). What does a school mean to a community? Assessing the social and economic benefits of schools to rural villages in New York. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 17(3), 131-137.
- Tyack, D.B. (1972). The tribe and the common school: Community control in rural education. *American Quarterly*, 24(1), 3-19.

Additional Recommended Readings:

- DeYoung, A.J., Howley C. B., & Theobald P. (1995). The cultural contradictions of middle schooling for rural community survival. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 11(1), 24-35.
- Lee, V.E., Smerdon B.A., Alfeld-Liro, C. & Brown S.L. (2000). Inside large and small high schools: Curriculum and school relations. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 22(2), 147-171.

Dec. 11 (Week Fifteen): The Future of Rural Schools and Communities (and wrap up)

- Arnold, M.L., Newman J.H., Gaddy B.B., & Dean C.B. (2005). A look at the condition of rural education research: Setting a direction for future research. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 20(6), 1-25.
- Gibbs, R. (2000). The challenge ahead for rural schools. *FORUM for Applied Research and Public Policy*, 15(1), 82-87.
- Gruenewald, D. (2006). Resistance, reinhabitation, and regime change. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 21(9), 1-7.
- Snauwaert, D.T. (1990). Wendell Berry, liberalism, and democratic theory: Implications for the rural school. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 67, 118-130.