

SOCIOLOGY 265 (5890)
INTRODUCTION TO URBAN SOCIOLOGY
FALL 2009
10:30-11:20 AM

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Class venue: C164

Introduction

This course provides a general survey of major social science perspectives and studies on cities and urban development in the United States and other countries. The course covers such topics as 1) the general characteristics, causes and consequences of city and community growth and decline, 2) the varied structure and change in communities, and 3) the comparative positions and roles of major cities in the globe and regional systems.

Learning and Course Outcomes:

Upon your dedicated participation and subsequent completion of this course, you will:

- Demonstrate a general knowledge and comprehension of how our experiences in city life vary from one another.
- Examine how the city has been socially constructed as well as examine the social construction of the city itself. Issues of class, race, and gender are also fully integrated throughout as the course examines how economic status has affected identity and power structures within urban cultural identity.
- Gain an understanding of the structural components of the city and how these components affect the building of communities in urban centers.
- Develop an understanding of the effect cities and city planning has on poverty.

Texts

1. Mark Gottdiener and Ray Hutchison. *The New Urban Sociology*. Westview Press. 2006.
 2. Mike Davis. *Planet of Slums*. Verso. 2006.
- A number of readings will be handed out in class or made available on line.

Requirements and Grading

Students are required to keep up with the readings. The class discussions often go beyond the required readings, so regular attendance and note-taking in class is important to performing well in the three examinations. Active participation is required and an important part of your grade. Class assignments include in-class exams consisting of multiple choice and essay questions, a team-oriented oral presentation, and a term paper of approximately 10 pages based on in-depth library or field

research. The exams constitute 45% of your overall grade, the term project 30%, and the remaining 25% based on your attendance, presentation and class discussion.

Examinations will be worth 15 points each and include a combination of fill-in-blank, short-answer questions, multiple choice type questions, and essay questions.

Urban Research Project and Paper (30 percent of final grade). (1) Urban Case Study, or (2) Service Learning. 30 percent of your final grade will be based on a 10 page research paper. There are two options to complete this project and paper -- you choose which to pursue.

Option #1: Urban Case Study. For those of you that choose this first urban research project topic, you will research a particular city and write a final paper on its history and current status. You may choose any city in the world provided that it has a population of at least 250,000. You will organize your final paper in the following manner and deal with the issues and questions under each general heading listed below. **You must apply the sociological concepts and theories learned in the class to your urban research.** Data collection for the paper should be based on assigned course readings and the following library and documentary resources: scholarly journals, newspapers, magazines, congressional testimony, archival material, planning department documents, government reports and analyses, census bureau data, books, and other written documents. I encourage you to include a map and any other figures and tables if necessary. When **writing** your paper, assume that the audience is composed of people who know nothing of the material you read, the concepts you use, and data you have collected.

Suggested elements of the paper include:

- **Demographics and Population Characteristics.** What is the current population of the city? Has the population increased or decreased any over the last fifty years or so? If so, why? What is the racial and ethnic composition of the city population? Has this increased or decreased much and why? Tell us about the income and age distribution of the current population.
- **Economic Base and Land-Use.** Is the urban economy dominated by one or two major industries or is it a diversified economy? Has the economic base changed much in the last fifty years? What is the rate of unemployment? Is the housing availability and cost considered high or low? Are there any major land-uses that dominate the city? Tell us about the land use distribution (e.g., residential, commercial, and industrial land-uses).
- **Infrastructure and Government.** Tell us about the transportation and communication systems, the quality of education and health care for city residents, and the form of city government.
- **Social Problems.** What are the major social problems the city faces? What is the crime rate? What is the percentage of the population living below the federal poverty line?
- **Prospects for the Future.** What are the projections for future economic growth? What major economic revitalization projects being planned or implemented? What barriers does the city face in promoting growth? What problems does the city face that may impede future growth and development?
- **Conclusions.** You **must** include this section. Answer following question: How does your urban research relate to your understanding of class readings, course concepts, and different theories of cities and urban life? Finally, pick two (2) of the six factors of the sociospatial approach as listed on pages 17-18 and discussed elsewhere in the book and explain how they have influenced the development of the city that you are researching.

- **References.** You must include a “References” section that contains **at least 13 references**. You may only include three internet references. Do not rely too much on information from the world-wide web. The bulk of your research sources should come from material available from authoritative sources, especially libraries, government agencies, and other official (i.e., government) outlets.
- **Methodological Appendix.** Provide a thorough description of how you gathered your information. You should identify the types and sources of data collected. You should include data in tables, graphs, and/or figures if you have large amounts of quantitative data. Put each table, graph, or figure on a separate page with a descriptive title over it. In the text of the research paper, refer to the table or figure by number and then explain it.

