

Soc. 331 Rural Sociology, Spring 2009

Instructor: Curtis W. Stofferahn, Ph.D
E-mail Address: curtis_stofferahn@und.nodak.edu
Office: 206 B Gillette, 777-4418
Classroom: Gillette Hall 101
Class Hours: Tues. Thurs. 8 – 9:15 a.m.
Office Hours: 10:00 – 12:00 Tues. Thurs.
Blackboard: [\(093\) SOC 331-01 RURAL SOCIOLOGY \(093-SOC331-S-11126\)](#)
Prerequisites: Sociology 110 (Introduction to Sociology)
Textbook: Flora, Cornelia Butler and Jan L. Flora. 2008. *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Third Edition. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Course Description: The focus of this course is on the various capitals in rural areas – natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built as a framework for understanding rural society. Our particular focus will be on how community capitals were utilized in the post-disaster recovery in Northwood ND. Each community capital has a project associated with it which will permit us to become more familiar with Northwood as a community. As we study each community capital, we examine it in the context of the disaster recovery. We will develop a list of community knowledgeable for that particular community capital, and we will develop an open-ended question for that capital which will be included in a questionnaire which students will use to interview these knowledgeable over the telephone. We will present the results of our community case study, including a summary of the interviews, at the end of the semester.

Course Objectives:

1. Define each of the community capitals.
2. Discuss the interrelationships among the capitals.
3. Analyze how community capitals affect community and economic development.
4. Use the community capitals framework to analyze how they affect a community's recovery from a natural disaster.

Course Philosophy: It is my hope that you will enhance your skills as a critical thinker, communicator, researcher and life-long learner as we progress together through this course. I believe that learning is more than memorizing information and answering questions on a test. It is using information to gain an understanding of how things work and then to make them better. I like the following definition of learning: "*Learning (is) a process that culminates in the ability: to ask the right questions and frame good problems, to acquire information and evaluate sources of information, to critically investigate and solve problems, to make choices among many alternatives, to explain concepts to others (both verbally and in writing) and to generalize to new situations.*" Ganter SL & Kinder JS, editors. Targeting Institutional Change: Quality Undergraduate Science Education for All Students. Targeting Curricular Change: Reform in undergraduate education in science, math, engineering, and technology. A report of the 1998 AAHE Conference on Institutional Change. The American Association for Higher Education

Disability Statement: If you need accommodations in this course because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you plan to request disability accommodations, you are expected to register with the Disability Support services (DSS) office (Room 190 McCannell Hall, 777-3425).

Blackboard: Please make use of the materials and facilities available on Blackboard for this course. I will establish one group page for the class members on Blackboard – Communications – Group Pages. You can deposit documents on your group page so they can be shared by other group members, you can send an email to one or all group members, and you can use the discussion board to set up a threaded discussion for your group.

Learning Circles: To facilitate interaction among members of working groups, we will use what is called Learning Circles.

Introduction: A Learning Circle is a self managed learning group. Participants learn at their own pace, drawing on their own experiences and without a lecturer or 'expert' running the show. Learning occurs through shared dialogue and inquiry. In this process all are teachers and learners. The direction, pace, style and topics are directed by the group. This may incorporate a variety of resources. There are three roles for members within a learning circle, organizing, facilitating (shared by the group) and participating.

Process: A typical learning circle (more traditionally called a study circle) is a group of people who meet regularly to discuss, learn about and consider action on an issue of concern to them, their communities or the wider society. Discussions are facilitated by a group leader which in our case will be your instructor, at least initially until we become more comfortable with the process such that anyone may assume the role. Learning circle groups use common resource material, which in our case will be our textbook, videos, and identified websites. The material is a guide to assist learning.

