

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**  
**Immigrant New York: The Changing American City**  
**Fall 2016**

Instructor: Van C. Tran  
Phone: 212-854-4115  
E-mail: [vantran@columbia.edu](mailto:vantran@columbia.edu)  
Office: 606 Knox Hall, 606 W. 122<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Course time: Mondays, 2:10-4 p.m.  
Location: TBA  
Office hours: Tuesdays, 1:30-3:30 p.m. Please sign up [here](#).  
Website: [https://courseworks.columbia.edu/portal/site/SOCIW3980\\_001\\_2016\\_3](https://courseworks.columbia.edu/portal/site/SOCIW3980_001_2016_3)

**Course Description:**

“There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born there, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size, its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter—the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something.” – from E.B. White’s *Here is New York* (1948:1)

Over the course of the twentieth century, New York City has witnessed two major waves of immigration. From the Irish, Italian and Jewish immigrants who arrived at the turn of the twentieth century to the Chinese, Jamaican and Mexican immigrants who now constitute the majority of the city’s immigrant population, New York City has a long tradition of integrating new immigrants. In 2011, approximately 40 percent of the city’s population of 8.2 million people is foreign-born with as many as 800 languages being spoken, making the city one of the most diverse metropolises in the world.

How has immigration transformed New York City, both in the past and in the present? What are the major ethnic groups in the city? How are immigrants and their U.S.-born children incorporated into the city’s schools, workplaces and neighborhoods? How will their integration reshape patterns of ethnic and racial inequality in the city? This course answers these questions by focusing on New York City as a case study to highlight how immigration has transformed the city’s demographic, political, socioeconomic and spatial landscape. On the one hand, the influx of immigrants has brought about economic revitalization of many neighborhoods from Jackson Heights to Washington Heights, lowering the crime rate and stimulating business growth. On the other hand, immigration and diversity have raised concerns about social cohesion and security.

And yet, this city of “eight million stories” is not only a major immigrant destination, but also the global capital for finance and commerce, arts and culture, higher education, medical innovations, and technological developments. Given time and space constraints, we will not be able to explore all these themes and will have to focus narrowly on the immigrant experience. One unique feature of this course is the opportunity for students to directly observe and study New York City’s diverse neighborhoods, immigrant communities and immigrant organizations. The course welcomes students from a range of disciplinary background, including sociology, urban studies, social anthropology, political science, and history. There are no prerequisites to the course and it is open to all undergraduate students, although no auditors will be allowed.

## Course Objectives:

In this course on urban sociology, we will:

1. Become familiar with the major immigrant groups in New York City.
2. Understand how immigration has transformed New York City neighborhoods.
3. Explore key domains through which immigrants become incorporated into the city.
4. Apply these ideas and concepts to the study of neighborhoods in New York City.

## Course Requirements:

1. Class participation (10% of final grade)
2. Leading discussion (10% of final grade)
3. 8 reading memos (20% of final grade)
4. 3 neighborhood memos (30% of final grade)
5. Final research paper (30% of final grade)

### *Class Participation*

Your active participation in class is strongly encouraged. Please complete assigned readings before each class and come prepared to discuss them. Everyone should join in, even those who are naturally shy. The quality of your comments is more important than the quantity. There will also be time to discuss your neighborhood visits and to share experiences from these trips with the class. These discussions will allow you to connect your experiences on the ground with the issues in the course readings.

### *Leading Discussion*

Two students will be responsible for leading the discussion each week by making a brief presentation (about **15 minutes maximum**) at the beginning of each class. Your responsibility will include: (1) highlighting the main themes from the reading memos; and (2) summarizing the remaining questions to be discussed.

### *Reading Memos*

These weekly reading memos will be based on the assigned readings. These memos should be about 300-400 words. In these memos, you could: (1) highlight the most important insight or idea from the readings; (2) share your assessments on both the strengths and weaknesses of the readings; and (3) raise questions that you particularly like to discuss in class. **The memos will be due on Fridays at 5 p.m. via the course website.** These reading memos also serve as the starting point for our in-class discussion. Recognizing that we all lead busy and complex lives, you will be required to submit eight reading memos out of the fifteen weeks. It is up to you to decide which of the eight weeks you would like to submit a memo.

### *Neighborhood Visits and Memos (due in class on Oct. 3, Oct. 31 and Nov. 28)*

One of the main assignments for the course is that you must go out and visit neighborhoods in New York City and provide a descriptive account of your experiences and observations. You must complete a total of three neighborhood memos throughout the semester. You can visit these neighborhoods at your leisure, but you will be responsible for handing in the memos for each neighborhood by the paper deadline. You might want to plan a visit with a classmate or a friend, as that could be a fun trip and provide extra security/safety especially when visiting a new area.

