

Western Kentucky University
Sociology 360: Rural and Urban Community Theory



Professor: Donielle M. Lovell, Ph.D
Telephone: 270-706-8870
E-mail: Donielle.Lovell@wku.edu

Office Hours: By appointment
Office: ECTC/CRPEC 130D

Catalog Description: SOCL 360: Study the structure and function of community life and the process of balancing community needs and resources.

Prerequisite/Co-requisite: Six hours of sociology

Text(s):

- Lyon, Larry. & Robyn Driskell. *The Community in Urban Society* (2nd edition). Waveland Press.
- Freie, John. F. *Counterfeit Community: the Exploitation of Our Longings for Connectedness*. Rowman and Littlefield.
- You must gain access to the films, *Waging a Living* (can purchase on Amazon for \$3.75), *Prom Night in Mississippi* (Can purchase on Amazon for \$2.75 or Netflix DVD if you have a subscription), *SelectED* (can view on Amazon Prime or rent on Amazon Prime for \$2.99). You can do this through Netflix, purchasing and reselling the film or other online means. Links for other films used in this class will be provided on blackboard. If you are near the WKU Elizabethtown/Fort Knox Campus you can check out the DVDs. I'd also recommend checking your public library.
- This course will also use academic articles which can be accessed online through blackboard.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to

- Demonstrate knowledge of rural and urban community theories;
- Apply analytical skill to the study of community; and
- Discuss challenges and opportunities in rural and urban America.

Course Content:

We all belong to communities. However, have you ever sat down and considered exactly what a community entails? Go on, think about it for a minute. Does your list get overwhelming? We will start the semester with a discussion, from a theoretical perspective, of what sociologists regard as community. As Pelly-Effrat (1974) notes “trying to study community is like trying to scoop Jell-o up with your fingers. You can get hold of some, but there’s always more slipping away from you.” We will discuss the current debates in the field of community as to exactly what this concept actually means. Further, we will tackle the debate of whether community is attached to place or if in the 21st Century community is “post-place.”

Ok, so we have worked to define community but how do we actually go about studying this phenomenon? We will spend some time discussing some of the approaches to researching community. We will look to some of the approaches of the past and also some of the ways community developers study community in order to make change.

Finally, we will spend the remaining part of the semester looking at those current issues communities face. We will look at a mix of urban and rural issues though I will warn my focus does tend to lean toward rural issues as I am a Rural Sociologist. But, we will look at issues such as educational attainment, health care, poverty, and race/ethnicity. I like to use documentaries as we look at these issues so I hope you will enjoy those I’ve chosen for this course.

Approach to Education:

As an instructor I feel it is important for me to share with you my perspective on education. Sociology 360 uses a **participatory, learner-centered, adult education** approach. This approach recognizes that **YOU are responsible** for your own learning. The instructor can only provide **opportunities** to learn, but cannot force you to learn. Course material is presented in **substantive readings** from the text; **structured activities and lecture**. You are expected to work hard in this course; for every hour of class time, you should spend at least **two to three hours** outside of class preparing by doing readings, assignments, studying for exams, and thinking about the course material.

*You are expected to take **responsibility** for the success of the course, that is, you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all*

participants. Factors such as **interest, motivation, creativity, and initiative** are important elements in evaluating your performance in the course and assigning a grade.

This class will be a place for sharing ideas and voicing opinions. Intelligent argument and polite disagreement with the course material is welcome. Your papers are a place for situating your own perspective about the problems we will discuss within the context of the field of sociology. In making an argument it is important to remember, it is just that—an argument. Just as you have your own perspective there are a multitude of other perspectives that may differ from your own. Part of the work of the course is to understand other perspectives.

Description of Major Assignment(s)/Project(s):

Connecting Theory and Practice (25 points each/4 assignments): In these writing assignments you will be asked to find practical applications to the material we have covered. More description can be found on blackboard.

Tests (3 tests worth 100 points each): There will be three tests. Two exams are essay/open notes & book; 1 exam will need to be taken with a proctored exam site. Information on how to schedule your exam can be found on blackboard.

