**Sociology 29: INTRODUCTION TO URBAN SOCIOLOGY**

Tuesday and Thursday, 2-3pm  
Harvard Hall 103

**Course Website:** http://isites.harvard.edu/k106518

**Professor:** Eva Rosen  
Department of Sociology  
840 William James Hall  
Office Hours: check website  
evarosen@fas.harvard.edu

**Teaching Fellow:** Jasmin Sandelson  
641 William James Hall  
Office Hours: check website  
jasminsandelson@fas.harvard.edu

**Course Description**

Urban sociology studies the way that cities shape social life, considering spatial context as fundamental to understanding the social world. Over the semester, this course will explore three essential components of the city: 1) its formation, 2) its geographical and physical structure and composition, and 3) social organization among its residents. We will pivot between an examination of macro-level processes of the shape and character of the city, and the micro-level processes through which the urban context shapes the lives and social interactions of those who reside within it.

The course is arranged both chronologically and theoretically, in order to highlight the interplay of historical changes in the American urban landscape with theoretical perspectives and empirical practices of the time. We will start by thinking about urban life as a sociological construct and examining contrasting paradigms for understanding what it means to reside in a city. Ethnographic studies from the Chicago School tradition use the city as a laboratory to study social life. Readings from this ecological perspective examine the inner worlds of a Jewish “ghetto” and a “taxi-dance hall” in the 1930s, and situate them within the larger ecosystem of the city. We then consider the way macro-economic processes such as deindustrialization, segregation, and suburbanization have interacted to create areas of concentrated urban poverty, and examine the character and consequences of social life in these inner-city neighborhood settings. We explore the role of the built environment in shaping social interactions, and how space is related to mechanisms of both formal and informal social control. Questions of power are essential to understanding how the city works: who makes decisions about urban space, to whom do public places belong, and who is excluded?

**Course Requirements**

1. **Three Paper Assignments:** 45%  
   Response paper assignments will be handed out during the semester. You will be asked to reflect on key themes of the course, drawing on assigned reading. These papers will be 5-6 pages long.
2. **Class and Section Participation:** 20%
   The participation grade is comprised of attendance (see below) and participation, in both lecture and section. It is important to come prepared for class by doing the reading. Students are expected to participate by asking and answering questions. This is based on not just how often you speak but also on the quality of your comments in demonstrating your engagement with the readings and analytical thinking skills.

3. **Final Take-home Essay(s):** 35%
   The take-home assignment will be emailed during exam week on the day that the exam for our class is scheduled. You will have a limited amount of time (a few hours) in which to complete the assignment. Details will be announced in class.

---

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, and will be taken in lecture and section, beginning the 2nd week of class. Absences from lecture and section will be excused for medical reasons or for religious observance. Please email TF in advance, unless there is a medical emergency, in which case you should contact them as soon as possible. Unexcused absences will count against your participation grade.

**Technology:** For the purpose of fostering an active and interactive learning environment, computers, tablets, and cellphones will not be allowed in class. Please be prepared to take notes with pen and paper. Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a disability should notify the professor, and may present a letter from the AEO. All discussions will remain confidential.

**Papers:** All papers are due in class, at the beginning of class, on their due date. One partial letter grade will be deducted for each day that a paper is late. For example, an A- paper that is not handed in at the beginning of class on the due date, would be marked down to a B+. Another partial grade is deducted for each additional day that the paper is late. Extensions are granted on a case-by-case basis in situations of medical emergency or religious observance.

**Grading:** Great care is taken grading assignments and providing feedback, and we happy to meet with students regarding their grades. Please do not hesitate to schedule a meeting with the professor or TF if you would like to know more about how to improve on future assignments. If you would like an assignment to be re-graded, please note that the grade may be revised up or down upon re-evaluation.

**Writing Resources:** The Sociology Department’s Departmental Writing Fellow (DWF) is available to meet with students to discuss their papers. Please also remember that the Harvard College Writing Center is available to assist in any stage of the writing process. Information about both can be found online: [http://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/pages/writing-papers-sociology](http://sociology.fas.harvard.edu/pages/writing-papers-sociology)

**Academic integrity, collaboration, and plagiarism:** Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For paper assignments in this course (with the exception of the final take-home exam, for which there is not collaboration), you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you as a classmate are working on a related topic. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices in this discipline and properly cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you with your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance. **Do not turn in someone else’s work – in part, or in full – as your own.**
**Readings & Course Schedule**

All required readings are available through the course website: http://isites.harvard.edu/k106518. There are no required texts to purchase. Students must do the readings each week before the class meets.

