This course focuses on a key paradox of modern economic development: Why is it that, despite the importance of natural capital for sustainable economic development, increasing economic dependence on natural resource exploitation appears to be a hindrance to growth and development in today’s low and middle-income economies? To explore this paradox, the course focuses on the role of natural resources in economic development, covering both macro-economic and micro-economic aspects of this relationship. It is designed as a senior seminar course and aims to give students a sense of current theories, debates, historical perspectives and methodologies concerning natural resources and economic development, while also allowing students to develop and utilize their skills in economics to analyze a relevant topic of their choice. The course is divided between lectures and readings, and a group project. Students will work together in groups to survey and analyze various central considerations in the economics of natural resources and development. The course will culminate in a poster session in which students share with each other the findings of their research.

Instructor: Dr. Edward Barbier
Prerequisites: Senior status, ECON 304, 306 and 335 (or concurrent registration)
Section 1, CRN: 67434: 1:00-2:15PM TR, MICRO A101
However you look at it, the prospect of human-caused climate change presents an enormous policy challenge that has been the subject of intense international debate for almost 30 years. While uncertainty persists regarding many features of the problem, the possibility of dire consequences cannot be ruled out. Meanwhile, despite numerous efforts to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases, global emissions continue to increase at a rate of several percent per year. The field of economics provides powerful conceptual and empirical tools for understanding the key policy obstacles and for devising a response that addresses these obstacles in a realistic way. In this class, students will work together in groups to survey and analyze various central considerations in the economics of climate change. The course will culminate in a poster-sharing session in which students share with each other the findings of their research.

Instructor: Prof. Terry Iverson
Prerequisites: Senior status, ECON 304, 306 and 335 (or concurrent registration)
Section 2, CRN 61936: 2:00-2:50PM MWF, EDDY 100
Section 5, CRN 64228: 11:00-11:50AM MWF, CLARK C251
ECON 492 – Senior Seminar, Section 6

Fall 2021 – Creating Bridges Across Colorado’s Rural/Urban Divide

Economics can be useful. Yet in the crunch to understand t-statistics, elasticities, and exchange rates, this fact can often get lost. The final course in the economics program is therefore designed to apply your economics toolbox to the challenges and opportunities facing both Colorado and the rest of the nation. Colorado’s economy has long been among the most dynamic in the country, due in large part to the state’s mix of highly productive and amenity-rich rural areas and innovative, attractive urban corridor. But Colorado, like much of the country, is experiencing uneven growth. Rapid urban growth is a key driver of the state’s economic expansion, as the Front Range in particular benefits from strong inflows of educated, creative workers. But this same growth has put upwards pressure on housing prices, and has led to infrastructure congestion, created a more skill-intensive labor market, and shifted the state’s cultural and demographic makeup.

Colorado’s rural areas also face a mix of opportunities and challenges. The state’s agricultural sector is among the most productive in the country, and is also highly diverse, comprising not only crop and livestock production but also substantial employment in marketing, wholesale, and innovative research in crop and animal sciences. Beyond agriculture, many of Colorado’s rural areas benefit from natural resource amenities. The state’s rural areas are also highly entrepreneurial, with self-employment rates substantially higher than the Front Range – and a third greater than rural areas nationwide. Yet many rural Colorado counties, especially those heavily concentrated in agriculture and natural resource extraction, have experienced declining incomes and net out-migration.

Colorado is uniquely placed to be a national leader in addressing the now widely-recognized gaps between rural and urban areas, and your work will play a critical role in building these bridges. Team research projects will be the focus of the semester, through which you will produce both a final paper and PowerPoint presentation discussing the research. The general goal is to learn first-hand of the real-world use of economics by actively becoming a part of an ongoing applied research effort to best leverage the statewide opportunities for bridging rural areas to the economic powerhouse that the Front Range has become. In that sense, the course combines both learning for you and service to the state. Such service-learning experiences can be unusually beneficial for both sides. Effectively, you are about to become a set of economic consultants for the state, a role which fits you well, given the land-grant status of Colorado State University and the fact that you’ve spent at least the last few years in the state itself. In that sense, finishing your economics degree with an in-depth economic understanding of the state will hopefully provide a compelling capstone experience.

Instructor: Prof. Stephan Weiler
Prerequisites: Senior status, ECON 304, 306 and 335 (or concurrent registration)
Section 6, CRN 65364: 2:00-3:15PM TR, Clark A203