

Urban Society • Space and Power in the City

SOC 330 • Spring 2022 • Tu/Th 2:00-3:15 • Graham 402

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Office hours W 12-2 via Zoom (<https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xpakt>)

“To consider the city as the projection of society on space is both
an indispensable starting point and too elementary an approach.”

–Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question* (1977)



Sociologists often abuse the concept of “the urban” when they talk about urban sociology. If you take a look at some of the most widely cited works in the subfield, you’ll notice that most of them are either about poverty, or else they’re about race. This isn’t to suggest that we can’t think about class and race in the city – that’s precisely what we’ll do in this class – but it does beg the question: what is *urban* about urban sociology? Why do sociologists who write about various forms of inequality often discuss these as “urban” issues?

In this class, we will be exploring what is distinctly “urban” about urban sociology. In particular, we will focus on how certain spatial arrangements appear to produce, or at least correlate with, certain forms of power. In other words, there is something about cities – the way they’re planned, the character of everyday interactions, the way they’re governed, how resistance emerges – that relates to social inequalities. In this class we’ll try to pin down what exactly that is.

We’ll begin with a classic reading from the sociologist Manuel Castells, who asks to consider what makes urban sociology “urban.” Just because something occurs in a city, does that make it a necessarily *urban* phenomenon? If I drink a glass of water in a city, am I engaging in an urban practice? Of course not. So how do we distinguish between phenomena *in* the city, as opposed to those that Castells calls *of* the city?

Once we clarify the concept of “the urban,” we’ll move on to review the origins of American urban sociology. The typical narrative goes something like this: Robert Park and his collaborators developed the subfield at the University of Chicago in the 1920s. Their students would go on to develop urban ethnography as we know it today. But as I hope to convince you, W.E.B. Du Bois was doing very comparable work (but in a far more rigorous fashion) more than a quarter century earlier. Why doesn’t he get credit? Similarly, Jane Addams was doing this kind of work decades earlier. Why doesn’t she get credit? I think we all know the answer.

We’ll review the work of Du Bois and discuss Addams’ research in relation to the emergence of the Chicago School in the 1920s, talking about all of them in the context of what came to be called “urban ecology,” the dominant theoretical paradigm for decades. We’ll then turn to a few critiques of the ecological approach, looking at how its proponents are incapable of accounting for power in the city.

From there, we’ll turn to our first topical unit: racial segregation in the US. We’ll explore the origins and persistence of segregation in zoning and then read a classic history of the creation of ghettos in our country. Then we’ll look at the rise and fall of public housing. Think about the high-rise projects you see on shows like *The Wire*: they’ve long been demolished. Indeed, this is the fate of high-rise projects around the country. Why? How did public housing augment urban inequality? If this is the case, why did its demolition only worsen racial segregation in most cities?

Then we’ll turn to another iteration of power in the American city. We’ll explore the concept of gentrification, asking what it is, where it came from, and how it’s reproduced on a regular basis. We will be reading a number of authors with conflicting explanations of gentrification, and we’ll try to make sense of the state of the debate. Very much related to gentrification is the concept of eviction. We’ll read a couple of recent accounts, some descriptive, and others that try to explain the role of the state and capital in the process.

For whatever reason, urban sociologists often stop here. But I’ll do no such thing. Cities don’t only exist in Europe. The *majority* of the world’s population now lives in the cities! For that reason, we’ll round out the class by looking at urban questions in other parts of the world, with a special focus on

Asia, Africa, and Latin America. We'll begin this unit by figuring out whether gentrification applies to cities elsewhere. We'll then read some recent writing on processes like gentrification taking place in what some authors will call "slums." Others will reject this label as dehumanizing, often instead writing about "informal settlements." We'll explore where they come from, why they emerge, and how governments tend to order their demolition.

We'll end the course by asking how residents tend to resist displacement. Sometimes, as we'll see, political action has unintended consequences, and residents may worsen their situations; in other cases, they successfully challenge officials ordering their eviction. Why do some residents win the right to stay put but others do not? That's exactly what we'll be discussing as the class wraps up. But first, the concept of "the urban"...