Your grade will be based on how complete your paper is (i.e., does it address the above points and issues), how organized it is and, most important, how well you **connect the various themes, concepts, readings from the course to explain your city**. Your paper should reflect your thoughtful engagement with the subject matter of urban sociology. The paper should be clear, concise, and succinct. Grammar, organization, spelling, and clarity all count. I will not accept any late papers or faxed papers.

Option #2: Service Learning Project. For students who choose this option, you will be required to participate in a service learning project for a minimum of 20 hours and write a final paper based upon your experience. The primary goal of these service learning projects is to link your community work and experience in the Seattle area to the course material. Service learning is also a way of illustrating the larger substantive elements to which the course pertains.

There are three components to any service learning activity: **service, personal insight, and academic knowledge**. The service component provides the context and content of the volunteering experience as you enter into the community to donate time and skills. The personal experience of volunteering often forces you to learn about yourself, to question your own beliefs, values, prejudices, ways of viewing the world, and the like. Academic learning occurs as you connect classroom learning with the real world, observing and participating in practitioners' daily activities. The service learning work will help reinforce the theoretical concepts and ideas introduced in the course books and discussed in class through interactions with people in Greater Seattle community. You will discover on your own the congruencies and discrepancies between theories and reality, and more important, learn to think sociologically.

Finally, you are required to write a 10 page paper that links the course material - e.g., concepts, theories, and related academic knowledge about cities and urban life - with your service learning experience. This paper is due in class on the last day of school. Below are my expectations for this paper.

- **Description.** Very briefly describe your service learning site, including its official purpose, the clientele it serves, the structure of the program, the training and use of personnel, and your role as a volunteer. When you are writing about your site, keep in mind the significant differences between comments that are descriptive (observations), comments that discuss your feelings about what you are describing (reactions), and comments that detail conclusions about what you saw (interpretations). You should not spend a lot of time describing mundane or ongoing operations of the various small groups or their activities at the site, or what you did each time you visited the site. Keep in mind that your description should provide preliminary information that will give the necessary context for the more important components of the paper: your analysis and reflection.

- **Analysis.** Provide a critical analysis of your service learning experience. Discuss how the concepts from the readings are illustrated in your activities or in the group's operations or the community's organization. Answer the following questions: What kinds of urban problems are being addressed by the community organization(s) you are involved with? What impacts do you see the organization or agencies making on the Greater Seattle community? Finally, and most important, which concepts and theories addressed in the textbook and class help you to understand the group you are involved with?
- **Reflection.** Discuss what you learned from your service learning experience. This may include discussions of emotional responses, contemplation of political implications, and reflections on your own personal views of how the service learning experience has caused you to think differently about cities and urban life. What impact is your service learning work having on you? How does your service learning experience relate to your understanding of class readings, course concepts, and different theories of cities and urban life? How has your service experience affected your views of the Seattle area?

Your paper should build upon your practical experiences at the service learning site and reflect your thoughtful engagement with the subject matter of urban sociology. You should deliberately apply the sociological concepts and theories learned in the class to your description, analysis, and reflection. The three parts - description, analysis, and reflection - should not be kept artificially separate, but should instead be interwoven as appropriate throughout your paper. Grammar, organization, spelling, and clarity all count. Though everyone's experience is different, I think you should be able to complete the paper in about 10-typed doubled-spaced pages. No late papers will be accepted.

Team Presentation, Discussion and Attendance (25 percent). Finally, 25 percent of your grade will be based upon my evaluation of your participation in class and your participation in a group presentation held during the last two weeks of class. The class will be divided into groups composed of about five people. Each group will read assigned readings and meet the following day in class to discuss the readings. Each group will discuss the readings, asking questions *about the texts, and identify the main points. During these class meetings, you will consider yourselves a group of urban policy analysts* discharged with finding ways to remedy metropolitan problems and conflicts. You will identify, discuss, and recommend policies, based on the insights you gather from the readings, that urban and metropolitan leaders could implement to prevent further urban decline, stabilize and revitalize cities, and create prosperous metropolitan areas. I will have more to say about these group discussions in September/October.

I will take roll at the beginning of each class period. Be aware that just because I do not take attendance does not mean that I have overlooked absentee students. **Four or more unexcused absences will result in the lowering of your final grade by one letter grade.** An unexcused absence is missing class without the professor's permission or without presenting a valid excuse within twenty four hours. All students are required to attend all classes unless they are ill or prevented from attending by exceptional circumstances. Preparedness, attendance and participation are expected and will have a bearing on final grades.

Everyone is encouraged to participate through open discussion and questions. Class participation includes sharing thoughts and ideas, observations, assessments, and questions during class time. Thoughtful participation means regularly attending class and being prepared to discuss the assigned subject matter. Please do not be worried about asking "dumb questions." If you are confused, chances are there are numerous other people who are also befuddled and will welcome your efforts at

clarification. Lastly, be on time to class and do not bring your cell phones. Anybody who has ever spoken in front a group knows that it can be very confusing for a speaker when people wander in and out or when phones ring. I always try to treat students with courtesy and respect. It makes life easier for all of us when you reciprocate.