Procedure: We will sit in a learning group circle, and I will have prepared name plates for each of you to place on your desk so that we may be able to become better acquainted. You will bring your name plate with you to each class period. As learning groups are only effective when students are engaged & participating, attendance is a must! Obviously, before we can begin to reflect on the meaning and significance of the topic, we have to know something about it. Thus it is imperative that you come class prepared to discuss the content, and that can only be accomplished by reading it before class. If there are topics, words, or issues that you don't understand, we will stop the discussion at your request and try to address those concerns. Always bring your textbooks to class!

Class Participation: During general class discussion that I will be evaluating your contribution to class discussion. This evaluation is a cumulative one rather than one based on your contribution to each day. *Therefore, it is in your best interest to attend class, to come prepared to discuss, to participate often, and to offer something of substance during your participation.* Because it is important for me to be able to associate a name and a face, it is imperative that you *bring the nameplate with you to every class.*

Projects and Discussions: Rather than assign one or more projects to each class member, each of us will do all of them. The week following the discussion of the topic, we will discuss what we have found from our research on the topic. Your individual report will be due the following week.

Assessment of Class Discussion:

A (90-100%) Thorough analysis of reading integrated throughout the following: 1) Relevant & regular discussion, 2) Excellent depth in considering underlying or related issues; 3) Consistently connects ideas in present discussions to previous reading/discussion; 4) Shows original and creative thinking. 5) Excellent listener building on comments by peers and listening attentively to (and even encouraging) ideas other than one's own. 6) Actively involved in a range of activities.

B (80-90%) Usually thorough analysis of reading integrated through the following: 1) Relevant discussion although occasionally irregular. 2) Generally shows good depth in considering underlying or related issues. 3) Often connects ideas in present discussions to previous reading/discussion. 4) Occasionally shows original and creative thinking as appropriate. 5) Good listener generally working to encourage others and to connect other's thoughts and ideas with one's own. 6) Actively involved in most activities.

C (70-79%) Occasionally integrates reading; misses major points evidenced as follows: 1) Sporadic but generally relevant discussion. 2) Occasionally shows depth. 3) Rarely connects ideas in present discussions to previous reading/discussion. 4) Rarely shows original thinking/sticks generally to comments of others or text. 5) Generally good listener but may at times dominate or withdraw from discussion. 6) Generally involved in activities, although sporadic.

D (60-69%) Rarely integrates reading; disconnected from content as follows: 1) Either shows no discussion or irrelevant discussion. 2) Omits depth. 3) Never connects ideas in present discussions to previous reading/discussion. 4) Shows no (or disconnected) original thinking. 5) Pays attention and listens some of the time. 6) Tends to dominate or withdraw from discussion. 7) Rarely involved in activities.

F (0-59%) Never integrates readings, evidenced as follows: 1) No discussion or discussion not relevant to topic at hand. 2) Shows no depth. 3) Shows no original thinking or comments are unrelated to class. 4) Shows a pattern of inattentiveness. 5) Little to no involvement in activities.

University Attendance Policy and Procedure:

Attendance and participation in class activities are considered integral parts of a university education. It is the University policy that attendance in classes is expected of all students. If attendance and/or participation are required and will impact grading, it is the responsibility of the instructor to communicate clearly that policy to students during the first week of class. Even in situations where an instructor might excuse a class absence (for example, severe medical situations, family emergencies, or authorized University activities) it is the responsibility of the student, whenever possible, to inform the instructor ahead of time. Attendance and participation in each class period are integral and essential to group work. Each class session is the equivalent of a laboratory setting where attendance is central to the learning objectives. As Woody Allen, a wise philosopher, once eloquently stated: “*Showing up is 80 percent of success*”.

Grading	Points
8 Projects @ 25 each	200
Class participation	100
1 Final Project @ 100	200
Total points	500

Final Project	Points
Interviews	25
Analysis	25
Writing	25
Presentation	25

Course Schedule

Module 1 – Getting started [January 13-15]

This week we will get to know each other, where we come from, and how we can work together via Blackboard. You will also be required to go through the Human Subjects training, as some of your assignments will involve asking people questions. Although this training is highly oriented to sciences that focus on the individual, such as medicine and psychology, it is helpful to be aware of the history of human subjects’ abuse that has led us to our careful attempts to insure the rights and protection of human subjects. The link for human subjects training is posted on Blackboard Web Resources.

