

## Sociology 72: Critical Community Sociology

Spring 2021  
Dartmouth College

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### **Description of the Course**

This class will focus on interrogating the drivers of inequality in rural and small-town communities. To understand this, we critically examine several interconnected issues: culture, health, racial equity, education, environment, infrastructure, social services, economic justice, and geographic isolation. Students who wish to enroll in this course should have previously completed either *Introduction to Sociology* or *Social Problems*. This requirement may be waived for students who have taken certain other sociology courses; contact the instructor to find out if you are eligible.

### **Course Format**

This course has an experiential learning component. Dartmouth has community partners throughout the Upper Valley that work to offset different forms of social inequality. With support from the [Dartmouth Center for Social Impact](#), students will apply the concepts learned in class to real issues faced by a chosen community partner, completing a research portfolio that includes a literature review and field research on a matter of concern for the organization. This community-engaged course is not only an opportunity to meet the needs of a community partner but also to learn from their existing assets and strengths. While traditional service-learning employs a charity-based approach to working *for* communities, in this course we practice critical service-learning by working *with* communities and analyzing the systemic causes of social problems that necessitate service. In order to build reciprocity and solidarity with community partners, we will engage individually and as a group in sustained reflection about how students' experiences relate to the theoretical material we are learning in class. In lieu of quizzes or exams, students will complete weekly written reflections on the material throughout the term that draw linkages between concepts and readings and participate in full class and small group discussions of the assigned material.

### **Course Objectives**

Students who successfully complete Socy XX will be able to:

1. Analyze the social factors shaping individual and group experiences in rural and small-town communities.

2. Perform critical readings of assigned works, consider controversial social issues respectfully from multiple viewpoints, synthesize complex information, and articulate thoughtful and effective arguments.
3. Carry out field research and produce a written report that synthesizes academic perspectives and public knowledge on a topic in community sociology.
4. Increase self-awareness of their own identities, changing attitudes, and perceptions about the “other” (those in disadvantaged economic and social positions) in rural communities.

### **Required reading**

There is one book you must purchase for this course.

Donahue, David M., and Star Plaxton-Moore. 2018. *The Student Companion to Community-Engaged Learning: What You Need to Know for Transformative Learning and Real Social Change*. Sterling, Virginia: Stylus.

All other required readings are posted as PDFs on the course Canvas site. I expect you to read all course material, before class on the day that we are discussing it.

### **Expectations and Assignments**

#### **1. Research portfolio (40%)**

You will apply the concepts learned in class to real issues faced by a chosen community partner (e.g., housing security, healthcare access, violence prevention), completing a research portfolio that includes a literature review and field research on a matter of concern for the organization. Community partners will vary from year to year, but will include organizations like: [Vital Communities](#); [LISTEN Community Services](#); [JAG Productions](#); and [Good Neighbor Health Clinic](#). The specifics of your field research experience will also vary by year and depend on the goals of your chosen community partner.

You will choose a community partner in Week 1, and complete background research on the organization in Week 2 (5% of your final grade). In Week 4, you will write and submit a literature review that applies concepts from class and presents knowledge from the academic literature to offer insights about the issue faced by your chosen partner (10%). During Weeks 3-7, you will complete field research on the matter of concern to your community partner. Field research will entail site visits during which you will make observations, take field notes, and conduct qualitative interviews. You will submit the notes from your field research at the end of Week 7 (5%). In Week 8, your team will submit a formal report on your field research (10%). Your final portfolio for the course, due during Week 9, will include a revision of your literature review (completed individually, 4%), a revision of the formal report on your field research (completed as a team, 4%), and a presentation to the class (completed as a team, 2%). One-third of your grade on the group components of the portfolio will be determined by peer evaluations of each team member’s contributions to the assignment.

#### **2. Written reflections (50%)**

You will complete weekly written reflections on the material throughout the term in lieu of quizzes or exams (worth 5% of your grade per week). These reflections, due each Sunday, should be

approximately one page, single-space in length. I expect you to critically consider the relationship between our readings for the week and the substantive issue of concern to your community partner.

### 3. Class discussion (10%)

A significant portion of our time in class will be structured around small group and full class discussions of the assigned reading. The effectiveness of these discussions is a shared responsibility. You are expected to complete the assigned reading before class and come prepared to share your thoughts about the material with others. Consistent, active participation in these discussions will account for 10% of your final grade in the course.

