

JINS 325: Rural America (Section 2)
3 credit hours; Fall 2004
T & TH 9:00–10:20, Barnett Hall 250

Instructor

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Office Hours: MWF 10:30–11:30, T, W, TH 1:30–2:30

Catalog Description

This course examines the topic of rural America through the lenses of various disciplines. The course explores ways of conceptualizing and defining "rural," describes the geographic, social, economic, and political characteristics of rural places, and discusses the implications of using alternative perspectives. Beyond this common introduction, specific sections of the course will examine in more detail selected contemporary issues relevant to rural people and places.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will...

1. Draw on multiple ways of knowing to gain an appreciation for the diverse people, landscapes, and cultural traditions that constitute rural America.
2. Become familiar with various ways of defining, identifying, and understanding rural America, and explore the implications of alternative approaches.
3. Develop a deeper understanding of selected issues currently confronting rural America.
4. Use writing as a means of communication and a method of learning, producing multiple works reflecting growth in thinking and writing.
5. Produce a substantial work of scholarship focused on an issue of contemporary or historical relevance to rural America that engages concepts and tools from two or more disciplines to achieve greater insight and understanding.

Additionally, in this particular section of the course, students will...

6. Explore what it means to live in a "rural community" and examine the issues facing residents of these communities.
7. Evaluate the economic, social, environmental, and governmental impacts of changes in the structure of agriculture on rural areas.
8. Investigate issues arising from population and demographic changes in rural areas.

Prerequisites: ENG 190 “Writing as Critical Thinking”; Junior Standing

Required Texts

1. Norris, Kathleen. 1993. *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
2. Meyers, Kent. 1998. *The Witness of Combines*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.
3. Selected readings as handouts or on 2-hour reserve at Pickler Library.

What is a “Junior Interdisciplinary Writing Enhanced Seminar” (JINS) Class?

The JINS course is a new type of course being developed as part of Truman’s Liberal Studies Program (LSP) to help students draw together ideas from different knowledge bases. As stated in the Outcome Statements for the LSP,

Interdisciplinary study should offer a model of how connections can be made. It should expose students to multiple ways of thinking about issues, problems, and concepts. It should enable the simultaneous use of multiple modes of inquiry and demonstrate that their source of power is synergistic rather than additive.

In other words, engaging in interdisciplinary thought and analysis means not only using concepts and tools from multiple academic disciplines to understand some phenomenon, but also integrating them to achieve greater understanding than is possible using the two approaches “side by side”. In this course, we will use the concepts, tools, and methods of multiple disciplines to better understand rural people and places and to examine some of the issues currently facing rural America. Because this course is “**writing-enhanced**”, we will also focus on the development of writing skills and the use of writing as a way to achieve deeper understanding about our subject matter. We will focus on the thought that goes into writing, the writing process itself, and the final written product as key components of the learning process in the class.

Course Outline

Week 1 Introduction

Week Beginning Aug 30

- Introductions (to the course and to one another)
- What about rural America is of interest to **you**?
- Why study rural areas?
- Contemporary significance of rural America: political, ecological, economic, cultural
- Preview of Town Portrait assignment
- *"Retro vs. Metro America"*
- *Logsdon, Ch. 11*

Week 2 What does it mean to live in a rural area?

Sep 6

- Relatives, friends, and neighbors; Town kids vs. Farm kids; and other stories...
 - *Meyers, pp. 1-56 & 125-139 (in MEYERS)*
 - *Logsdon Ch. 12*
 - *Norris (pp. 1-37)*

Week 3 & 4 "Industrialization" of Agriculture & its impact on Rural America

Sep 13 & 20

- *Meyers, pp. 159-217*
- *Blank, pp. 1-21 (Not Made in America)*
- *Logsdon Ch. 16*
- **Videos: "Death of the Dream" & "Troublesome Creek"**
- How will you keep 'em down on the farm once they've seen *Minneapolis?!?*
 - *USA Today: "Big cities lure away North Dakota youth." Feb. 24, 2004*
 - A former JINS student's summer experience in New Town, ND (population 1,396), located in Mountrail county, in the northwest part of the state

Week 5 Rural: The "Official" Definitions: Rural/Urban; Metropolitan, etc.