Final Paper: Defining Community (100 points) Guidelines found on blackboard.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Activity	Points Possible	Approx. Percent of Total Grade
Connecting Theory and Practice	100	20%
Tests	300	60%
Final Paper	100	20%
Total	500	100%

Points Needed	Percent	Letter Grade
450-500	90%-100%	A
400-449	80%-89%	B
300-399	70%-79%	C
250-299	60%-69%	D
249 and below	59% and below	F

Expectations of Students:

Quality of Written Work: This is an academic course. Therefore, I expect you to write with the highest quality. I expect complete sentences in all written work. I expect well thought out responses. Further, I will deduct points if you use text message abbreviations or language in your formal papers or in the

discussion boards. I still value proper grammar and expect you to do the same while in this course. This is not the place for “slang” terminology unless you are using it to make a theoretical point.

Further, write in a professional manner. I do not expect your papers to sound like you just sat down at your computer and typed a conversation to me. Avoid phrases such as, “Well, in my personal opinion”—even if I am asking for your thoughts and opinion, that is not a necessary phrase. Think “professional tone” while writing. Also, limit the use of “I.” Once again, even when asking you to respond from your own life you can minimize the first person. There is nothing worse than reading a paper that begins every sentence with “I think”, “I want to discuss”, “I believe”, “I feel”, etc. Please refrain from addressing the reader directly. For example, there is no need to thank me for reading your paper. Finally, proof read all your work. I really hate to read papers that are full of grammatical errors. It takes away from your thoughts and ideas and frustrates me. You do not want me to grade your paper frustrated!

Professional Communication

With the use of our personal mobile devices to write and respond to email I’ve noticed a disconcerting trend among students. I will receive emails like the following example (an actual email I’ve received):

To: Donielle.lovell@wku.edu

Subject: NONE

grades are not posted

And that will be it. No salutation, no proper sentences, no closing comments, and not even a name. This is highly unprofessional and sounds rude to the reader. In the work world you will be expected to compose proper messages and you are expected to do so in this course. Therefore, I expect all emails to include greeting, actual sentences that thoroughly explain the purpose of your email and a closing that includes your name. For example:

To: Donielle.lovell@wku.edu

Subject: Grades in SOCL 240

Greetings Dr. Lovell,

I was curious as to when grades for our first reflection paper will be posted.

Thank you for your time,

Jane Doe

I will no longer respond to unprofessional emails.

Academic Honesty: You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the Western Kentucky University College Catalogue (page 42). You are expected to do your **own work** in this course. Plagiarism, fraud and other forms of cheating will **NOT** be tolerated. I have the authority to either fail you on the paper plagiarized and even for the course or depending on the seriousness of the offense, to take it to WKU administration which can have serious consequences. Do not test me on this. I have failed students in the past and will continue to do so for academic dishonesty. I take this VERY seriously. DO NOT TEST ME—THERE IS NO SECOND CHANCE. **Act with integrity.**

IT IS **YOUR RESPONSIBILITY** TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES. Make sure you know what constitutes plagiarism and cheating **BEFORE** turning in any assignments. Once you turn in an assignment, you are representing it as your own work. If you are suspected of committing plagiarism, pleas of “I didn’t know what plagiarism was” will not be accepted. If you are concerned about your knowledge of plagiarism, please see me and I will give you a handout with examples of plagiarism. **Please note, copying and pasting directly from a website is plagiarism. Copying and pasting directly from a website and changing a few words is STILL plagiarism. Copying and pasting from Wikipedia is also plagiarism and very easy to identify so just don’t do it.**

Instructor Policies:

Office Hours: Since this is a distance learning course, please email me directly and we will set up a times that works for you for a telephone conversation, skype call, etc. Email is always the best form of contact and I try to respond within 24 hours.

Americans with Disabilities Act: “In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in Downing University Center A-200. The phone number is 270-745-5004; TTY is 745-3030. Per university policy, please DO NOT request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the OFSDS.”

FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act): Once a student reaches 18 years of age or attends a postsecondary institution, he or she becomes an "eligible student," and all rights formerly given to parents under FERPA transfer to the student. Therefore, I am unable to disclose information about grades, attendance, class schedule, etc. to parents, spouses and other interested parties. If you would like to give these rights to your parents or spouse you need to file a waiver with Western Kentucky University. Until I have received such waiver, please discourage other parties from contacting me regarding your status as my student.