In this assignment you will be making observations at both the individual and neighborhood levels. At the individual level, you should observe, catalog and interpret the ways individuals interact, or avoid interactions, in public (i.e. streets, parks, etc.) and semi-public (i.e. restaurants, stores, etc.) settings and, if possible, changes in these patterns of interactions. Also observe the ways that you are reacting inwardly to the events you observe. What do you find attractive? From what do you recoil? How do you manage your reactions and cope with the unfamiliar? At the neighborhood level, you will observe signs of change at the borders of the different neighborhoods you cross on a single street. Observe changes in ethnic composition, shops, sounds, facilities, cleanliness of the streets, etc. Pay close attention to the border and the things that immediately signify that you have moved from one zone to the next.

The expectation for these neighborhood memos is that you provide a thick, detailed, and interesting description and reflection of your visit in the neighborhood. Please bring a small notebook to write down your observations, and, if possible, a camera (or your smart phone) to take photos of the neighborhoods you visit. You may also use an unobtrusive tape recorder to voice your observations or record notes from any conversations you might have with local residents. Try to listen in on public conversations. Write a 5-6 page report on your observations.

One in-class exercise will involve you reading your classmate's first neighborhood visit memo and giving feedback to him/her. What do you like about the memo? What other information do you wish to have been included? How can the memo be improved? Completion of this exercise will count towards your in-class participation grade. More importantly, it will provide an opportunity to learn about what constitutes a good neighborhood memo for everyone involved.

***Major Research Paper (due on Friday, December 16 at 5 p.m.)***

You will be expected to write one 15-18 page research paper, but you will have two options.

The first option is to do a research paper comparing two neighborhoods in New York City. This paper will be based largely on your own observations of the neighborhoods, demographic data available from the census or other administrative sources, and two to four interviews of local residents (one to two residents from each neighborhood). For example, you might want to compare Morningside Heights where Columbia University is located to a neighborhood of your choice. The possibilities are endless, but the strongest comparisons should be theoretically motivated. In your comparison, you might want to highlight the similarities and differences between the two neighborhoods in terms of their ethnic/racial composition, socioeconomic status, levels of amenities and resources, crime and safety concerns, and physical and social (dis)order, etc. The goal here is to provide readers with a detailed description of the neighborhoods and how it might feel like to live there. Think of your audience as someone who have no prior experience with or knowledge of these neighborhoods, how would you describe these neighborhoods to them? What neighborhood features would you emphasize (i.e. diversity, amenities, restaurant scene, waterfront access, public parks, etc.)? Which neighborhood features could use some improvements (i.e. crime and safety, amenities, cleanliness, etc.)?

The second option is to do a research paper that focuses on an ethnic organization or a non-profit organization that serves a particular immigrant community in the city. This paper will be

based on archival materials and in-depth interviews with the organization or community leaders, as well as other staff members and/or clients of the organizations. You will be expected to conduct up to four interviews for this assignment, perhaps one with the leader of the organization, one with a staff member and two with the organization's clients. The goal here is to provide readers with a clear sense of the mission of the organization, the services that it provides, the opportunities and challenges that it faces in providing support for the immigrant community, etc. Why is its work important? How does it serve a particular need? What could use some improvements? You might consider presenting your final report from the research project to the organization, which could lead to real recommendations for improvements.

Doing the fieldwork in the neighborhoods or scheduling interviews will take some time, so I will want you to get started on the research earlier rather than later. You will be expected to hand in a brief proposal well in advance so that we can assess and discuss the feasibility and potential content of your paper. If you aren't sure about a possible topic, I encourage you to look over the syllabus and look at what we will cover. Is there a topic that stands out as interesting? Is there anything missing that you might want to explore on your own? If you are thinking about comparing two neighborhoods, visit them early and often during the semester. If you are thinking of writing about an organization, develop relationships and contacts early on in the semester.

### **Course Policies:**

1. Our weekly seminar will mainly be discussion-based. We will begin with the student facilitators who will highlight the main themes. We will then open the discussion to the rest of the group. On some occasions, there will also be short lectures to provide the main themes and background information that will help frame the readings and discussion. The discussion provides a forum for active engagement with the materials and your classmates. We will also have a few faculty guests who will be discussing their research with us.
2. Doing the reading is essential to your comprehension and participation in class. Some questions to ponder for each reading assignment include: What data and methodology is employed by the author? What is the main argument or thesis? What claims are being made by the author? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument? Do you agree or disagree with the author? If so, why? How does the reading relate to the lecture materials? How does it relate to current events or public opinion? Thinking about and answering these questions will help prepare you for class discussions and assignments.
3. I am happy to meet with you individually to answer questions that you might not have the opportunity to ask during lectures. I also would like to get to know you, to learn more about your interests and to see how I can best help you. The mechanism for this is my office hours and I recommend that you sign up for a 15-minute appointment with me. Before assignment deadlines, I will make an effort to provide extra office hours, but it is always best to plan at least one week in advance if you anticipate needing any help. I will try to stay a few minutes after each class. If you have "small" questions, then this will be an excellent time to approach me. I would like you to do as well as you can in my course, so please do not hesitate to ask questions and to get feedback on your work. To reserve an office hour slot, visit this [link](#).

