

*University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Department of Sociology and Social Work*

**The American Community
Sociology 300
Spring 2017**

Instructor: Krishna Roka
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Office: CCC 478 Office hours: Mon: 13:00-14:00 Wed: 13:00-14:00
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Class schedule:
Mon- 11:00AM- 12:15PM
Wed- 11:00AM- 12:15PM
Room: CCC 204

Course Description

We live in a rapidly changing world. These changes are transforming our lives and our relationships with people around us. The places we grew, friends we cherished and interactions we enjoyed are fading in memory. The causes and impacts of these changes along with the shared ideas to build a sustainable future with “community” in mind is the focus of the course. Do we live in “our” world or “my” world? Have we adopted individualism to fulfill our dreams? What are the costs of this transformation? Finally, are we running away from our responsibilities our ancestors shared? These are some of the questions we sometimes think when reflecting our lives and/or planning for the future. This course will help you to contextualize your thoughts in a broad manner. It will create a platform where we can share our thoughts with others and discuss the “community” we all desire.

Using multiple perspectives, the course will try to answer the following questions: What is a community? How is the community changing around us? What are the major causes of change? Can we rebuild community? What are the major approaches and practices of community development? In addition, we will discuss “the community” and “our community” using multiple viewpoints: history, economy, environment, rural and urban. We will examine the theoretical and methodological challenges and opportunities to building sustainable communities. We will explore examples of successful community development practices across the nation and admire exemplary leaders.

The course consists of three sections. In the first section, we will discuss what community is, its history and compare between rural and urban areas. The second section will look at the trends in declining community participation, the causes and impacts of changes and share our experiences. In the third part, we will examine community development, approaches and practices and explore strategies for the future. Each section will include a set of readings, which students are expected to read and come prepared for class discussion.

Course objectives:

By the end of the course students will:

- Have become familiar with the concepts of community and community development;
- Have garnered knowledge on the history of community in the US, transformation and causes of change (be able to contextualize their experience in the broader society);
- Have the ability to apply multiple perspectives in identifying opportunities and challenges to community development.

Required texts (available in bookstore)

- Robert Putnam. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
- Matthew Desmond. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown Publishers.

Supplemental reading (available in the library)

- Jerry Robinson and Gary Paul Green (Eds.). 2011. *Introduction to Community Development: Theory, Practice and Service-Learning*. Sage Publication.

Course Structure

The course is designed to explore communities in the US using multiple approaches. I will present lecture on the key topics followed by a class discussion. Class presence and participation is crucial for good grades. In addition to class lectures, there will be various assignments and activities.

- **Class discussion (assigned chapter/article):** There will be 10 online discussion assignments, for which each student will submit a 150 words discussion post for the week's materials. The discussion post will include a summary of the readings, critical analysis of the topics from the readings, connection with the course and three questions for discussion. Each discussion post will be graded for 3 points (30 points in total).
- **Final project- Experiential learning:** Each student will work in a group of 3-4 students and visit one local community organization that works on social issues. Some of them include YMCA, Public Library, Child Services, United Way, Boys and Girls Club, etc. During the visit the group will learn through observation, volunteering and/or interview about the organization's work and its views on community changes. You will visit the organization at least FIVE times during the semester and submit a 10 page report at the end of the semester. The report should include a history of the organization, major work, community changes, major challenges of community development and the future of

community development and should incorporate concepts and topics discussed in the course and make a strong connection with the course. The group will also present their finding to the class in the final week (week 15) of the course. Other details will be discussed during the class.

- **Book review:** Each student will write a 1000 words review for the book *Evicted* which will be due on **Week 10**. Instructions and samples of book reviews are available in D2L website. The book for this assignment has been carefully selected to enhance your knowledge on environmental issues.
- **My community:** To understand and share your knowledge about your community (the community you grew/went to school), I want each student to prepare a short 8 min presentation on the history, culture, landmark, social changes and the future of the selected community. You will present your community to the class on Week 7 & 8. The presentation should be submitted in D2L and if you used any sources, they must be cited.
- **Attendance (comment cards):** To record your attendance I will collect comment cards for each lecture. You will write a short- 2-3 sentence – question or comment pertaining to the content of the lecture and/or the reading materials. Please buy a pack of 3*5 cards for use in class. The card should include your name and the date and should be submitted at the end of each lecture. I will grade random 10 cards; make sure you attend all lectures. **Note: Do not turn in your friend’s cards when they are absent or ask other students to turn in your cards when you do not attend the lecture. Evidence of these practices will result in academic misconduct that will affect your grades.**
- **Extra credits:** You may also earn extra credits (a total of **5 points**) by attending lectures and events outside the class. Submit a 1 page, single spaced review paper for each activity you attend. You will receive **1 point** for each event. Other ways to earn extra credits should be discussed with the instructor.

Grading Procedures

The final grade will be determined by your participation in class discussions and performance on the book review, review papers, final paper and group project.