**Week 1: Introduction: Theories of Urbanism**

**Tuesday, September 2nd**
No reading.

**Thursday, September 4th**

**Week 2: The Chicago School: The Ecological Approach**

**Tuesday, September 9th**
   - Chapter 2: “The Growth of the City” (47-62)
   - Chapter 3: “The Ecological Approach to the Study of Human Community” (63-79)
   - Chapter 8: “The Neighborhood: Can Neighborhood Work Have a Scientific Basis?” (144-155)

**Thursday, September 11th**
   - Chapter 11: “The Chicago Ghetto”
   - Chapter 1: “A Night in a Taxi-Dance Hall” (3-16)
   - Chapter 3: “The Taxi-Dance Hall as a Social World” (31-52)

**Week 3: The Creation of Ghetto Poverty and The Truly Disadvantaged**

**Tuesday, September 16th**
   - Chapter 1: “The Ghetto Underclass, Poverty, and Social Dislocations” (3-19)
   - Chapter 2: “Social Change and Dislocations in the Inner City” (20-62)

**Thursday, September 18th**
   - Chapter 1: “The Missing Link” (1-16)
Week 4: The Persistence of Segregation

Tuesday, September 23rd
   Chapter 3: “The Persistence of the Ghetto” (60-82)

Thursday, September 25th
   Chapter 4: “The Continuing Causes of Segregation” (83-114)

Week 5: Employment and Joblessness in the Inner City

Tuesday, September 30th
   Chapter 3: “Ghetto Related Behavior and the Structure of Opportunity” (51-86)
   Competitive Ethnic Relations (selection from The Urban Sociology Reader)

Thursday, October 2nd
   Chapter 2: “The Invisible Poor” (39-62)
   Chapter 4: “No Shame in (This) Game” (86-121)

Tuesday, October 7th PAPER #1 due at the beginning of class in hard copy

Week 6: Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration

Tuesday, October 7th
   Yorkers: Immigrant Incorporation in a Majority Minority City.” International Migration Review 36

Thursday, October 9th
   in Nancy Foner and George Frederickson eds., Not Just Black and White: Historical and
   Contemporary Perspectives on Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in the United States.
**Week 7: Housing The Poor**

**Tuesday, October 14th**

**Thursday, October 16th**
3. Film viewing: *Dislocation* or *The Myth of Pruitt Igoe*

**Week 8: Social Organization and the Informal Economy**

**Tuesday, October 21st**

**Thursday, October 23rd**
   - Chapter 3: “The Entrepreneur” (91-165)
   - Chapter 4: “The Street Hustler” (166-213)

**Week 9: The Built Environment & Social Organization**

**Tuesday, October 28th**
   - Chapter 2: “The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety” (29-54)
   - Chapter 8: “The Need for Mixed Primary Uses” (152-177).

**Thursday, October 30th**

**Tuesday, November 4th** **PAPER #2 due at the beginning of class in hard copy**

**Week 10: Suburbanization & Gentrification**

**Tuesday, November 4th**
   - Chapter 8: “Social Life, Suburban Homogeneity and Conformity” (153-184)
   - Chapter 11: “The Impact of the Community” (252-304)

**Thursday, November 6th**
   - Chapter 3: “There Goes the Hood” (59-94)

**Week 11: Power and the Political Economy of Space**

**Tuesday, November 11th**
2. David Harvey. “The Urban Process Under Capitalism” (Blackwell City Reader)

**Thursday, November 13th**

**Week 12: Surveillance and the Penal State**

**Tuesday, November 18th**
   Chapters 1-5

**Thursday, November 20th**
   Chapters 6-7
   Conclusion & Epilogue

**Tuesday, November 25th Paper #3 due at the beginning of class in hard copy**

**Week 13: Social Networks and Social Isolation**

**Tuesday, November 25th**

**Week 14: Problems and Futures for Urban Sociology**

**Tuesday, December 2nd**