

**Urban Sociology**  
Soc 260, Spring 2009  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:50-2:00; PPHAC 103

*Professor Daniel Jasper*

*PPHAC 316*

*Office Hours: Tuesdays 8:00-9:00; Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:05-3:00; other times by appointment*

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**Course Overview:** The city has been a central focus of sociology since the beginning of the discipline. This course will examine the uniqueness of the city as a site and context of social life. We will adopt a multi-disciplinary sociological perspective to identify and analyze cities and city life. We will look at spatial dimensions of cities; the culture of cities; the distinct economic and political structures of urban areas; and how urban areas are connected to regions and nations. We will pay particular attention to the ways that globalization is re-fashioning urban life. To orient our inquiry, we will focus on New York City as an example of a Global City. We will adopt a comparative focus contrasting New York with other cities in North America and beyond.

**Course Goals:** Through this course, students will

- 1.) develop their skills as sociological observers by documenting urban life.
- 2.) become familiar with the sociology of urban spaces and urban life.
- 3.) be able to identify the structural features of urban areas.
- 4.) be familiar with the distinct traits of different types of cities.
- 5.) further develop their writing and oral presentation skills.

**Course Requirements and Expectations:** This course is designed as a participatory seminar where all participants have an equal role in the work and success of the collective endeavor. Therefore, the most important expectation for all students in this course is to take the work of documenting and thinking about cities seriously. This entails a continual exploration of and reflections upon urban space and how people go about their lives in those spaces. Students are thus expected to spend time **in** urban environments. Fortunately, publicly available transportation allows for easy access to a variety of urban areas, including New York, Philadelphia, and Newark, as well as Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton.

As a professional and collective endeavor, we all share the responsibility for the success of this course. Therefore, we should plan on attending all class sessions. We shall arrive on time, having completed the shared readings and assignments and be prepared to collectively discuss these. We should arrive with the texts, our notes on the texts, and the necessary tools of scholarship. We should leave unnecessary distractions, such as cell phones, someplace else.

The most important part of conducting oneself as a professional scholar involves following the conventions of scholarly citation. All members of this course should read, re-read, and familiarize themselves with the college policy on Academic Honesty included in the student handbook. All written work must include full and proper citations. There are **no exceptions**, including ignorance. Cheating and plagiarism will result in failing this course.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street

(extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

**Student Assessment:** Students will be assessed on their degree of engagement with (1) the course content; (2) the collective work of the class; and (3) their individual work and thinking about urban life. Engagement with course content will be assessed through weekly reading questions. Engagement in the collective work of the class will be assessed through each student's participation in discussion (in-class and on the course blackboard site); sharing one's work with peers; and providing feedback to peers on their work. Engagement with individual projects and thinking will be assessed through documentary work, and written assignments. Students will keep a journal where they reflect critically upon their experiences and thinking in light of the course material. In lieu of a final exam, students will submit a final portfolio. It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course. Assignment guidelines and a detailed grading sheet is appended to this syllabus.

**Students should expect to spend approximately 10 hours per week on this course.**

**Required Texts:** Each student should purchase a copy of the course texts.

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 2000. *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles: America's Global Cities*. University of Minnesota Press.

Goldschmidt, Henry. 2006. *Race and Religion Among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights*. Rutgers University Press.

Maurrasse, David J. 2006. *Listening to Harlem: Gentrification, Community, and Business*. Routledge.

Additional texts will be available online, through Reeves Library, or will be distributed.

**Course Schedule:**

*Week 1* (January 20<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>): **Course Introduction**

**Read:** Course Syllabus; Maurrasse, Introduction; Goldschmidt, Prologue

*Week 2* (January 27<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup>): **The History of US Cities**

**\*Read:** Abu-Lughod, An Overview, Part I

*Week 3* (February 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>): **The History of US Cities**

**\*Read:** Abu-Lughod, Part II

*Week 4* (February 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>): **The History of US Cities**

**\*Read:** Abu-Lughod, Part III

*Week 5* (February 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>): **The History of US Cities**

**\*Read:** Abu-Lughod, Part IV < p. 321

*Week 6* (February 24<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>): **The History of US Cities**

**\*Read:** Abu-Lughod, Part IV > p. 320

*Spring Break* (March 3<sup>rd</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>) **No Class**

*Week 7* (March 10<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>): **Neighborhood Case Study – Crown Heights**

**\*Read:** Goldschmidt, Introduction & chapter 1

*Week 8* (March 17<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>): **Neighborhood Case Study – Crown Heights**

**\*Read:** Goldschmidt, chapters 2-3

*Week 9* (March 24<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>): **Neighborhood Case Study – Crown Heights**

**\*Read:** Goldschmidt, chapters 4-5, conclusion

*Week 10* (March 31<sup>st</sup> & April 2<sup>nd</sup>): **An International (and comparative) Interlude**

**Read:** Details to be distributed later in the term

*Week 11* (April 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>): **Neighborhood Case Study - Harlem**

**\*Read:** Maurrasse,

*Week 12* (April 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>): **Neighborhood Case Study - Harlem**

**\*Read:** Maurrasse

*Week 13* (April 21<sup>st</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>): **Neighborhood Case Study - Harlem**

**\*Read:** Maurrasse

*Week 14* (April 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>): **Course Conclusion**

## Guidelines for reading questions

Students should prepare reading questions for each week of reading. Reading questions are brief statements that highlight and contextualize key topics from the texts that call for further thought, analysis, and discussion. Each question should (1) clearly articulate—in your own words—a key idea from the text. (2) Show—by citing or pointing to a key passage in the text—where you find this idea. And (3) clearly state the question as to what needs to be further thought about and discussed. (These questions should open thought and discussion, and link the text to our deepening understanding of cities and urban life. Thus, questions should not be factual or content specific.) It will often be helpful to include (4) a justification as to why this question is worth pursuing.

