Course Description

LIS research and public library service tend to favour urban contexts. Considerably less attention is paid to library service for our rural populations who already disproportionately face extreme challenges including poverty, isolation, and poor access to education, healthcare and infrastructure services. This course explores the demand and potential for public library service and research to understand and respond to the unique information challenges and opportunities faced by rural populations across our country’s landscape from coast to coast to coast.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify, define, and describe the scope of challenges faced by remote and rural populations, as well as current and ideal information service in these contexts.
2. Compare interdisciplinary perspectives on remote and rural lived experiences in the context of information seeking and use.
3. Recognize, respond to and respect remote and rural information seeking and use, cultural practices and alternate ways of knowing.
4. Advocate for and inform public library policy-making through the creation of professional documents and presentations.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of readings, assignments, and class participation, students will:

- Engage critically with issues and practices in LIS and related fields through diverse approaches to independent ongoing learning.
● Explain, analyse and interpret professional and scholarly literature, research data and information resources to articulate their implications for LIS and related fields of knowledge and practice.
● Exercise and enact the values and principles of the field and its specialisations with an awareness of overarching social responsibility associated with progressive public service for the public good.
● Relate the practices and roles of individual librarians and information professionals to broader organizational, professional, political, economic, social and technological contexts.

CONTENT

1. What is rural? Non-urban ways of life, information seeking and use
2. Public library service in the context of rural and remote
3. Challenges and solutions
   1. Systemic constraints (isolation, funding models, resources, policy)
   2. Social constraints (out-migration, education, healthcare, (un)employment)
   3. Infrastructure constraints (buildings, telecommunications, transportation)
4. Opportunities
   1. Community engagement and resilience
   2. Cultural & Traditional knowledge stewardship
   3. Partnerships
   4. Policy interventions
5. The library as a source of “Cultural Continuity” in the community
   1. Programming
   2. Collections
   3. Impacts and outcomes

Methods

Lectures, readings, discussions, presentations, optional group/team work

Course Relationships

No pre/co requisites. Ideally, it is recommended that students have completed most of the MLIS required courses.

This course complements ideas introduced to students in LIS 503 Reference and Information Services, and LIS 598 Human Information Interaction. It also departs from established MLIS courses that tend to cover documentary information sources and formal information settings, through exploration of informal information seeking behaviour and intangible information sources. Finally, it explores the topic from multi-disciplinary perspectives including studies of geography and “place”,

policy, education, healthcare, technology, rural and island studies, indigenous studies, and arts and culture.

**Required Texts**

No required texts. All readings will be available through the University of Alberta Library system or provided by the instructor.

**Sample readings**


**Assignments and Weighting**

Community study 25%

Policy Brief 20%

Presentation 25%

Essay 20%

Professionalism/Participation 10%

**School of Library and Information Studies Grading Statement:**

Grades reflect professional judgements of student achievement made by instructors. These judgements are based on a combination of absolute achievement and relative performance in class. The instructor should mark in terms of raw scores, rank the assignments in order of merit, and with due attention to the verbal descriptions of the various grades, assign an appropriate final letter grade.
**Academic Integrity:**

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online athttp://www.governance.ualberta.ca/) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the university.

Students should also be mindful of the [SLIS Copyright Policy](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/).

**Inclusive Language and Equity:**

The Faculty of Education is committed to providing an environment of respect for all people within the university community and to educating faculty, staff, and students in developing teaching and learning contexts that are welcoming to all. The Faculty recommends that students and staff use inclusive language to create a classroom atmosphere in which students' experiences and views are treated with equal respect and value in relation to their gender, racial background, sexual orientation and ethnic background. Students who require accommodations in this course due to a disability affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, or mental or physical health are advised to discuss their needs with [Student Accessibility Services](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/).

**Recording of Lectures:**

Recording of lectures is permitted only with the prior written consent of the professor or if recording is part of an approved accommodation plan.