## **Grading**

I follow the grading conventions as defined by the Organization, Regulations, and Courses (ORC) at Dartmouth. [http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade\\_descriptions.html](http://www.dartmouth.edu/~reg/transcript/grade_descriptions.html)

- A Excellent** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a very high degree of originality, creativity, and excellent performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- B Good** mastery of course material (student performance indicates a high degree of originality, creativity, and good performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- C Acceptable** mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and acceptable performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- D Deficient** in mastery of course material (student performance indicates some degree of originality, creativity, and deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)
- E Serious deficiency** in mastery of course material (student performance clearly lacking originality, creativity, and seriously deficient performance in analysis, synthesis, critical expression, and independence)

I will determine your final letter grade according to the following percentage breakdown:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A	95-100%	C+	77-79.9%
A-	92-94.9%	C	73-76.9%
B+	89-91.9%	C-	70-72.9%
B	83-88.9%	D	60-69.9%
B-	80-82.9%	E	< 60%

## **Important Notes**

### **Attendance**

It is my expectation that you will attend each class meeting—and that you will arrive to each class on time and stay for the duration. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each class

meeting; it is your responsibility to make sure you sign it each day. There are no opportunities to make up missed in-class participation work. If you miss more than three days of class, your course grade will decrease by one whole letter grade (e.g., A to B), and decrease by one step (e.g., B to B-) for each additional absence. In the event that you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for getting notes from another student. As a general policy, I do not make my notes available. After you review your classmate's notes, I would be happy to meet with you to talk about the material or answer questions about anything that is unclear. If you anticipate missing class meetings because of athletic team participation, religious observances, or some other reason, please arrange a meeting with me at the start of the term and bring documentation of the expected conflicts.

### **Late work**

Unexpected things will come up over the course of the term. To ensure you don't wind up in a difficult position, plan ahead: start your assignments early and finish them in advance of the deadline. Please speak with me at the beginning of the term if you anticipate any circumstances that might affect your ability to get your work in on time.

For written products, the maximum grade you may earn will be reduced by one letter grade for each day late. In other words, if you turn your assignment in 1-24 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a B; if you turn your assignment in 25-48 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a C; if you turn your assignment in 49-72 hours after the deadline, the maximum grade you can receive is a D. I will not accept your assignment after 72 hours.

Extensions will only be given if a deadline was missed because of extreme circumstances beyond your control. For example: severe illness requiring a doctor's visit or hospitalization, or death in the family. Generally not feeling well, forgetting about the deadline, having computer problems, needing to help your friend or family member with something, scheduling conflicts with interviews, appointments, or exams in other classes, etc. are not considered extreme circumstances. If you believe you are eligible for an extension, it is your responsibility to notify me before missing the deadline, and explain in writing why your circumstances warrant an exception.

### **Accommodations**

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the [Student Accessibility Services office](#) (Carson Hall, Suite 125, 646-9900). Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to their professor. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

### **Communication**

My office hours are for you. You are welcome to come in and talk with me about anything during my posted hours. I am also available by appointment if my office hours do not coincide with your schedule. I regularly check e-mail during the school day (9am-4pm) and will make every effort to reply to messages as soon as possible. I expect students to regularly check their Dartmouth e-mail and Canvas accounts for class announcements and updates.

## **Academic Honor**

I assume you will follow intellectual honor and integrity in this class. For more guidance on the Honor Principle, see: <https://student-affairs.dartmouth.edu/policy/academic-honor-principle> Students must do their own work—they will write their own papers and exams, prepare their own presentations, and cite the original sources of any material they draw on for their papers. Any student who submits work which is not his or her own, or commits other acts of academic dishonesty is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or separation. For a broad overview on the practice of citing sources, see <http://dartmouth.edu/writing-speech/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth>.

## **Classroom Responsibility and Courtesy**

All students are expected to have a voice in our class dialogue. Class participation involves thinking carefully, listening, and posing questions to others as much as it is about sharing your ideas. This requires us to be present, set aside distractions, and focus our attention on engaging with one another. Please put your cell phones on vibrate, do not text, and do not use your laptop during seminar discussions.

The tone with which we engage one another is also extremely important and should come from a place of mutual respect and understanding. You are free to disagree with the views raised in the material or by others in the class but must do so with a reasoned critique based on a complete consideration of their argument. Your own argument should be supported by sociological evidence rather than opinion or anecdotes. Disrespectful behavior such as talking while others are talking, dominating the floor, or engaging in personal attacks will not be tolerated. You are always expected to treat one another and me with respect .