A note on reading. Reading is a central component of this class. As such, it is imperative that you complete your biweekly assignments. Because you are likely unfamiliar with most of the material we will be covering, this reading can be daunting. It is *very* important that you make time for it. With a couple of exceptions, these are not texts that you can simply skim. I repeat: this is a reading-intensive course. If you don't plan to do the readings, this is *not* the class for you.

With that said, you do not need to buy a single book for this class. I will make every reading available on Canvas free of charge. (You may decide to purchase some of the books if you want more, however. I'm happy to help you strategize in case you're wondering what to buy.)

However, just because the texts are available online doesn't mean that you should skim them on your phone. You need to give them the same attention you would if you were actually holding a book. For me, this means printing it out, underlining important sections, and writing notes in the margins. Annotating your texts is absolutely crucial. If you want to do this on your computer or tablet instead, fine. But please do learn to mark up the text. It's central to learning how to read in an academic context, which is very different from reading for pleasure. Of course, many of these readings are immensely pleasurable. But you should also be able to extract their central arguments, and this means marking them up.

Requirements for the class are the following:

1. **Participation (20 %):** While this may be a lecture class, but you'll quickly learn that my style is fairly Socratic. I don't want to hear the same half dozen people in every meeting. *If you're shy or reluctant to speak for other reasons, please come see me in office hours. I'm happy to make accommodations as needed.*

In addition to coming to class and actually participating, you are required to submit two items via Canvas before *every single class*.

- (1) a discussion question, and
- (2) the most important quote from the reading.

You'll need to do this for every set of readings by noon the day our class meets, i.e. *before* class. While I'll only grade these as Pass/Not Pass, the very fact of doing it doesn't guarantee you a Pass. I want to see deep engagement with the readings. If you're unsure what that means, come see me in office hours. That's what they're there for!

2. **Reading memos (25 %):** You are required to submit four short writing assignments (2 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1" margins) via Canvas:
 - How would you characterize the ecological approach to studying cities? What are its limits? (due February 3)
 - Why are American cities so segregated? (due March 1)
 - Why does displacement persist today? (April 5)
 - What kinds of displacement do informally housed people face in the rest of the world? (April 26)
3. **Midterm (25 %):** There will be an in-class midterm on March 3. *If you require special accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible.* The content of the midterm will not be a surprise and will draw on all course material covered before that date. There will be nothing unexpected, and the entire thing will be short answers. Note that I reward clear, concise writing. If that means writing a longer version of the answer on scrap paper and then editing it down to fit the space allotted, great. Whatever gets you to your goal is a worthy strategy.
4. **Final (30 %):** As with the midterm, this will be in-class. It is scheduled for May 5, from 3:30 to 6:30 in this very room. Again, there won't be any surprises. It will be very similar to the midterm but will focus on material from the latter portion of the class. But unlike the midterm, *it will also be cumulative*. But don't worry; we'll go over this in some detail before it's time to begin studying. If you've done the course readings, attended lectures, participated in discussion, and turned in the writing assignments along the way, you'll be very well prepared.

On plagiarism: If you are currently enrolled for a 300-level course – and you are – then I expect that you know what constitutes plagiarism. If you do not, I urge you to consult the UNCG Office of Rights and Responsibilities website on plagiarism, available at <https://osrr.uncg.edu/academic-integrity/violations-and-sanctions/plagiarism/>. I don't play when it comes to plagiarism. If I catch you plagiarizing on an assignment, it should go without saying that I will fail you on that assignment. If the case is sufficiently egregious, I may decide to fail you for the entire class.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me via email or preferably, in person during office hours. I promise I don't bite. I wish these sorts of unpleasanties did not require addressing, but after more than a decade of teaching, I've realized that they absolutely do. Please do not be that person. It's 2022, and the plagiarism detection software will catch you before I have to even lift a finger.

On attendance: While your grade depends heavily upon you completing all of the assignments, including reading responses posted to Canvas, I will not take attendance, and the fact of missing class will not affect your grade. However, please note that in my experience teaching, students who miss more than three classes invariably struggle to pull off a low C. And almost without exception, those who miss substantially more class time are those who tend to fail. To reiterate: I do not require attendance, but I strongly urge you not to miss class. The fact of missing class won't affect your grade; but missing lecture will absolutely impact your grade.