Assignment 1. Becoming familiar with Northwood & Human Subjects Training

Describe the Community: Write a brief description of Northwood. Include its location (where in the state, province or country; nearness to major highways, railroads, rivers, or ports), appearance, size, ethnic

composition, population, businesses, and any important historical events that you know have occurred in the area. (See Web Based Resources, Northwood Website, Northwood Centennial History (CFL Special Collections), and anything else that might be relevant).

Human Subjects Training: On Blackboard Web Resources you will find a link to Human Subjects Education. Once you click on the link, the Human Subjects Education page opens up. Click on “Register Here” and follow instructions for completing the online education program. When you have completed the training, print out the form acknowledging your completion and give it to me.

Module 2 –The capitals framework: basic terms and interconnections [January 20-22]

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora, Chap.1: The Rural Landscape and the Importance of Place,

Assignment 2: Community Change

Both urban and rural communities can be growing or shrinking in terms of population, economy and land base. Find data about your community that can help you determine changes over time, using census and other place-based data. Present that data to demonstrate changes in the shifts in population, economy and land base of your community or neighborhood over time. Are there obvious explanations for those changes? Are they all in the same direction? (See Web Based Resources, ND Cities Population, 1920 – 2000, Scroll down for Northwood, The Northwood Centennial History will also be of help).

Module 3 –Natural Capital [January 27-29]

Project Discussion: Discuss community change project

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora, Chap. 2: Natural Capital,

Assignment 3: Community Environmental Strengths and Challenges

From the newspaper articles, the environmental study done by FEMA for the new school sites, and letters from environmental agencies regarding construction projects, discuss the role that natural capital has played in the recovery and redevelopment of Northwood. Which aspects of natural capital does the community or groups within the community have 1) the most pride and 2) the greatest concern?

Interview Question: Develop a question that addresses the role of natural capital in the process of recovery of Northwood from the tornado. (See course documents, examples of in-depth interview questions for community capital study)

Community Knowledgeables: Who are the community or county knowledgeable about natural capital in Northwood or Grand Forks County?

Module 4– Cultural Capital [February 3-5]

Project Discussion: Discuss community environmental strengths and challenges project

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora, Chap. 3: Cultural Capital and Legacy.

Assignment 4: Sources of Community Cultural Capital

Unobtrusive Observation. One can learn a good deal through observation. The following exercise uses the technique of *unobtrusive observation*. In contrast to participant observation, your presence does not change what you are observing. In participant observation, you interact with those you are observing and therefore change their behavior. The specific technique to be used for this exercise is similar to what is called a *windshield survey*, because it can be conducted from a car. (You might be able to do this by using pictures located on the Northwood website, from other pictures you can find about Northwood using Google pictures, or from the Grand Forks Herald Northwood Rising Archive posted on Blackboard.)

In this assignment, you will analyze the visual symbols of community culture presented to the public in and around the community. You will relate this to the cultural themes within the community and the way culture is organized. A community expresses its culture in many ways, some planned and some unintended. One planned presentation of the community is through the conscious (if we can for the moment personify the community) presentation of self which a community provides to those who visit it. *Conscious* symbols are represented by signs that mark the city limits and welcome visitors to town, by an official webpage if the community has one, by statues, and sometimes by the facade presented in the business district. You will also examine *unconscious* or inadvertent symbols which provide clues to the community's culture.