Sep 27

- Census Bureau, OMB, & Other definitions
 - *USDA-ERS web site on Beale Codes:*
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/Rurality/>

Week 6 More "Official" Definitions & Data Sources

Oct 4

- Rurality as a continuum: The Rural-Urban Continuum (Beale) Codes
- Using Census data to identify and understand rural and urban areas
 - <http://factfinder.census.gov>

Week 7 Getting a Handle on Interdisciplinarity

Oct 11

- **Test over Rural Definitions (Oct 12)**
- Seipel, "Interdisciplinarity: An Introduction"
(<http://www2.truman.edu/~mseipel/Interdisciplinarity.pdf>)
- Orr, "The Problem of Disciplines/The Discipline of Problems" (access via J-STOR from Pickler Web Page Article Search)

Week 8 Rural Politics and the Politics of Rural America

Oct 18

- Do political attitudes and voting patterns differ in rural America as compared to urban and suburban areas? If so, in what ways and how did it come to be so?
 - "The Great Divide": *Retro vs Metro America*
- What role will rural counties/states play in the upcoming Presidential election?

Week 9 & 10 Social fabric of rural America: "sense of place" and "sense of community"

Oct 25 & Nov 1

- Being of a place versus being from a place
 - Meyers, "Old Waters" and "Going Back"; Norris (pp. 44–106)
- Insiders vs. Outsiders
 - Norris (pp. 107–158)
- The necessity of community in the rural Great Plains
 - Kemmis, Ch. 4, "Barn Raising"

Week 11 & 12 Rural as "Culture": Bringing in Anthropology and Sociology

Nov 8 & 15

- "What Then is Rural? Challenges to Rural and Community Identity"
 - Meyers (selections); Norris (pp. 26–43)
- **A Rural Culture Quiz**
- **Soundbyte: "The Nebraska Finger Wave"**
- **Video: "Postville"**

Week 13 Rural America in "freeze-frame": Art & culture

Nov 22

- **Final Project Draft due (Nov 23)**
- More of Meyer's rural aesthetic experience
 - Meyers pp. 87–124 (in MEYERS)
- Visual portrayals of rural areas in art
 - Chapin, "Fading Refrain" (handout)
 - Farm Security Administration B&W Depression-Era Photos

Week 14 A Geographic Approach: Bringing in space, place, and location

Nov 29

- Evaluating rural landscapes
 - *Hart, "Understanding Landscape"*
- **Th. Dec. 2: Begin Presentation of Final Projects**

Week 15 Presentation of Final Projects

Dec 6

- In-class presentations of final projects

Finals Week Presentations continue

Dec 13 Th. Dec 16 7:30–9:20 (Finals Time)

Assignments—This section describes the major learning exercises that we will undertake in this class.

1. Test over Rural Definitions

We will cover in class the official definitions of rural (nonmetropolitan, etc.) used by the Bureau of the Census and other agencies of the federal government. This exam will test your understanding of these definitions and your ability to apply them to towns, places, and counties.

2. The Town/Community Portrait Group Project

For this assignment, you will take the role of an anthropologist, ethnographer, or journalist, studying and documenting social interaction among people in a rural setting. With a group of 3 or 4 other students, you will develop a portrait of a northeast Missouri town. You may focus on one of the “thriving” burgs surrounding (but not including) Kirksville (e.g. Brashear, Novinger, La Plata, etc.) or one of the former towns that is marked today by a few residences or even less (possibilities include Yarrow, Millard, Nineveh, Sublette, Shibley’s Point) . Your group will document the history of the town (specifically, the date of and reason for its founding, name and origin of its founder(s), the year and size of its population peak, and perhaps one major event in its history) by using resources from Pickler Library, the Adair County Historical Society, and the WWW. The group will then visit the community, talk with community members to solicit information on current issues and events in the community, and take some video and still photographs to document the experience.

Several area towns will have town festivals during September. You may wish to take the opportunity of the festival to visit the town, take some of your video or still footage there, and visit with community members. If the town does not have a festival or some other occasion for a public gathering (e.g. HS sporting event), you may have to rely on individual interviews with community members.