On laptop use: I'm not one of those professors who complains about students using laptops in class. However, I may choose to ban them from our classroom if I notice students playing around on the Internet during class time. Please don't test me; I really don't like reverting to a parental role. Take me seriously in this class, and I'll do the same. Test me in this class, and I'm fine with doing the same. And no, do not be on your phone. You're adults, and I realize you may occasionally have emergencies. Fine. But if I notice you playing around on your phone on a regular basis, expect me to kick you out of class.

On the lecture format: This is a lecture course. In general, it means I'll be talking quite a bit, though as you'll quickly learn, I also include group work in my repertoire. In addition, I tend to adopt a Socratic approach to lecturing to encourage active learning. This won't be one of those snoozefests where a professor reads slides to you, and you dutifully copy down their every word. Instead, I plan to facilitate discussions in this class. That means I expect you to discuss. And in order to do that, I expect you to come to class prepared. Doing the reading doesn't mean that you skim the assigned text and put a check next to it on the syllabus. It means that you think deeply about the reading and come to class with a number of questions, criticisms, etc.



Without further ado, let's move on to the schedule of readings:

Part I. What is the “urban” in urban sociology?

January 11: Introduction and course overview

January 13: *In the city or of the city?*

Manuel Castells. 1976. “Is There an Urban Sociology?” Pp. 33-59 in *Urban Sociology: Critical Essays*, edited by C. G. Pickvance. London: Routledge.

Part II. Ecological Approaches and Beyond

January 18: An unacknowledged pioneer I

W.E.B. Du Bois. 1995 [1899]. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1-9, 25-45.

January 20: An unacknowledged pioneer II

W.E.B. Du Bois. 1995 [1899]. *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 287-321, 385-97.

January 25: The Chicago School

Ernest Burgess. 1925. "The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project." Pp.46-62 in *The City*, by Robert Park, Ernest Burgess, and Roderick McKenzie. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Louis Wirth. 1996 [1938]. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." Pp. 96-104 in *The City Reader*, 5th edition, edited by Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout. London: Routledge.

Mary Jo Deegan. 1988. *Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892-1918*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 7-13.

January 27: The limits of the Chicago School

Michael Dear. 2002. "Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate." *City and Community* 1(1):5-32.

February 1: Beyond the Chicago School

David Harvey. 2005 [1978]. "The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis." Pp. 100-08 in *The Urban Sociology Reader*, edited by Jan Lin and Christopher Mele. London: Routledge.

John Logan and Harvey Molotch. 2005 [1987]. "The City as Growth Machine." Pp. 109-17 in *The Urban Sociology Reader*, edited by Jan Lin and Christopher Mele. London: Routledge.

Part III. Why are American cities so racially segregated?

February 3: American cities weren't always so segregated; who made them so?

Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. "The Construction of the Ghetto." Pp. 17-59 in *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

February 8: Segregation's over, isn't it?

Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton. 1993. "The Persistence of the Ghetto." Pp. 60-82 in *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

February 10: Ghettoes are made...

Arnold R. Hirsch. 1998 [1983]. "The Second Ghetto and the Dynamics of Neighborhood Change." Pp. 1-39 in *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

February 15: ...but how and why?

Arnold R. Hirsch. 1998 [1983]. "Making the Second Ghetto." Pp. 212-58 in *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

February 17: Public housing: Can't live with it...

Edward G. Goetz. 2013. "The Quiet Successes and Loud Failures of Public Housing." Pp. 24-47 in *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic, Injustice, and Public Housing Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

February 22: ...can't live without it.

Edward G. Goetz. 2013. "Negro Removal' Revisited" and "The Fate of Displaced Persons and Families." Pp. 111-54 in *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic, Injustice, and Public Housing Policy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

February 24: Housing collapse as social collapse

In class screening: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (2011, d. Chad Freidrichs)

March 1: IN-CLASS REVIEW

March 3: MIDTERM

[SPRING BREAK]

Part IV. Why does displacement persist today?

March 15: What is gentrification?