## **Additional Support for Learning**

*Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology (RWIT)*: At RWIT, you can meet one-on-one with an undergraduate tutor to discuss your writing. <https://students.dartmouth.edu/rwit/>

*Academic Skills Center (ASC)*: The mission of Dartmouth's Academic Skills Center is to assist students in achieving academic success through a wide variety of services and programs. The Center is available to all students who wish to improve their academic skills and ability to learn, thereby maximizing their academic experience and allowing them to achieve greater academic performance and personal fulfillment. <https://students.dartmouth.edu/academic-skills/>

## **Course Plan and Readings**

### **Week One (Mar 29-Apr 2)**

#### **Monday Introduction to the course**

- Brown and Swanson (2003), Selections from *Challenges for Rural America in the 21st Century*
- Smith, M. K. (2001) 'Community' in *The encyclopedia of pedagogy and informal education*, <http://www.infed.org/community/community.htm>.

#### **Wednesday What is community engaged learning?**

- Donahue and Plaxton-Moore (2018), "Imperatives" and "Benefits"

- Mitchell, Donahue and Young-Law (2012), “Service Learning as a Pedagogy of Whiteness”

**Friday      Community engaged learning in an anticolonial framework**

- Nakano-Glenn (2015), “Settler Colonialism”
- Santiago-Ortiz (2019), “From Critical to Decolonizing Service- Learning”

**Week Two (April 5-9)**

**Monday      Field Research Methodology**

- Interviewing, taking field notes, ethnographic observations

**Wednesday      Community partner discussions (describe mission and work)**

- Donahue and Plaxton-Moore (2018), “Dispositions”

**Friday      Community partner discussions (describe mission and work)**

- Donahue and Plaxton-Moore (2018), “Responsibilities”

**Week Three (April 12-16)**

**Monday      Economic inequality**

- Carolan (2020), “The Rural Problem: Justice in the Countryside”
- Skobba, Osinubi and Tinsley (2020), “What about Rural Blight?”

**Wednesday      Field work**

**Friday      Structural and cultural differences**

- Johnson and Lichter (2019), “Rural Depopulation”
- Kelly and Lobao (2019), “The Social Bases of Rural-Urban Political Divides”

**Week Four (April 19-23)**

**Monday      Resource extraction**

- Sherman (2018), “Not Allowed to Inherit My Kingdom”
- Schafft et al. (2018), “Busted amidst the Boom”

**Wednesday      Field work**

**Friday      Environmental justice**

- Hochschild (2018), *Selections from Strangers in Their Own Land*
- Shriver and Webb (2009), “A Rural Native American Community Exposed to Carbon Black”

### **Week Five (April 26-30)**

**Monday      Relationship with the land**

- King et al. (2018), “Black Agrarianism”
- Geisler (2014), “Disowned by the Ownership Society”

**Wednesday      Field work**

**Friday      Farmwork**

- Garni (2018), “Crafting Mass Dairy Production”
- Wright and Annes (2016), “Farm Women and Empowerment”

### **Week Six (May 7-11)**

**Monday      Rural poverty and culture**

- Duina (2018), Selections from *Broke and Patriotic*

**Wednesday      Field work**

**Friday      Health equity**

- <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/01/31/rural-americas-health-crisis-seizes-states-attention>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2016/02/rural-hospitals-baby-delivery-rooms/470571/>
- <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2018/01/rural-hospitals/549050/>

### **Week Seven (May 14)**

**Monday      Racial equity**

- Mauer (2017), “Indian Country Poverty”
- <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20190409.122546/full/>
- <https://www.chicagotribune.com/nation-world/ct-race-rural-america-20170618-story.html>

**Wednesday      Field work**

**Friday      Educational equity**

- Schafft (2006), “Poverty, Residential Mobility, and Student Transiency”
- Ticken (2020), “Rural Parents’ Perspectives on College”

### **Week Eight (May 17-21)**

**Monday      Opioid crisis and suicide**

- Monnat and Rigg (2018), “The Opioid Crisis in Rural and Small-Town America”

- Kilgannon (2018), “When the Death of a Family Farm Leads to Suicide.”  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/19/nyregion/farmer-suicides-mark-tough-times-for-new-york-dairy-industry.html>