Some "local" festivals include:

- Bethel World Sheep Fest (~40 mi. southeast of Kirksville) Sep. 4-6
- La Plata Soybean Festival (10 mi. south) Sep. 4-6
- New Cambria Fall Festival (45 mi. southwest) Sep. 4-5
- Edina CornFest (30 mi. east) Sep. 10-12
- Putnam County Fair-Unionville, MO (45 mi. northwest) Sep. 7-11
- Shelbina Old Thresher's Reunion (50 mi. southeast) Sep. 17-19
- Clark County Mulefest-Kahoka, MO (60? mi. northeast) Sep. 18-19

Group members will discuss and compare notes on their observations in the community, then prepare a presentation which documents the community's history and pulls together the individual observations of each group member from their visit to the community. The group will present the findings of their festival observation to the class. The format that I recommend for this presentation is a video composed using the I-Movie technology available at the Teaching and Learning Technology Center (formerly New Media Center) in PML. This software allows you to incorporate video and sound as well as still images and text. The I-Movie software is relatively user friendly and I would be happy to help you set up a time at the TLTC to learn to use it. (You may, of course, use Windows-based or other digital editing software to prepare your movie.) Please output your presentation to a VHS cassette, as that is all that the technology in our classroom will reliably support for playback. (Since we're in a different room this semester, check with me on the possibility of DVD format.)

Your presentation should be supplemented with comments and explanation from the group members.

3. Journal Entries

Over the course of the semester, you will write three (3) short (two pages, single-space unless otherwise noted) journal entries in response to specific readings or prompts. Each entry is worth 25 points; the entry should be peer-read and revised before it is turned in; the revised copy will be read, graded, and returned to you. Entries will be graded for mechanics (grammar, spelling, etc.) and depth and originality of thought or reflectivity demonstrated. Four possible journal topics are as follows:

- React to the "*Death of the Dream*" & "*Troublesome Creek*" videos.
- React to the "*Postville*" video.
- Write a short, non-fiction essay describing a personal "rural" experience.
- Critique one of several contemporary motion pictures that show us a view of rural America through the lens of popular culture (a list of suggested movies will be discussed in class).

You are required to journal on the first two topics but may choose between the third and fourth, as listed above.

4. Final Semester Project

The culminating assignment for the course is a major paper combining concepts, methodologies, and/or data from multiple disciplines to examine a rural issue. The topic can be of your choosing, but should deal with a contemporary or historical issue of relevance to rural people and places. You may develop your project in a research format, in which you identify a research question, develop hypotheses, and select methods and data sources that will enable you to address these hypotheses. Alternatively, you may use an "article critique" format for your project, in which you assemble and review literature using different disciplinary approaches to examine a similar issue, and then attempt to integrate or synthesize the findings of the different articles to develop a deeper understanding of the issue.

Whatever format you choose, the critical component of this assignment is its interdisciplinarity—that you use the different disciplinary concepts, methodologies, or data sources in an integrative, rather than additive, way. That is, by exploring multiple facets of the issue, the final product should provide a deeper, or more nuanced understanding of this issue than could be gained by using each of these tools independently.

You will submit a 1–2 page pre-proposal that outlines the general topic you would like to pursue in your project. This initial pre-proposal is ungraded, but will give me an opportunity to offer feedback and suggestions on a direction for your project. You will then submit a formal proposal that outlines in significant detail the project you plan to complete. The proposal should contain a problem statement, research question, or thesis statement that clearly defines the topic you are examining. It should then describe the methodology and data sources or previous research that you will use to complete the project. Data sources should be presented in the form of an annotated bibliography (a citation for each source or article, followed by a 1-paragraph summary of the piece and its relevance to your project.) The proposal should also outline and describe the disciplinary perspectives being used in your final project. This section should outline the

fundamentals theories, concepts, or methods being utilized from each discipline, describe specifically how they apply to the topic at hand, and then briefly describe the specific articles or data being used from that discipline. The proposal will be graded and returned to you.

You will submit a finished draft of your project to the instructor and one peer reviewer; this draft will not be graded, but will be returned with feedback. You will submit the final draft of the paper on the last regular day of class. You will present your project during one of the last three regular class periods or the time scheduled for our final examination.

Basis of Student Evaluations

Specific written assignments are described above, with due dates for those assignments given in the outline below. Besides prompt submission of these written assignments, the other expectations for the course are that you will:

- attend class, participate in class discussion, present overviews of assigned readings and initiate related class discussion periodically during the semester,
- and participate in peer writing groups—providing feedback on the style, mechanics, and content of paper drafts of other group members.

