

DEVELOPING RESILIENT RURAL COMMUNITIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

Offered: June 15 – July 17, 2015

Credits: 5 (AIU)/9 (OSU, graduate or undergraduate)

Capacity: 5 AIU students, 5 OUS students

Course Instructors

Dr. John Bliss, Forest Ecosystems and Society, OSU

Dr. Nancy Rosenberger, Anthropology, OSU

Dr. Ayumi Sugimoto, Basic Education, AIU

Course Description

Global economic restructuring is changing the character of rural communities around the world. In Oregon, as in many parts of the United States, rural communities founded upon natural resource extraction and processing have experienced mill closures and increasingly restricted access to resources. Declining employment opportunities have led to an outmigration of youth. Similar dynamics have occurred in rural Japan, leading to an aging rural population and stagnant rural communities. In Akita, as in other areas of rural Japan, rural communities founded on natural resource management have maintained collective actions and community ties. Japan's declining population and outmigration of rural youth have shrunk rural communities.

This course focuses on rural community resilience through a comparative case study of communities in both rural Oregon and rural Akita. Students will research actual practices in the two countries by focusing on community dynamics and their natural resource use, especially forestry and agriculture. Students' field research includes interview, questionnaire survey, and hands-on training.

This course is designed explicitly to enhance the global, cross-cultural competency of participating students. A key strategy will be team research by the integration of AIU and OSU students in a project-based learning (PBL), during this PBL they will take classes together and meet at social functions held by course instructors. Student research teams will work mainly for different topics, forestry or agriculture of rural community resilience. American students will serve as cultural translators for the Japanese students while in rural Oregon, and the Japanese students will serve a similar role while the class is in rural Akita. Funding from the Japanese government will support faculty involved with this project, as well as provide travel and lodging support for OSU and AIU students.

Student Learning Goals/ Expected Outcomes

1. Students evidence cross-cultural competency by working effectively throughout the course as members of cross-cultural teams.
2. Students demonstrate ability to articulate (orally and in writing) key concepts of community resilience, adaptive capacity and related concepts, and to apply these concepts to understanding the challenges faced in the two communities studied.
3. Students demonstrate ability to:
 - Develop and articulate research questions germane to course themes;
 - Collect relevant primary and secondary data using appropriate research methods;
 - Synthesize research findings and present them through professional oral and written communications.
4. Students demonstrate recognition of, and ability to describe their own cultural “lenses” in contrast to other cultural “lenses”. Students demonstrate ability to compare and contrast U.S. and Japanese cultural mores, values, and perspectives.

Prerequisites

To register for the course, students must:

1. Have achieved at least junior standing
2. Submit an application packet including nomination, resume and statement of interest
3. Be interviewed by course instructors

Student Learning Assessment

Each student will prepare a course portfolio documenting their learning experience and outcomes. Portfolios will include the following:

1. Personal learning objectives and self assessment of learning
2. Field notes, writing assignments, journals
3. Class critiques of student presentations
4. Graded final projects (including contributions to course website and blog)
5. Graded final essay examination
6. Student and faculty assessment of student participation in and contribution to class activities
7. In addition, each student will participate in an exit interview with course instructors

Final grades will reflect student participation (including professional behavior, participation in class activities, contribution to class esprit de corps) (40%); quality of team work (including research process, collaborative interaction, and final products) (30%); and individual performance (including written assignments, presentations, and final exam) (30%).

Learning Resources

Adger, W., Huges, T., Folke, C., Carpenter, S., and Rockstrom, J. 2005. Social-ecological resilience to coastal disasters. Science 309:1036-1039.

Chaskin, Robert J. 2001. Building community capacity: A definitional framework and case studies from a comprehensive community initiative. Urban Affairs Review, 36(3)2001: 291-323.

Joy Hendy et al. 2013 Understanding Japanese Society, Routledge

John W. Traphagan and John Knight eds. 2003 Demographic Change and the Family in Japan's Aging Society, State University of New York Press.

Margaret McKean 1992 "The Management of Traditional Commons land (Iriaichi) in Japan" D.W. Bromley (eds.) In Making the Commons Work: Theory, Practice, and Policy. ICS Press

Course Design: The course consists of 4 modules:

Module 1: Foundations of Rural Resilience

Module 1 will occur on and near the OSU Corvallis campus. Students will engage in reading, discussion, and writing on contemporary rural community dynamics, resilience theory, globalization, and cross-cultural studies. This module will take place over approximately one week.

Topics covered will include:

- Introduction to the class: learning objectives, course logistics, team organization
- Theoretical foundation: cultural literacy, rural communities, globalization, resilience theory
- Introduction to rural America: history, culture, demography
- Team building exercises, social activities
- Course project, website development

This module will include the following activities:

- Lectures on course topics by course faculty and guest speakers
- Student – led discussion of assigned readings
- Several one day field trips to rural communities in the Willamette Valley, Coast Range, and Oregon Coast
- Opportunities for socializing and team building

Student assignments:

- Serve as discussion leader or discussant for at least one assigned reading
- Write 250 word abstract for each reading
- Work with research team to develop research project focus
- One or more pop quizzes or writing assignments relevant to course themes

Module 2: Rural Oregon Case Study

Module 2 will occur in Wallowa County, Oregon. The class will be based at the Wallowa Lake Methodist Camp, where we will eat and sleep and many class activities will occur. This module will take place over approximately two weeks.

