

Geog. 409/501: Rural Development Seminar

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Course Plan

The purpose of this seminar is to explore issues of importance in rural development and to design some research projects that examine these issues. The perspective will be regional or geographical in some way, emphasizing the location dimension in patterns and processes of rural development. The class will cover issues concerning rural areas, communities, places, and population. We will learn about rural industries, rural development goals, and rural planning strategies, and how these have changed over time, using examples from different countries. We will read literature from a variety of disciplines that presents various aspects of the rural development theme. **The course will proceed with introductory lectures on general rural issues and trends, impacts of globalization, rural issues in developing countries, remote region problems, examples of development strategies, and a field trip of local communities in our region.** The lectures will be followed by article reports and discussion. Students will be assigned to read several articles each week and each student will be responsible to give short reports on assigned articles and lead the discussion of the topic.

Research Paper

Each student will do a research paper on a rural topic of your choice, using empirical data to answer research questions in the paper. **Undergraduates** may do team projects, **graduate students** will do individual papers. We will devote class time for student presentations of research topic ideas and proposals, progress reports, and final reports. The research paper should be an empirical analysis containing a literature review, a problem statement, a data description and documentation, a section on method of data collection and analysis, a results section, and a conclusion that ties the findings back to your literature review and problem statement.

Rural Seminar Topics

- Rural population – growth and decline, population characteristics, factors associated with each in developed and developing countries.
- Rural communities – social organization, community structure, social change.
- Rural economy – structural change, labor issues, business trends, employment trends, and occupations.
- Small towns – central place functions, market areas, business changes, population and settlement changes, functional diversity, demographics.
- Rural development – goals and strategies, theories of rural development, urban/rural continuum, gradient effects.
- Rural industries – business location, traditional and contemporary location patterns.
- International rural comparisons – rural areas in advanced countries, underdeveloped countries, emerging FSU countries, marginal lands research.
- Rural education – comparisons of quality, performance measures, challenges of rural schools, future outlook.