My community	15%
Book review	15%
Final project report	30%
Online discussion	30%
Attendance	10%

Total

100%

The final grade will be calculated using the following schedule

Course grade	Percentages
A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	84-89
B	80-83
C+	75-79
C	70-74
D	60-69
F	<60

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Readings and activities*
1.	Jan 23-27	Introduction What is a community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a community? (D2L) • Introduction to your community (class activity)
2.	Jan 30- Feb 3	Defining community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the community (d2l) • WHO- defining community (d2l) • How social isolation is killing us (https://goo.gl/FidtBZ)
3.	Feb 6-10	Communities Urban Rural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lyon and Driskell- Chapter 2 • Revitalizing community documentary (https://goo.gl/1EIZSH) • Discussion 1: Lyon and Driskell- chapter 7 •
4.	Feb 13-17	Social change in America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No longer 'Mayberry' - Washington Post (https://goo.gl/4qTGRR) • Next America- Chapter 1 (introduction) • Walden University- Social change report (d2l) • Discussion 2: Putnam- Chapter 1-3 •
5.	Feb 20-24	Changing American community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next America- Chapter 2 (millennials and boomers) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Millennials and religion (http://goo.gl/Sh14hV) • Why do millennials hate groceries? The Atlantic (https://goo.gl/u4qXJi) • Baby boomers are what's wrong with American economy- Washington Post (https://goo.gl/8fJHHG) • Discussion 3: Putnam- Chapter 4-6

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
6.	Feb 27- Mar 3	Economic changes- communities in trouble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The heartland: life and loss in steel city – MSNBC (http://www.nbcnews.com/specials/geographyofpoverty-heartland-1) • Dark valley: life in the shadows- MSNBC (http://www.msnbc.com/interactives/geography-of-poverty/sw.html) • Discussion 4: Putnam – Chapter 7-9
7.	Mar 6-10	My community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My community presentation
8.	Mar 13-17	The new America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next America- Chapter 6 (the new immigrants) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Languages (http://time.com/4098591/languages-at-home/?xid=homepage) • Migrants and economy (http://goo.gl/Bew9w7) • The terrible loneliness of growing up poor in Robert Putnam’s America- Washington Post (https://goo.gl/JFCbzR) • Discussion 5: Putnam – Chapter 10-12
9.	Mar 27- Mar 31	The future community in America	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next America- Chapter 10 (living digital) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing families (http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/26/health/families.html) • Discussion 6: Putnam- Chapter 13-15
10.	Apr 3-7	Evicted discussion	<p>Book Evicted discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion 7: Putnam- Chapter 16, 17 & 19
11.	Apr 10-14	Approaches to community development	<p>Green and Haines- Chapter 4 & Chapter 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boomers and millennials cooperation (http://goo.gl/Vpdx3v) • Discussion 8: Jnanabratta Bhattacharya. 2004. Theorizing community development. <i>Journal of the Community Development Society</i>, Vol. 34 (2):5-34. • Book review due
12.	Apr 17-21	Leadership and cooperation in community development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robinson- Chapter 9 & 10 • Community engagement matters- SSIR (https://goo.gl/xy5IEK) • Discussion 9: Federal Reserve Bank: Past, present and future of community development
13.	Apr 2-28	Sustainable communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green and Haines- Chapter 3 • Gaining Ground documentary (https://goo.gl/Skxvyy) • Discussion 10- How to change the world
14.	May 1-5	Future of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics and community development

		community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building a new community for rural homeless- NPR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Part 1: https://goo.gl/O4cMBM ○ Part 2: https://goo.gl/9pkrmN
15.	May 8-12	Recap and conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiential learning project presentation Rewrite due

*Additional materials could be added during the semester

Class Policy

Attendance and participation: Class attendance and participation is important to this course. Both physical and mental presence during the class is critical to understand the topics in the course. There will be no excuse for absence, unless there was an emergency for which I will need a written explanation. During the course we will engage in discussing major concepts and active participation from students is highly encouraged. Despite the class size I will accommodate discussion when required. Late arrival and leaving early will be marked as absence and will result in negative grade.

Readings: Textbooks and other reading materials for the course have been carefully chosen. It is required for students to read them prior to the class. Reading assignments must be completed as required by the course.

Writing: For writing assignments, students must write clearly and concisely. Each paper should be written in a format with 1 inch margin, double spaced, 12 size font, use Times New Roman font and include sources.

A high level of writing is expected for the course. Written papers with grammatical errors, inconclusive logics, drafts and poor structure are unacceptable and will result in poor grade. Students must become aware of plagiarism and cite sources used for the assignment. Any evidence of plagiarism will automatically result in an F grade. A high level of academic integrity is expected throughout the course. For the UWSP's policy on academic integrity and plagiarism visit this link:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/Academic%20Integrity%20Brochure.pdf>.

Late submission: All assignments must be submitted by the time mentioned in the course structure. Late submission will result in negative grades.

Use of technology: Use of technology in the classroom is not required for the course. Therefore, use of cell phones, tablet/ipad, computer and other electronic devices are not allowed in the class. Using electronic devices during class will affect your grade. No recording of lecture is permitted without the instructor's permission.

Meeting: I welcome students meeting to discuss course materials and assignments. The best way to contact me is by email and I try my best to respond to your email promptly. You can also stop

by my office during the office hours or schedule an appointment during other times. You can also contact me using the REMIND app using Text Messages.

Safe environment: The class strives for a safe environment to promote knowledge sharing. Disrespectful, degrading, or offensive language will not be tolerated. Any personal experiences shared in the class should remain confidential. UWSP Student rights and responsibilities document includes the policies regarding academic misconduct.

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>

Disability services: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, check here:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyinfo.pdf>.

If you have a disability and require classroom and/or exam accommodations, please register with the Disability Services Office and inform me. I am happy to assist where necessary. For more information, please visit the Disability and Assistive Technology Center, located on the 6th floor of the Learning Resource Center (the Library) or the website:

<http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx> .