Urban Sociology

Especially in the United States, urban sociology has been at the heart of the sociological enterprise, helping to generate important methodological approaches, and theoretical and substantive concerns. While the urban environment has changed in significant ways since the early Chicago School studies helped to define this subfield, urbanism remains a key feature of social life. According to the United Nations, 54% of the world's population now lives in urban areas, while 81% of Americans live in cities with a population over 2500. Taking our cue from Louis Wirth, who defined the city "as a relatively large, dense, and permanent settlement of socially heterogenous individuals" and urbanism as "that complex of traits which makes up the characteristic mode of life in cities," this course introduces graduate students to the field of urban sociology, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between cities and diversity, and the cultural dimensions of urban life. Readings will include classic and contemporary theoretical frameworks for understanding urban life as well as empirical studies. Among the themes we will discuss are the nature of community, the regulation of urban space, and those dimensions of the built environment that shape social interaction and social inequality. We will also consider historical and social processes that affect how cities provide housing, employment, commercial services, and leisure opportunities for their residents and visitors. We will conclude the course by focusing on the extent to which rural areas are now affected by urbanism and the nature of those differences that continue to divide the urban from the rural.

Learning Goals

Students who complete this course will:

1. Gain familiarity with key sociological perspectives on urbanism.
2. Explore relationships between social processes, culture, and the physical design of human settlements.
3. Assess how urban problems are defined and addressed.
4. Analyze and communicate, in writing and orally, debates in urban sociology.
5. Synthesize research on a related topic in order to develop one's own sociological argument.

Requirements

Students are expected to:
(1) Keep up with the readings and actively participate in seminar discussions.
(2) Lead seminar discussions on two occasions (either individually or in groups, depending on course enrollment). This does not mean lecturing to the class, but it should include presenting the class with a written outline of topics you think should be covered in that day's discussion, and being prepared with appropriate questions to guide the class through those topics.
(3) Complete a final paper of 20-30 pages on a topic related to issues raised in the class. Your paper can be either based on empirical research or a theoretical review of the literature; I just ask that you
first clear the topic with me.

Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, preparation for discussion, etc.).

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, you should contact me, and present your letter of accommodation, as soon as possible.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion leading</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>70%</td>
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Students are expected to uphold standards of academic integrity. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement of that source.

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:


These books are also on reserve at the library.

Additional readings for Weeks 1-4 are on the Latte site for this class.

Remaining readings are contained in a custom course packet. Information on how to purchase this will be announced in class.

Unless otherwise specified, the entire book is to be read. When a book is especially long, I have
suggestions for sections that can be skimmed.

Course Schedule

week 1
Aug 30

Introduction

no assignment

week 2
Sep 6

Theoretical Statements on the City and Urbanism


week 3
Sep 13

Creating a Social Order


week 4
Sep 20

The Political Economy of Urban Development


John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. 
Deindustrialization and Economic Restructuring


Immigration


no class October 11 -- Brandeis Thursday

**week 7**

Oct 18

**Race and Segregation**


**week 8**

Oct 25

**Neighborhood Effects**


**week 9**

Nov 1

**Gentrification**


**week 10**

Nov 8

**Housing and Homelessness**


**week 11**

Nov 15

**Public Space and Interaction among Strangers**

no class November 22 -- Thanksgiving

week 12  Nov 29  Cultural Creation and the Cultural Economy


week 13  Dec 6  Small Towns: Left Behind or Islands of Community

ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THOSE WHO WANT MORE

Creating a Social Order


The Political Economy of Urban Development


Deindustrialization and Economic Restructuring


Immigration


Race and Segregation


**Neighborhood Effects**


**Gentrification**


**Housing and Homelessness**


Public Space and Interaction among Strangers


Cultural Creation and the Cultural Economy


Small Towns: Left Behind or Islands of Community


AND SOME ADDITIONAL TOPICS

Concentration of Poverty


**Commerce**


**Suburbia**