Level of participation in class discussion will also help determine your final grade if you are on the "borderline" between two letter grades. Points are allocated as follows:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
Rural Definitions Test	100
Attendance/Participation	75
Readings Questions & Quizzes	50
Town festival/community portrait group project	100
Peer review of final project paper	25
Pre-proposal for Final Project	0
Proposal for Final Project	75
Journal entries (25 pts. x 3)	75
Presentation of Final Semester Project	50
<u>Final Semester Project Final Draft</u>	<u>150</u>
Total	700

Each student is allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 5-point deduction from your attendance points.

This penalty will double during times of student presentations (such as the presentations of the final semester projects).

Academic Integrity

As members of an academic community, we share responsibility for conforming to the highest standards of academic integrity and helping ensure that others also conform to those standards. This includes doing our own work, taking responsibility for our intellectual output and properly recognizing the incorporation of others' ideas and words into our own work. Work performed for this class should be your own original work (not recycled from another class). Suspected incidents of cheating or plagiarism will be brought to the attention of the student, followed with additional action as deemed appropriate by the instructor, including an assignment or course grade of "F" and referral to the Dean of Student Affairs.

For more information on Academic Integrity, please see

<http://conduct.truman.edu/docs/AcademicIntegrity.pdf> or pp. 39–40 of the General/Graduate Catalog (http://catalog.truman.edu/acad_info.pdf).

Dates and Deadlines

<u>Wk.</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>
1		
2		
3		
4		9/23 Final Project Pre-Proposal
5	9/28 Journal 1 (<i>Death of the Dream</i> and <i>Troublesome Creek</i>)	
6		
7	10/12 Rural Definitions Test	
8	10/19 Town Portrait Presentations	
9	10/26 Final Project Formal Proposal & Annotated Bibliography	
10	11/2 Journal 2 (Personal Essay <i>or</i> Rural Movie Critique)	
11		
12	11/16 Journal 3 (<i>Postville</i>)	

13	11/23 Final Project: 1 st Draft	11/25 - NO CLASS
14	11/30 Final Project Peer Review	12/2 Begin Final Project Presentations
15	12/7 Final Project Presentations	12/9 Final Project Presentations 12/9 Final Project Final Draft Due
Finals	TH 12/16 7:30-9:20 Final Project Presentations	

Bibliography of Sources for Additional Readings

- Beale, Calvin. 1998. "Nonmetro Population Rebound: Still Real but Diminishing." *Rural Conditions and Trends* 9(2): 20-27.
- Bell, Bill Jr. 2000. "The Bring Jobs and Money, But They Also Bring Trouble". *St. Louis Post Dispatch Newspaper*.
- Blank, Steven C. *The End of Agriculture in the American Portfolio*. 1998.
- Fitchen, Janet. *Endangered Spaces, Enduring Places*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991.
- Flora, Cornelia Butler, Jan L. Flora, Jacqueline D. Spears, Louis E. Swanson, with Mark B. Lapping and Mark L. Weinberg. 1992. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Hart, John Fraser. 1998. *The Rural Landscape*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Horwitz, Richard P. 1998. *Hog Ties: Pigs, Manure, and Mortality in American Culture*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Kemmis, Daniel. 1990. *Community and the Politics of Place*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Lacayo, Richard. 1998. "The Brawl over Sprawl." *Time Magazine*.
- Lockeretz, William (editor). 1997. *Visions of American Agriculture*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.
- Logsdon, Gene. *You can go home again : adventures of a contrary life*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press. 1998.
- Meyers, Kent. 1998. *The Witness of Combines*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Nassauer, Joan Iverson. 1997. "Agricultural Landscapes in Harmony with Nature." Pp. 59–76 in William Lockeretz (editor) *Visions of American Agriculture*. Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press.
- Spain, Daphne. 1993. "Been–Heres Versus Come–Heres: Negotiating Conflicting Community Identities." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 59(2): 156–171.
- Toennies, Ferdinand. 1887 (1988). "Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft." Pp. 7–15 in Roland Warren (editor), *New Perspectives on the American Community (5th edition)* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Watkins, T.H. 2000. "High Noon in Cattle Country." *Sierra*.