

University of Guelph: Department of Geography  
**GEOGRAPHY 4390: Seminar in Rural Geography**

Faculty:	John Smithers	E-mail: <a href="mailto:jsmither@uoguelph.ca">jsmither@uoguelph.ca</a>
Office:	Hutt Bldg. Rm. 118A	Phone: Ext. 56722
Prerequisite:	Geog 2260; 3320 or equivalent	Tues & Th. 10:00–11:20 rm 233 MacK

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Once well understood in both its composition and purpose, rural space is now highly contested in many regions. This course examines the causes and main forms of social, economic and institutional change in rural Canada and in the rural parts of other developed market economies. A primary goal of the course is to expose students to a variety of issues and approaches (both theoretical and methodological) in contemporary rural geography. While the processes and outcomes of contemporary rural change are explored through a variety of defined contexts and issues, two concepts serve as cross-cutting themes in the course: *change and sustainability*. Particular attention is given to the nature of competing demands on rural resources, to the links between social, economic and political change, and to the implications of change for the sustainability of rural communities.

### **Learning Objectives:**

By the end of this course it is hoped that students will have gained:

- i) An appreciation of range of current issues and challenges in promoting and sustaining viable rural systems in Canada and elsewhere.
- ii) familiarity with a range of research themes, theoretical perspectives and research methods reflected in contemporary rural geography
- iii) skills in critical thinking, original research and the written and oral presentation of ideas.

### **Approach:**

The course integrates lectures, discussion, mini-presentations and student seminars as the main means of sharing information and ideas. As this is a senior level course with “manageable numbers” I will be encouraging an informal and interactive method of operating – obviously this works best when students are active rather than passive participants i.e. you have to talk!!!

### **Text Book and Assigned Readings:**

The main text for this course is: Rural Geography, Woods, M. (2005). I will assign other readings from texts, journals, media sources and government docs and these will be made available on the D2L page. In a 4000-level course reading is critical to our ability to engage with the type of material I want us to cover and to having the type of classroom environment that befits a contemporary (rural) issues course.

In addition, I will assign a selection of papers for students to critique (probably in pairs) over the course of the semester – these are not graded per se, but are part of the normal expectation for participation and discussion in a seminar style course

### **Course Content:**

The course content is organized into three broad components. In the first part of the course I will take more of a leadership role as we map out some of the broad dimensions of rural change including some theoretical perspectives on change and sustainability as they are reflected in the literature. In the second and third parts we will explore various issues of a more applied nature as these represent the reality and local complexity of contemporary rural change. This will allow us to span a variety of themes relating to rural land use, settlement, economic change and other issues – always with a view to thinking about whether (and how) prospects for sustainability are challenged or enhanced.

### Part A: Concepts and Theory

- The Dimensions of Rural Change: *what is “rural”? Who is rural? Why and how are rural areas changing? What are the competing and changing demands on rural spaces and places; Commodifying and consuming rural spaces and places!*
- Economic Perspectives on Change and Rural Development: *the changing role of the countryside; from landscapes of production to landscapes of consumption. The meaning and role of “regulation: the emergence of a “new rural economy”? Differentiated Rural Space(s).*
- Demographic Change and Social Constructions of the Rural *social perspectives on rural spaces and places; conceptualizing rural communities; incorporating people and places in research design – learning through lived experiences; coping with change.*

### Towards a Geog 4390 working model of Rural Change and Sustainability (group exercise)

### Part B: Issues and Unfolding Experiences

- **Agricultural Restructuring: from big yields to new fields:**
  - i) Sketching the farm and food mainstream – a productivist agriculture: *structural features and good (and not so good) outcomes of the dominant model. Questioning the mainstream?*
  - ii) Mapping alternative trajectories of agricultural development in the countryside; *the changing regulatory environment for food production; farm adjustment to rapid and long term change in society and economy. A post-productivist agriculture?*
- **Relocalizing agriculture and the food chain – exploring the alternatives to subsumption:**
  - i) *Unpacking short supply chains and local food systems.* ii) *Understanding the confusion in organics (?) AND (re)visioning rural areas through food.*
- **Food (and Drink!) as Farm and Place – the re-making of rural spaces:** *interpreting colliding or complementary pathways of farm and community change – profiles of consumption and volunteerism; Community through Food – explorations of local food systems as tools for building community and (re)defining and “branding” regions.*
- **Conserving the Countryside: Agri-Environmental Policy and Management Strategies at the Community-Level:**
  - i) *Approaches for Modifying Farm Management Behaviours; New Innovations in Agri-Environmental Management Systems; Agricultural Goods and Services frameworks.*
  - ii) *Rural Land Use Planning and Farmland Preservation: Preserving “Important” Farmland.*

### Part C: Seminars in Rural Geography

- **Student Research Seminars (wks 10 & 11)** – topics to be negotiated/announced.

**Emerging Rural Geographies: Remaking Rural Space and Place (JS: wrap-up Nov 24)**

### Method of Evaluation

Mid Term Test	(30%)	October 25 – in class
Group Research Seminars	(25%)	Weeks of Nov 14; Nov 21
Research Paper	(35%)	Due November 24 (in class)
Participation	(10%)	

Late submissions will be penalized at the rate of 10% of the earned grade per day.

## From the academic calendar:

### **E-mail Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

### **When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

### **Drop Date**

The last date to drop one-semester courses, without academic penalty, is Thursday, November 3, 2011. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

### **Copies of out-of-class assignments**

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

### **Accessibility**

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible.

For more information, contact CSD at [519-824-4120](tel:519-824-4120) ext. 56208 or email [csd@uoguelph.ca](mailto:csd@uoguelph.ca) or see the website: <http://www.csd.uoguelph.ca/csd/>

### **Academic Misconduct**

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

### **Recording of Materials**

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

### **Resources**

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/index.cfm?index>