Ruth Glass. 2010. [1964]. "London: Aspects of Change." Pp. 7-8 in *The Gentrification Reader*, edited by Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly. London: Routledge.

John Joe Schlichtman, Jason Patch, and Marc Lamont Hill. 2017. "Invasions." Pp. 87-128 in *Gentrifier*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

March 17: What else is gentrification?

Sharon Zukin. 2010 [1991]. "Gentrification as Market and Place." Pp. 37-44 in *The Gentrification Debates*, edited by Japonica Brown-Saracino. London: Routledge.

Loretta Lees. 2010 [2003]. "Super-gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City." Pp. 45-50 in *The Gentrification Debates*, edited by Japonica Brown-Saracino. London: Routledge.

In-class screening: *My Brooklyn* (2012, d. Kelly Anderson)

March 22: What causes gentrification?

Neil Smith. 2010 [1979]. "Toward a Theory of Gentrification: A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People." Pp. 71-86 in *The Gentrification Debates*, edited by Japonica Brown-Saracino. London: Routledge.

David Ley. 2010 [1996]. "Introduction: Restructuring and Dislocations." Pp.103-12 in *The Gentrification Debates*, edited by Japonica Brown-Saracino. London: Routledge.

March 24: What is eviction?

Matthew Desmond. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown, 1-5, 144-66, 186-203.

March 29: Why are people evicted?

Esther Sullivan. 2017. "Displaced in Place: Manufactured Housing, Mass Eviction, and the Paradox of State Intervention." *American Sociological Review* 82(2):243-69.

March 31: NO CLASS

Part V. Provincializing America, Provincializing Sociology

April 5: Is gentrification a global process?

D. Asher Ghertner. 2015. "Why Gentrification Theory Fails in 'Much of the World.'" *City* 19(4): 552-63.

Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales. 2015. "'Gentrification' – A Global Urban Process?" Pp. 1-18 in *Global Gentrifications: Uneven Development and Displacement*, edited by Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales. Bristol: Policy Press.

April 7: Are slums an age-old phenomenon or a postcolonial novelty?

Mike Davis. 2006. "Hausmann in the Tropics." Pp. 95-120 in *Planet of Slums*. New York: Verso.

Alan Mayne. 2017. "Shadow Cities." Pp. 248-82 in *Slums: The History of a Global Injustice*. London: Reaktion.

April 12: Gentrifying slums?

Loretta Lees, Hyun Bang Shin, and Ernesto López-Morales. 2016. "Slum Gentrification." Pp. 140-71 in *Planetary Gentrification*. Cambridge: Polity.

Alan Mayne. 2017. "Conclusion." Pp. 283-88 in *Slums: The History of a Global Injustice*. London: Reaktion.

April 14: Where do informal settlements come from?

Teresa P. R. Caldeira. 2017. "Peripheral Urbanization: Autoconstruction, Transversal Logics, and Politics in Cities of the Global South." *Environment and Planning D* 35(1):3-20.

Asef Bayat. 2013. "The Quiet Encroachment of the Ordinary." Pp. 33-55 in *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

April 19: Is struggle the same as resistance?

Zachary Levenson. 2018. "The Road to TRAs Is Paved with Good Intentions: Dispossession through Delivery in Post-Apartheid Cape Town." *Urban Studies* 55(14):3218-33.

Tatiana Adeline Thieme. 2018. "The Hustle Economy: Informality, Uncertainty, and the Geographies of Getting By." *Progress in Human Geography* 42(4):529-48.

April 21: Is resistance organized?

Julie-Anne Boudreau. 2017. "Global Urban Social Movements: Emerging Forms of Political Action." Pp. 65-101 in *Global Urban Politics: Informalization of the State*. Cambridge: Polity.

Trevor Ngwane, Luke Sinwell, and Immanuel Ness. 2017. "Introduction." Pp. 1-19 in *Urban Revolt: State Power and the Rise of People's Movements in the Global South*, edited by Trevor Ngwane, Luke Sinwell, and Immanuel Ness. Chicago, IL: Haymarket.

April 26: IN-CLASS REVIEW

May 5: FINAL EXAM, 3:30-6:30