1. Find the major signs or statues that tell about the town or neighborhood. It could be a sign at the boundary of town. (Absence of any indicator of when you are entering the town is an important piece of information also; it indicates that the community lacks an image of itself.) Does the sign have a town slogan? Are there signs for local organizations and churches? Are there signs announcing community celebrations and festivals? Describe the signs and markers as completely as possible. Is there a community park with a statue? A garden? A public building? What does it tell you that the community wants the public to know about it?
2. If there are no outside indicators of community solidarity or presentation of self, is there one within the community? Are lawns neat and houses well painted? Are some neighborhoods well manicured and others not? Is there obvious racial and/or class segregation? In some communities, there truly is an "other side of the tracks."
3. From the newspaper articles, determine how Northwood intends to commemorate the disaster and recovery. Did the city adopt a new slogan to depict its recovery and redevelopment? Does it plan any special monument or marker? Examine the architectural pictorials for the new buildings (school, church, etc.). What does the appearance of those buildings say about Northwood? (There may be other pictures in the Grand Forks Herald Northwood Rising Archive from the Grand Forks Herald posted on Blackboard.)

Interview Question: Develop a question that addresses the role of cultural capital in the process of recovery of Northwood from the tornado. (See course documents, examples of in-depth interview questions for community capital study)

Community Knowledgeables: Who are the community knowledgeable about cultural capital in Northwood?

Module 5 – Human Capital [February 10-12]

Project Discussion: Discuss sources of community cultural capital project

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora , Chap. 4. Human Capital,

Assignment 5: Human capital and the local labor force

Using data from the Northwood 2000 Census on educational attainment, employment status, commuting to work, occupation, industry, and class of worker, discuss the human capital characteristics of the labor force of the Northwood community. Using information from the Northwood Public School webpage on class schedule and class description, discuss what the kinds of careers or occupations that the school district and the community believes are important for success of their students. Using School District Profile, Northwood Public School, School District AYP Report for the latest year, discuss the extent to which the school district is meeting expectations in math and reading. Using the Assessment Report, determine whether graduation rates vary by demographic group and the extent to which these rates meet or exceed state rates. Also determine the extent to which eleventh graders were proficient or not proficient in math, reading and science. Do these rates vary by demographic group? Have they improved over time? From the newspaper articles archive, find articles that deal with human capital and its role in recovery and redevelopment.

Interview Question: Develop a question that addresses the role of human capital in the process of recovery of Northwood from the tornado. (See course documents, examples of in-depth interview questions for community capital study)

Community Knowledgeables: Who are the community or county knowledgeable about human capital in Northwood?

Module 6 – Social Capital [February 17-19]

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora , Chap. 5 Social Capital and Community

Project Discussion: Discuss human capital and the local labor force project

Assignment 6: Social Capital: Examples of Progressive Participation

Community re-development depends on both bonding and bridging social capital. As these have to be invested in, it becomes easy to fall into inaction, apathy or conflict. Review the matrix on page 126 of this chapter. Examine the newspaper articles to find examples of bridging and bonding social capital. Describe each. Which categories of the matrix on page 126 best describe these examples? Do any of these examples approximate the progressive participation (high bridging and high bonding) described in the matrix on page 126? What kinds of capitals were mobilized besides social capital to make things work?

Interview Question: Develop a question that addresses the role of social capital in the process of recovery of Northwood from the tornado. (See course documents, examples of in-depth interview questions for community capital study)

Community Knowledgeables: Who are the community knowledgeable about social capital in Northwood?

Module 7 – Political Capital [February 24-26]

Project Discussion: Discuss social capital project: Examples of progressive participation

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora , Chap. 6, Political Capital,

Assignment 7: Approaches to study of community power

The event analysis and positional approaches to study of community power:

From the City of Northwood website, develop a list of community organizations (including the school district, churches, service clubs, cultural clubs, civic clubs, patriotic clubs, health center, clinic, city council). If the officers (both appointed and elected) of the organizations are listed, add their names below the name of the organization. If the officers aren't listed, contact the person listed on the website to obtain the names. List the officers of each organization. Tally how many times a particular person had multiple mentions.