**Wednesday Domestic violence, masculinity**

- Leap (2020), “Shifting Masculinities in Mainstream Country Music”
- Lynch, Logan and Jackson (2018), “People Will Bury Their Guns before They Surrender Them”

**Friday Group work**

- Donahue and Plaxton-Moore (2018), “Transformations”

**Week Nine (May 24-28) Community partners participate in presentations**

**Monday Portfolio presentations**

**Wednesday Portfolio presentations**

**Friday Portfolio presentations**

**Week Ten (May 31-June 2)**

**Monday Memorial Day, no class**

**Wednesday Course wrap-up**



## References

- Brown, David L., and Louis E. Swanson. 2003. *Challenges for Rural America in the 21st Century*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Carolan, Michael. 2020. "The Rural Problem: Justice in the Countryside." *Rural Sociology* 85(1):22-56.
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- Duina, Francesco. 2018. *Broke and Patriotic: Why Poor Americans Love Their Country*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Garni, Alisa. 2018. "Crafting Mass Dairy Production: Immigration and Community in Rural America." *Rural Sociology* 83(2):244-69.
- Geisler, Charles. 2014. "Disowned by the Ownership Society: How Native Americans Lost Their Land." *Rural Sociology* 79(1):56-78.
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- Johnson, Kenneth M., and Daniel T. Lichter. 2019. "Rural Depopulation: Growth and Decline Processes over the Past Century." *Rural Sociology* 84(1):3-27.
- Kelly, Paige, and Linda Lobao. 2019. "The Social Bases of Rural-Urban Political Divides: Social Status, Work, and Sociocultural Beliefs." *Rural Sociology* 84(4):669-705.
- Kilgannon, Corey. 2018. "'When the Death of a Family Farm Leads to Suicide'." in *New York Times*.
- King, Katrina Quisumbing, Spencer D. Wood, Jess Gilbert, and Marilyn Sinkewicz. 2018. "Black Agrarianism: The Significance of African American Landownership in the Rural South." *Rural Sociology* 83(3):677-99.
- Leap, Braden. 2020. "A New Type of (White) Provider: Shifting Masculinities in Mainstream Country Music from the 1980s to the 2010s." *Rural Sociology* 85(1):165-89.
- Lynch, Kellie R., TK Logan, and Dylan B. Jackson. 2018. "'People Will Bury Their Guns before They Surrender Them': Implementing Domestic Violence Gun Control in Rural, Appalachian versus Urban Communities." *Rural Sociology* 83(2):315-46.
- Mauer, K. Whitney. 2017. "Indian Country Poverty: Place-Based Poverty on American Indian Territories, 2006–10." *Rural Sociology* 82(3):473-98.
- Mitchell, Tania D., David M. Donahue, and Courtney Young-Law. 2012. "Service Learning as a Pedagogy of Whiteness." *Equity & Excellence in Education* 45(4):612-29.

- Monnat, Shannon M., and Khary K. Rigg. 2018. "The Opioid Crisis in Rural and Small Town America." in *National Issue Brief #135*. Carsey School of Public Policy: University of New Hampshire.
- Santiago-Ortiz, Aurora. 2019. "From Critical to Decolonizing Service- Learning: Limits and Possibilities of Social Justice- Based Approaches to Community Service- Learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* Winter:43-54.
- Schafft, Kai A. 2006. "Poverty, Residential Mobility, and Student Transiency within a Rural New York School District." *Rural Sociology* 71(2):212-31.
- Schafft, Kai A., Erin McHenry-Sorber, Daniella Hall, and Ian Burfoot-Rochford. 2018. "Busted amidst the Boom: The Creation of New Insecurities and Inequalities within Pennsylvania's Shale Gas Boomtowns." *Rural Sociology* 83(3):503-31.
- Sherman, Jennifer. 2018. "'Not Allowed to Inherit My Kingdom': Amenity Development and Social Inequality in the Rural West." *Rural Sociology* 83(1):174-207.
- Shriver, Thomas E., and Gary R. Webb. 2009. "Rethinking the Scope of Environmental Injustice: Perceptions of Health Hazards in a Rural Native American Community Exposed to Carbon Black." *Rural Sociology* 74(2):270-92.
- Skobba, Kim, Adenola Osinubi, and Karen L. Tinsley. 2020. "What about Rural Blight? Housing and Neighborhood Conditions in Southeastern Small Towns." *Rural Sociology* 85(1):85-110.
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