Grades:

First Examination (Friday, 10/9) = 15% of final grade

Second Examination (Friday, 11/6) = 20% of final grade

Third Examination (Tuesday, 12/9) = 15% of final grade

Team Presentations (final 3 weeks) = 10% of final grade

Final Paper (due date: Friday, 12/4) = 30% of final grade

I will use the following scale to translate total scores into final course grades:

98-100 =A+ 88-89 = B+ 78-79 = C+ 68-69= D+

94-97 = A 82-87 = B 72-77 = C 62-67 = D

90-93 = A- 80-81 = B- 70-71 = C- 60-61 = D-

For students who fall within a borderline range, I will evaluate the trend of your individual examination scores, the quality of your city presentation, and your class attendance and participation. I do not give extra credit, extra assignments, or other opportunities for improving grades. Moreover, I do not negotiate about grades, except when you believe there is an explicit error in the grading procedures. Lastly, no grades will be determined by a curve.

Plagiarism: All students are required to abide by the Student Code of Conduct at Bellevue College. This means that the presence of a student's name on any work submitted in completion of an academic assignment is considered to be an assurance that the work and ideas are the result of the student's own intellectual effort, stated in her or his own words, and produced independently, unless clear and explicit acknowledgment of the sources for the work and ideas is included. This principle applies to papers, tests, homework assignments, and other assignments.

Tentative Course Outline and Readings

Week 1: Introduction

9/21 introducing the Course

9/22 film - "People Like Us" (Part 1)

9/23 Introductory lecture on general issues

9/24 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 1

9/25: review

Week 2: Historical Background and Meaning of Place

- 9/28: film - "People Like Us" (Part 2)
- 9/29 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 2, pp. 30-41—capitalism and the rise of the industrial city
- 9/30: Library Workshop for Students
- 10/1 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 3; pp. 43-53
- 10/2 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 3; pp. 53-63

Week 3: Theoretical Perspectives

- 10/5 College Issues Day - no class
- 10/6 Davis, Chapter 1
- 10/7: Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 4, pp. 65-75
- 10/8 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 4, pp. 75-83
- 10/9 EXAM #1

Week 4: American Cities

- 10/12 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 7, pp. 139-148
- 10/13 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 9, pp. 161-180
- 10/14 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 9, pp. 161-180
- 10/15 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 10, pp. 199-210- poverty, poverty and race
- 10/16 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 11, pp. 240-246

Week 5: Cities in Comparative and Global Perspectives

- 10/19 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 13, pp. 281-292
- 10/20 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 13, pp. 292-298
- 10/21 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 13, pp. 298-312
- 10/22 Davis, Chapter 2, pp. 20-31 – global slum census, slum typology
- 10/23 Davis, Chapter 2, pp. 31-42

Week 6: Cities in a World Economy

- 10/26 Davis, Chapter 4, pp. 70-82
- 10/27 Davis, Chapter 4, pp. 82-94
- 10/28 Davis, Chapter 5, pp.95-103
- 10/29 Davis, Chapter 5, pp.104-114
- 10/30: review

Week 7: Cities in a Global Economy

- 11/2 film
- 11/3: review
- 11/4 Davis, Chapter 7, pp.151-163 – urban poverty's big bang, adjustment from below
- 11/5 Davis, Chapter 7, pp. 163-173 – the utopian decade
- 11/6 EXAM #2

Week 8: Slum Ecology

- 11/9 Davis, Chapter 6, pp.121-134
- 11/10 Davis, Chapter 6, pp.134-142
- 11/11 Professional Development Day, no classes
- 11/12 Davis, Chapter 6, pp.142-150
- 11/13 Davis, Chapter 8, pp.174-185

Team Oral Presentations Begin

Week 9: Identity and Place in the World

11/16: film/review

11/17 Presentation

11/18 Presentations

11/19 Davis, Chapter 8, pp.186-191

11/20 Davis, Chapter 8, pp.191-198

Week 10: Food

11/23 "Urban foraging and guerilla gardening" -- Presentation by City Fruit

11/24 "Food is Power and the Powerful are Poisoning Us"

11/25 "High Rise Farm? The New Model for Sustainable Cities"

11/26 Holiday, no class

11/27 Holiday, no class

Week 11: Summary and Conclusion

11/30 Davis, Epilogue, pp. 199-206

12/1 Gottdiener and Hutchison, Chapter 16

12/2: film

12/3 Summary and Conclusions

12/4 **Term Paper Due**

Wednesday, 12/9, 9:30-11:20 a.m. Exam #3