



RURAL SOCIOLOGY M.S. AND PH.D. PROGRAMS AT PENN STATE

WHY JOIN PENN STATE'S RURAL SOCIOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM?

We are a vibrant, dynamic program that develops and disseminates research on rural people and places both domestically and internationally. Our program faculty have core strength in the discipline of sociology and a commitment to conducting interdisciplinary research and practice with colleagues in the social, natural, and biophysical sciences. It is this combination of both disciplinary and interdisciplinary training that we uniquely offer to graduate students.

OUR SIGNATURE THEMES

- **Agriculture and food systems:** In this theme, students examine social organization and change in agriculture and food systems in the United States and internationally. Our focus ranges from individual farmers and local farming communities to global institutions that intersect with agriculture and food systems.
- **Community and international development:** Students learn to generate a new understanding of the social and economic well-being of people and their communities in rural and urban areas of the United States and abroad, especially as this well-being is affected by development policy and regional context.
- **Natural resources and environment:** Students can explore the intersection of people, communities, and natural resources and how these relationships come together to address the social issues related to sustainability. This theme focuses on land, forests, water, soils, wildlife, and energy, and the decisions societies make regarding their use.
- **Rural social demography:** Students develop and extend knowledge of population-related processes such as family formation, transitions to adulthood, migration and immigration, poverty and inequality, and socioeconomic status attainment that contribute to change in both rural and urban areas of the United States and the world.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING

Graduate students may enroll in one of four Penn State dual-degree programs. Students may receive M.S. and/or Ph.D. degrees in Rural Sociology and any one of the following:

- Demography (ranked in the top five nationally)
- Human Dimensions of Natural Resources and the Environment
- International Agriculture and Development
- Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

OUR SUCCESSFUL ALUMNI

Our M.S. and Ph.D. graduates move on to success in both academic and applied research positions.

- **Academic Positions:** Tenure-track, research, and teaching faculty at a range of educational institutions, including large research universities (e.g., Cornell, LSU, NC State), mid-sized and regional universities (SUNY-Albany, Ball State), and liberal arts colleges (Ohio Univ., Ursinus).
- **Research positions:** Alumni now work in federal and state government (e.g., Census Bureau, USDA, state agencies) and international organizations (e.g., The World Bank, AfricaRice).

OUR DYNAMIC FACULTY

We conduct both U.S. based and international research on a wide range of issues of importance to rural people and places. Our research has both basic and applied, policy-relevant outcomes.

- Our faculty: Kathryn Brasier (PhD, Wisconsin); Guangqing Chi (PhD, Wisconsin); Rob Chiles (PhD, Wisconsin); Leland Glenna (PhD, Missouri); Clare Hinrichs (PhD, Cornell); Leif Jensen (PhD, Wisconsin); Laszlo Kulcsar (PhD, Cornell); Kathy Sexsmith (PhD, Cornell); Brian Thiede (PhD, Cornell); Ann Tickamyer (PhD, North Carolina)
- Recent research topics: energy development; gender and agriculture; climate change and land use; food systems, food ethics, and sustainable agriculture; science and technology in policy making; employment, poverty, and social stratification; international development; health and health disparities; population and environmental change and natural disasters, and much more.
- We have success in acquiring research support public and private sources (e.g., NSF, NIH, USDA, NASA, DOT, Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources, Center for Rural Pennsylvania, McKnight, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation).

OUR CURRICULUM AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

- We provide rigorous training in both quantitative and qualitative research methods as well as substantive coursework in our signature theme topics.
- We support students as active professionals, providing professional development throughout graduate school. Students co-author peer-reviewed journal articles with faculty; present research at regional, national, and international conferences; develop grant-writing skills; and become leaders in professional associations.

ACTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE STUDENT CULTURE

The Rural Sociology Graduate Association (<https://sites.psu.edu/rsga/>) is a dynamic voice for students, and conducts the Annual Rural Studies Conference, attracting students across Penn State and beyond.

APPLICATION AND ADMISSIONS INFORMATION

- A background in sociology is not required. Students come to our program with a variety of degrees (e.g., environmental studies, economics, international development). Our program is enriched by this diversity. Students with little social science training might consider supplemental coursework prior to enrolling.
- The graduate admissions committee reviews applications holistically: assessing the student's potential for success by examining academic qualifications, previous work experiences, desire and preparation for conducting research, and alignment with our signature themes.
- Admission to the Rural Sociology Graduate Program at Penn State is competitive. In a typical year, we enroll 6-8 graduate students with funding. International and domestic applicants are considered for funding support.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

- Rural Sociology Graduate Program: <http://aese.psu.edu/graduateprograms/rural-sociology>
- Admissions procedures: <http://aese.psu.edu/graduateprograms/rural-sociology/apply>. Applications received by Dec. 15th will be considered for admission and funding for the following fall semester.
- International students must meet Penn State's requirements for English language proficiency <http://gradschool.psu.edu/prospective-students/how-to-apply/new-applicants/requirements-for-graduate-admission/>
- Applicants to the PhD program must have completed a research-based master's degree (with thesis).
- Recent Thesis/Dissertation Titles: <http://aese.psu.edu/graduateprograms/rural-sociology/thesis-titles>

Questions and inquiries, please contact: Dr. Kathryn Brasier, Director of Graduate Studies, kbrasier@psu.edu, 814-865-7321