

SOC360 Studies in Rural Society

3rd and 4th quarters, Junior

Instructor	ITO ISAMU
Style of Class	Lecture
Number of Credits	2
Day and Period	To be advised

Course Description

In this course, students will acquire basic viewpoints related to, as well as a recognition of, rural communities by studying sociological research on rural communities in modern Japan. In the first half of the course, students will study basic perspectives and representative research findings regarding rural community research in the field of sociology, starting with the fundamental concepts of “*ie*” (Japanese traditional household) and “*mura*” (Japanese traditional village). In the second half of the course, students will learn about the changes and transformations of rural communities from the post-war reform period to the period of rapid economic growth, the period of slow growth and production adjustment, and through to the period of globalism, and also look at contemporary challenges faced by modern rural communities.

Course Objectives

- To gain an understanding of the basic concepts and standpoints related to rural communities.
- To gain a basic understanding of processes of change observed in modern rural communities.
- To gain a basic understanding of sociological research regarding problems in the agricultural sector and rural communities in modern Japan.

Prerequisites

- Introduction to Global and Community Studies
- Introduction to Contemporary Rural Sociology
- Introduction to Sociology
- Theory of Local Economy
- Theory of Urban Communities

Class Materials

Textbook:

Torigoe Hiroyuki, *Ie to mura no shakaigaku (zohoban)* (Sociology of Households and Villages (Expanded Edition)), Sekaishiso Seminar.

Reference literature:

Hasumi Otohiko *Kuno suru noson* (Suffering Rural Areas), Yushindo.

Masugata Toshiko, et al. *Shoku to no no shakaigaku* (Sociology of Food and Agriculture), Minerva Shobo.

Other works

Course Method

Although the course will be conducted in a lecture format, students will be asked to submit short opinion essays each class in an effort to avoid one-way communication.

Evaluation/Assessment

Evaluation will be based on three types of submitted work: (1) short opinion essays submitted each class, (2) midterm report, and (3) final report.

Grading

Study attitude (1)	20%
Midterm report (2)	30%
Final report (3)	50%

Course Schedule

Week 1: Orientation and introduction

Explanation of course outline, how Classes are conducted, and evaluation methods.

Introduction: Basic viewpoints in rural sociology, persistence and change in Japanese rural society.

Section 1: Traditional households and villages in rural areas

Week 2: *Ie* theory (1)

Two types of *ie*, Japanese *ie*-related concepts (*kazoku*, *setai*), *ie* and its members

Week 3: *Ie* theory (2)

Views of ancestral spirits among the Japanese, rituals to worship family ancestors, and quest for *ie* perpetuity

Week 4: *Ie* theory (3)

Alliances among households, various folk words, two kinship structures (“*dōzoku*” and “*shinseki*”)

Week 5: Village mechanisms (1)

Administrative villages and natural villages, dual nature of villages, village structures and official posts, village finances

Week 6: Village mechanisms (2)

Village perimeters, private and common land ownership, persistence and changes in land awareness

Week 7: Village mechanisms (3)

Village cooperation, organization and operation; changes in cooperation and relationships inside village settlements

Week 8: Organizations supporting village life (1)

Social groups (*ko* and *kumi*), present state of social groups

Week 9: Organizations supporting village life (2)

Constructive family relationships (social parent-child relationships), seniority system, present state of village settlement types

Section 2: Changes in post-war Japanese rural areas

Week 10: Perspectives on change in rural areas

View that regards the present as the outcome of a series of historical changes, impact of temporary economic climate and agricultural policy, four turning points

Week 11: Agricultural sector and rural area reforms in the post-war reform period

Continuation and departure from pre-war rural areas, background to and consequences of farmland reforms, growth in land-owning farmers and shift to small enterprises, major transformation in structure of rural areas

Week 12: Changes in agriculture and rural area during the period of rapid economic growth

Economic growth policy and Agricultural Basic Act, three policies of the Basic Act, objectives of agricultural policy in Basic Act and consequences, new changes for farmers and rural areas, start of depopulation

Week 13: Predicaments for the agricultural sector and rural areas in the period of low-growth and production adjustments

Agricultural policy in the post-growth period, start of reduction in acreage under cultivation and expansion, concurrent rise of mechanization and engagement in second businesses, changing face of households and villages (multiple family members working to support family income, husband-wife alliances across multiple generations, decline of “*dōzoku*” unions and village-wide initiatives, etc.)

Week 14: Agricultural sector and rural area problems in the age of globalization (1)

Transformation of agricultural policy in the 1990s and globalization, New Agricultural Basic Act and agricultural negotiations with WTO, multifunctionality theory and initiatives in environment-friendly agriculture, new cooperative initiatives among farmers

Week 15: Agricultural sector and rural area problems in the age of globalization (2)

Rise of new rural area problems, new trends in urban-rural area relations with regard to food and agriculture, persistence and changes in households and villages, toward a future profile of rural communities, explanation of final report assignment

Preparation and Follow-up

- Preparation: Review relevant chapters in the textbook and reference literature (approx.1 hour).
- Follow-up: Revise class content, and identify points requiring clarification (approx. 1 hour).