Reading questions are to be posted to the course **blackboard** site. They are due on **Mondays** before **10pm** of the week we will be discussing the text(s). All reading questions should include your name and a proper citation for the text. Notes will be graded on a scale (0 – 2) for a possible total of fourteen points. Notes lacking a proper citation will receive no credit (0). You may turn in reading notes on any day with assigned readings (noted in the course schedule with and asterisk [\*]). Thus, there are eleven possible weeks to turn in a reading note, you may turn in nine, the seven highest scoring will be included in your final grade.

## Reflective Essay Guidelines

You will prepare two essays designed to deepen our reflection upon and thinking about urban spaces, how we engage these spaces, and how these spaces effect us. For each essay, you will read one chapter and prepare an essay that addresses questions raised by the essay through a reflection about specific urban space(s). You are encouraged, but not required, to focus on the space(s) of your documentary research.

For each essay do two things: First, what issues, questions, or problems are raised about urban space and practices by the writings? Second, how do these issues, questions, or problems change your perspective and experience of particular urban spaces.

Readings:

de Certeau, Michel. 1984. “Walking in the City” in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. U. California.

Simmel, Georg. 1964. “The Metropolis and Mental Life” in Kurt H. Wolff (Ed.), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Free Press.

I am willing to allow students to substitute an equivalent essay for one of these readings. If you are interested in doing so, please speak with me early about this.

Essays should be typed, double spaced, include proper references, and page numbers. Other than this, you should feel free to be creative in your writing and style. (Approx. 2000 words.)

You may submit these essays in any order that you like.

## Documentary Project Guidelines

The purpose of this project is to document social life in urban space.

As a documentary project, the most important skill is observation and recording observations. There are a number of ways of to record what one observes, including field notes, journalistic notes, photographs, drawings, audio recordings, and video recordings.

For the first version of this assignment, you should plan on visiting your site twice, for at least one hour each time. While there, take extensive and thorough notes. Pay close attention to all that is publicly observable. For the second version, your documentary should be based upon multiple visits.

Your writing should consist of (1) a concrete description of what you have observed—a particular place, pattern of behavior, etc.; (2) what the key features of this observation are; (3) what questions are raised by these observations. In addition to this descriptive writing, you should include the documentary evidence. It is here that you have a great deal of creativity. You may have written evidence, such as field notes, a journalistic article, or a travel letter to a friend. Your evidence may be visual, such as a photo essay, a sound essay, or a video essay.

You will be graded on the following criteria:

- how well you describe what you are documenting
- the clarity of the evidence that you present
- how well the evidence speaks to the issues that you raise in your written description
- the overall professionalism of the work.

You will complete this assignment twice; the second version should be much more involved and detailed.

For examples, see [www.photojournalistas.com](http://www.photojournalistas.com)

The magazine: *DoubleTake* (Reeves has issues from 1998-2002)

City Lore ([www.citylore.org](http://www.citylore.org)) and its related site Place Matters ([www.placematters.net](http://www.placematters.net))

## Guidelines for Textual Critique Essay

For these essay, you will review one of the two neighborhood case studies read during the semester. Your essay, on either Maurrasse's or Goldschmidt's text, will address how the author interprets, analyzes, and makes sense of the neighborhood.

Essays should be typed, double spaced, include proper references, and page numbers. Other than this, you should fee free to be creative in your writing and style. (Approx. 2000 words.)

## Guidelines for Final Portfolio

For the final portfolio, you should collect the work that you have produced over the semester and organize it in such a way as it clearly shows the progression of your thinking about cities and urban life. You will most likely include your journal, your documentary project, and both of your reflective essays. You should also include an introduction that contextualizes your thinking, a table of contents listing what is included and its page number, and a conclusion that summarizes the development of your thinking.

### Grading Sheet

Weekly Response Questions:	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	=	<u>14</u>	
Textual Critique Essay:									<u>10</u>	
Journal:									<u>16</u>	
Engagement with work of the class (Midterm):									<u>8</u>	
Engagement with work of the class (End-term):									<u>12</u>	
Documenting Urban Life										
Preliminary Documentation:									<u>6</u>	
Final Documentation:									<u>8</u>	
Reflective Essay 1:									<u>8</u>	
Reflective Essay 2:									<u>8</u>	
Final Portfolio:									<u>10</u>	
<b>Total:</b>									<u>100</u>	
									<b>Possible points =</b>	<b>100</b>

#### Final Grades

	87.1-90 = B+	77.1-80 = C+	67.1-70 = D+
>94.1 = A	83.1-87 = B	73.1-77 = C	63.1-67 = D
90.1-94 = A-	80.1-83 = B-	70.1-73 = C-	60.1-63 = D-
60 points or below = F			