The resilience framework will be used to organize our learning experiences. What factors influence the social, economic, and ecological conditions we observe? What are the drivers of change in these conditions? Examples of issues and topics to be explored within this framework include:

- Contemporary life in a remote, rural community in the Western US
- Demographics of rural America: aging populations, outmigration of youth, amenity migrants, rural poverty
- Ethnic and cultural diversity in rural America: the Nez Perce Homeland Project, Maxville Heritage Project

- Contemporary conservation issues: wolves, cattle, and ranchers; public forest health, salmon
- The role of community non-profit organizations in community well-being: Wallowa Resources
- Evolving food systems: organic farming, farmers' markets, grass-fed beef
- Rural development innovations and challenges: mini hydro, bioenergy, solar and wind power, ecotourism

This module may include the following activities:

- Field trips focused on:
 - Prairie restoration at the Nature Conservancy's Zumwalt Prairie
 - Community development with Wallowa Resources
 - African American history: The Maxville Heritage Project
 - Local innovative entrepreneurs in food systems
 - The Nez Perce Homeland Project
 - Rural politics and services with Wallow County Commissioners
 - Public forest management on the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest
 - The science and sociology of Wolf reintroduction
 - Community-scale bioenergy
- Team research projects, including secondary data collection and analysis, key informant interviews, and participant observation
- Synthesis of course themes through journaling, development of a course website and blog
- Service learning project with either the Maxville Heritage Project or the Nez Perce Homeland Project
- Multiple recreational opportunities, including hiking, swimming, trail running, and horseback riding
- Several structured pauses for reflection, discussion, synthesis, and writing
- A community dinner at which students will present insights from their Wallowa experience

Student Assignments:

- Research projects undertaken during this module will be conducted by teams comprised of 2 AIU and 2 OSU students. Teams will work together under faculty guidance to develop research questions and methods.
- Teams will identify data requirements, key informants, and other research needs, and will co-produce materials to be hosted on the course website. These may include written reports, videos, links to existing sites, photographs, and other materials as appropriate.
- Individual students will also complete short writing assignments, participate in class discussions, and complete a mid-term essay exam.

At the end of this module we will pause for one or more days to reflect on what we've learned, synthesizing and documenting our experience through writing,

presenting, and developing the course website. This may occur in either Wallowa County or back on the OSU Corvallis campus.

Finally, we will afford students some days to prepare for travel to Japan and the next module of the course. Modules 3 and 4 will be conducted during the period July 18 – August 7.

Module 3: Rural Japan Case Study

Module 3 will take place in rural Akita Prefecture, Japan. We will be exploring the concepts of resilience in Akata village, a community of Yurihonjo city. Students will engage in reading, discussion, and writing on contemporary rural community dynamics, resilience theory, globalization, and cross-cultural studies. This module will take place over approximately one week.

Topics covered will include:

- Introduction to Akita session: learning objectives, course logistics
- Theoretical foundation: family structure, rural communities, global and national policy, resilience theory
- Introduction to rural Japan, Akita: history, culture, religion, demography, economy, agriculture, forestry (Iriairin commons), sixth industry, NPO
- Team building exercises, social activities
- Course project, Website development

This module will include the following activities:

- Lectures on course topics by course faculty and guest speakers
- Student – led discussion of assigned readings
- Three days field trips to rural communities in Akita: Tenjin, Arawa, Kayagasawa, Mt. Takao
- Five days field research in Akata: interview, questionnaire survey, hiking common forest, farming experience, one night home stay, social gathering
- On the job training in Akata: harvesting and cooking edible wild plants and vegetables, helping farmer's store

Student assignments:

- Serve as discussion leader or discussant for at least one assigned reading
- Write 250 word abstract for each reading
- Work with research team to develop research project focus
- One or more pop quizzes or writing assignments relevant to course themes

Module 4: Synthesis

Module 4 will occur on the Akita University campus, and involve synthesis across the two countries studied, critical examination of lessons learned, and assessment of student learning. Team projects will be completed and presented.

Examples of issues and topics in Akita to be explored within the resilience framework include:

- Contemporary life in a remote, rural community in Tohoku region, the North-Eastern Parts of Japan
- Demographics of rural Japan: aging populations, outmigration of youth, amenity migrants (A-turn), seniors living alone, rural poverty
- Ethnic and cultural diversity in rural Japan: Emishi people, intangible cultural properties (ex. Namahage), cultural tourism and local tour guide
- Contemporary conservation issues: Iriai community forest, abandoned farms, and group farming
- The role of community outsiders in community well-being: Akita Green Tourism Promoting Association (NPO), Keihoku supermarket (private sector in urban)
- Rural development innovations and challenges: sixth industry (farmer's market, ecotourism), bioenergy

This module may include the following activities:

- Field trips focused on:
 - Mt. Takao
 - Rural Akita history
 - Rural politics and activities with Neighborhoods Association
 - Iriairin Common forest management in rural Japan
 - Introduction of the Sixth industry to farmers
 - Bioenergy (wood pellet industry, community currency)
- Team research projects, including secondary data collection and analysis, key informant interviews, and participant observation
- Synthesis of course themes through journaling, development of a course website
- Service learning project with Akata neighborhoods association, common forest association, farmer's market association
- Multiple recreational opportunities, such as fireworks festival, hot spring
- Several structured pauses for reflection, discussion, synthesis, and writing
- Home stay, community dinner, and tea party at which students will present insights from their Akata experience

Student Assignments:

- Research projects undertaken during this module will be conducted by teams comprised of 2 AIU and 2 OSU students. Teams will work together under faculty guidance to develop research questions and methods.
- Teams will identify data requirements, key informants, and other research needs, and will co-produce materials to be hosted on the course website. These may include written reports, videos, links to existing sites, photographs, and other materials as appropriate.
- Individual students will also complete short writing assignments, participate in class discussions, and complete a mid-term essay exam.

