Introduction to Rural Studies  
RS 512X  Winter 2011

Instructor:  Bruce Weber  bruce.weber@oregonstate.edu

Course time: This 1 credit hour seminar meets weekly.

Course Catalog Description: This course introduces students to the emerging theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and critical themes that define rural studies in the U.S. and elsewhere. It draws primarily from the disciplines of sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, human development and geography, examining how each discipline understands and analyzes rural households and communities.

Prerequisites: None.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes: Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:
- Identify key insights offered by various social science disciplines associated with rural studies in the contemporary U.S. and elsewhere.
- Critically appraise differing theoretical perspectives employed to understand rural households and communities.
- Discuss various methodologies central to the study of rural people and places.

Evaluation of Student Performance: Students are expected to be fully engaged in all aspects of the course, including reading, writing, attending and actively participating in all seminar sessions, asking questions, offering reasoned points of view, and listening attentively to others. Each student will be expected to write and discuss an essay outlining whether and how insights and constructs from different disciplines might improve understanding about a particular rural topic of interest to them, selected in consultation with the faculty member teaching the course. Essays are expected to include: key insights from various disciplines; critical appraisal of different theoretical perspectives; and discussion of various methodologies included in faculty presentations. For the final examination, each student will be asked to provide a written critique of another student’s essay in terms of how well the essay articulated and used insights and theories from various disciplines in understanding the particular issue addressed. This will provide an assessment of how well each student achieved the course’s expected learning outcomes. Final grades will be determined with consideration given to participation (40%) and to assignments (60% - 40% essay and 20% final).

Learning Resources: Course readings and faculty guest speakers from several disciplines will together provide the relevant theoretical, methodological and thematic foundations. We will draw speakers from across the OSU campus and nationally primarily from such disciplines as sociology, economics, anthropology, political science, human development and geography. Weekly speakers will provide course readings. Readings and course topics will thus evolve in a dynamic way dependent on guest speakers.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities: "Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Disability Access Services (DAS). Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 737-4098."

Link to Statement of Expectations for Student Conduct: http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm
Diversity Statement: The Rural Studies Program strives to create an affirming climate for all students including underrepresented and marginalized individuals and groups. Diversity encompasses differences in age, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender, physical or mental ability, religion, socioeconomic background, veteran status, sexual orientation, and marginalized groups. We believe diversity is the synergy, connection, acceptance, and mutual learning fostered by the interaction of different human characteristics.

Religious Holiday Statement: Oregon State University strives to respect all religious practices. If you have religious holidays that are in conflict with any of the requirements of this class, please see me immediately so that we can make alternative arrangements.

Tentative Course Schedule: Winter 2011

Week of:

January 3  Introduction to Rural Studies
What is “rural”? Are rural people and places distinctive? How does examining rural people and places through a “rural lens” matter?

January 10  Applying a “rural lens” in sociology
What are the major theoretical constructs in sociology? How are these constructs applied in a rural setting?

January 17  Applying a “rural lens” in economics
What are the major theoretical constructs in economics? How are these constructs applied in a rural setting? (Research question for essay due this week)

January 24  Applying a “rural lens” in public policy/public administration
What are the major theoretical constructs in public policy/public administration? How are these constructs applied in a rural setting?

January 31  Applying a “rural lens” in anthropology
What are the major theoretical constructs in anthropology? How are these constructs applied in a rural setting?

February 7  Applying a “rural lens” in human development and family sciences
What are the major theoretical constructs in human development and family sciences? How are these constructs applied in a rural setting?

February 14  Applying a “rural lens” in geography
What are the major theoretical constructs in geography? How are these constructs applied in a rural setting?
February 21  Doing multidisciplinary research in rural areas: A roundtable

February 28  Doing multidisciplinary rural research on public policy issues: Applying a “rural studies” framing to a particular policy issue

Each year we will focus on a topic of current concern in rural Oregon or rural America: some examples include community planning on tsunami preparedness, or county and state strategies for adjusting to the termination of federal forest funding in rural Oregon counties.

March 7  How a rural studies perspective enriches research involving rural people and places: discussion of student essays