Urban Life and Culture

This course examines the experience of urbanism, with an emphasis on the social dimensions of life in the cities. While the course includes historical material on the development of urbanism, we will focus on changing conditions within the American city. Two themes in particular will run through the class: the relationship between urbanism and diversity, and the tension between social control and tolerance in urban environments. We will begin by considering some classic theoretical frameworks for understanding urban life. We then discuss how transportation systems structure social life and the urban environment. Following an examination of the heterogeneity of the city, we turn to analyses of how residential, employment, and leisure patterns have changed in response to major shifts in the economic foundations of North American cities. Finally, we consider the future of the city by examining new forms of urban development and the built environment.

Learning Goals

Students who complete this course will:

1. Gain familiarity with key sociological perspectives on urbanism
2. Explore the relationship between culture, public policy, and the physical design of human settlements
3. Assess how urban problems are defined and addressed
4. Apply sociological concepts to empirical observations

Requirements

Students are expected to keep up with the readings, attend class, and participate in discussions. In addition, you will complete: (1) A short paper covering readings and other course material. (2) A group project consisting of designing and writing up a sociological tour of some community in the Boston area. This will include planning a route and specifying points of interest. The object is to describe the sociological significance of neighborhoods, residential and commercial structures, recreational spaces, and infrastructural elements, relating these places to concepts from readings and lectures where appropriate. You will be divided into groups of approximately five; each group will turn in a single report. Half your grade for this project will be based on what your group produces, half will be based on your individual contribution. (3) A take-home final.

I expect courtesy in the classroom. That means arriving to class on time, turning cell phones off before class begins, no texting, and no side conversations. Please recognize how distracting these latter behaviors are for your classmates and your instructor. If you bring food or drink to class, remember to clean up after yourself.

My policy on laptops is that they should be used only for class-related purposes. Other uses are
highly distracting for you, for me, and for those sitting around you. If I notice you reading email, checking Facebook, watching a broadcast or anything else not related to class, I will call you on it. If these behaviors become a persistent problem, then laptops will be prohibited in class.

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper (4-6 pages)</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour report (15-20 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-home final</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Students are expected to uphold standards of academic integrity. Except for the group project, each student is expected to turn in work completed independently. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use references and, where appropriate, quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, or ideas not your own -- whether they are found in written materials or on the Internet, and whether they are created by a published author, another student, or your parent. Violations of University policies on academic integrity may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. Students with questions about standards of academic integrity are advised to consult Section 4 of Rights and Responsibilities from the Brandeis Student Handbook and/or speak to me.

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. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, you should contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in Academic Services at 736-3470. Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:


The Anderson and Gowan books are also on reserve at the library. The Currid book is on order at the library, and hopefully will be on reserve by the time you are to read from it.

The readings for Weeks 2 & 3 are on the Latte site for this class.

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

On Latte, I have also included an area with links to local organizations and other resources related to issues we will be discussing in class. This may be useful for those who would like to pursue these
issues further, either during the course or sometime in the future. I will be adding to this site as the course progresses, so you may want to check it periodically.

**Course Schedule**

**Introduction: The City in Social Theory and the Social Imagination**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sep 7</td>
<td>No assignment</td>
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**Urban Arteries**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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**Diverse People, Diverse Cultures**

**week 5**

Oct 3-5

**The City as Subcultural Haven**


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**Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity**

Oct 10-12


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**Economic Restructuring and Its Consequences**

**week 7**

Oct 19

**Deindustrialization**


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**week 8**

Oct 24-26

**Concentration of Poverty**

week 9  
Oct 31-Nov 2

**Homelessness**


Tour progress report due Wednesday, November 2nd

week 10  
Nov 7-9

**Gentrification**


week 11  
Nov 14-16

**City of Services**


weeks 12-13  
Nov 21-28

**Standardizing Commerce**


weeks 13-14  
Nov 30-Dec 5

**Surveillance and Social Control**


Tour report due Monday, December 5th
New Urbanism


Take-home final due Monday, December 19th