From a reading of the news articles about the recovery effort in Northwood, develop a list of projects associated with the recovery and names of persons identified in the news articles as being associated with each of those projects. Identify them by name and with the particular project with which they are associated. Tally how many times each person was mentioned. Tally how many times a particular person had multiple mentions.

Compare the results from the procedures. How comparable are they? Is there overlap between the event analysis and positional approaches? Are there considerable differences between the two approaches? How widely is power shared in the community? Do the results support the pluralist, elitist, class based or growth machine theories? Why?

Module 8– Financial Capital [March 3-5]

Project Discussion: Discuss approaches to study of community power

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora , Chap. 7 Financial Capital,

Assignment 8. Financial Capital and Recovery and Redevelopment

From the archives of newspaper articles, attempt to identify the sources of financial capital that were used for various projects in the recovery and redevelopment. The sources can include governments (federal, state, county), foundations, charities, insurance, organizations, businesses and individuals. Which source was the greatest source of financial capital for recovery and redevelopment? Did the sources of financial capital vary according to purpose for which they were used or the time frames associated with recovery and redevelopment?

Interview Question: Develop a question that addresses the role of financial capital in the process of recovery of Northwood from the tornado. (See course documents, examples of in-depth interview questions for community capital study)

Community Knowledgeables: Who are the community knowledgeable about financial capital in Northwood?

Module 9 – Built Capital [March 10-12]

Project Discussion: Discuss financial capital and recovery/redevelopment project

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora , Chap. 8, Built Capital,

Assignment 9. Recovery and local infrastructure

Using the archive of newspaper articles dealing with the recovery and re-development, find out about recent infra-structure investments in Northwood. These would include new, repaired or renovated buildings, expanded sewer systems, new roads, new schools, repaired electrical systems, etc. Read the coverage of the decision for the investment and how the project was executed in the local press and summarize the project. Who were the individuals involved in the project? From the news articles attempt to determine who was involved in the decision in either the public or private sector. Answer the following questions: 1. What motivated the investment? Was it to replace, repair, or renovate infrastructure damaged in the tornado? 2. What local and outside enterprises and institutions were involved in the infrastructure projects? 3. Where did the

community find the financial capital to undertake the infrastructure projects? 4. What are the impacts of the infrastructure investment on the quality of community life and economic security?

Interview Question: Develop a question that addresses the role of built capital in the process of recovery of Northwood from the tornado. (See course documents, examples of in-depth interview questions for community capital study)

Community Knowledgeables: Who are the community knowledgeable about built capital in Northwood?

Module 10 – Governance [March 24-26]

Project Discussion: Discuss recovery and local infrastructure project

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora, Chap. 11, Governance,

Assignment 10: Governance project

Review the newspaper articles to discover what kinds of inter-governmental and intra-governmental problems the city government encountered in its recovery and redevelopment efforts? What kinds of unique problems did the recovery and redevelopment pose for the mayor, council, and appointed officials? How did they deal with these problems? How does their experience compare with the problems of rural community governance discussed in this chapter?

Module 11 – Generating Change [March 31-April 2]

Project Discussion: Discuss governance project

Reading Assignment: Flora and Flora, Chap. 12, Generating Community Change,

Assignment 11. Local organizations and their approach to recovery and redevelopment.

Review the newspaper articles to discover projects that local organizations undertook in the recovery and redevelopment of Northwood. Find two such projects. Discuss the projects concerning the nature of the project, who was involved in the project, who were the beneficiaries of the project, and the outcome of the project. Which of the four models of community development did the project resemble?

Module 12: Final Presentation, Finalize Questionnaire, Interviewing Training [April 7-9] [April 14-16]

Project Discussion: Discuss community change project

Finalize Questionnaire

Divide List of Community Knowledgeables to Interview

Schedule Interviews

Conduct Interviews

Module 13: Preparing final report [April 21-23]

Module 14: Presentation of Community Study [April 28- 30]