4. Paper assignments should always be submitted in hard copy in class on the day they are due. Papers will be lowered by a third of a grade for every day late. For example, if your paper would receive a B+, it will get a B if you are one day late, a B- if you are two days late, and so on. Recognizing that we all have complex lives, **you are entitled to one 48-hour extension** on your neighborhood memos and/or final paper. Beyond that, **no extensions will be granted, except in case of serious illness**. If you are seriously ill, you should go to see your physician and provide a note to support any extension requests.
5. Technology in the classroom can be both a blessing and a distraction. If you must use your laptop during class, you should turn off your internet browsers and email clients. **Laptops and other electronic devices should be used strictly for note-taking purposes only. We will rely on the honor code for the reinforcement of this rule**, so please help me and your classmates create a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and sharing.

### Course Readings:

*Books to purchase (available at Book Culture: 536 W 112th St., New York, NY 10025)*

Chin, Margaret. 2005. *Sewing Women: Immigrants and the New York City Garment Industry*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Foner, Nancy. 2013. *One Out of Three: Immigrant New York in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan. 1970. *Beyond the Melting Pot, Second Edition: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

Hum, Tarry. 2014. *Making a Global Immigrant Neighborhood: Brooklyn's Sunset Park*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Smith, Robert C. 2005. *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-93.

Louie, Vivian S. M. 2004. *Compelled to Excel: Immigration, Education and Opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Padilla Peralta, Dan-el. 2015. *Undocumented: A Dominican Boy's Odyssey from a Homeless Shelter to the Ivy League*. New York: Penguin Press.

Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

### *Other readings*

Other readings include journal articles and book chapters that will be made available on the course website.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **PART 1: OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRANT NEW YORK**

#### **September 12: Introduction**

Foner, Nancy. 2007. "How Exceptional is New York? Migration and Multiculturalism in the Empire City." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30: 999-1023.

#### **September 19: Immigrant New York, Then**

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan. 1970. *Beyond the Melting Pot, Second Edition: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Introduction and Chapters on the Negroes and Puerto Ricans, pp. 1-136.

#### **September 26: Immigrant New York, Then**

Glazer, Nathan and Daniel P. Moynihan. 1970. *Beyond the Melting Pot, Second Edition: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Chapters on the Jews and Italians, pp. 137-216.

#### **October 3: Immigrant New York, Now**

Foner, Nancy. 2013. *One Out of Three: Immigrant New York in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

#### **Neighborhood memo #1 due and in-class discussion of neighborhood visits**

#### **October 10: The Ethnic Mosaic of New York City: Russian Jews, Chinese and Koreans**

Foner, Nancy. 2013. *One Out of Three: Immigrant New York in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

#### **October 17: The Ethnic Mosaic of New York City: Dominicans, Jamaicans and Mexicans**

Foner, Nancy. 2013. *One Out of Three: Immigrant New York in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapters 7, 9 and 10.

### **PART 2: ASSIMILATION AND DOMAINS OF INCORPORATION**

#### **October 24: Assimilation of Immigrants and their Children**

Alba, Richard and Victor Nee. 2003. *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-2.

Foner, Nancy. 2013. *One Out of Three: Immigrant New York in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapter 11.

**October 31: Employment and Mobility**

Chin, Margaret. 2005. *Sewing Women: Immigrants and the New York City Garment Industry*. New York: Columbia University Press. Chapters 1-7.

Faculty guest: Margaret Chin, Associate Professor of Sociology, Hunter College of CUNY

**Neighborhood memo #2 due and in-class discussion of neighborhood visits**

**November 7: Academic Holiday – no class scheduled.**

**November 14: Education and Opportunity**

Louie, Vivian S. M. 2004. *Compelled to Excel: Immigration, Education and Opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. Introduction + Chapters 1-6.

**November 21: Neighborhoods and Communities**

Hum, Tarry. 2014. *Making a Global Immigrant Neighborhood: Brooklyn's Sunset Park*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Faculty guest: Tarry Hum, Professor of Urban Studies, Queens College of CUNY

**November 28: Identity and Intergroup Relations**

Waters, Mary C. 1999. *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1-5.

**Neighborhood memo #3 due and in-class discussion of neighborhood visits**

**Final research proposal due (2 double-spaced pages)**

**December 5: The Transnational Connections**

Smith, Robert C. 2005. *Mexican New York: Transnational Lives of New Immigrants*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 1-4, pp. 1-93.

**December 12: The Undocumented Experience**

Padilla Peralta, Dan-el. 2015. *Undocumented: A Dominican Boy's Odyssey from a Homeless Shelter to the Ivy League*. New York: Penguin Press.

**Final research paper due on Friday, December 16 at 5 p.m.**

\*\*\*

### **A Final Note on Academic Integrity:**

The intellectual endeavor in which we are all engaged requires of faculty and students alike the highest level of personal and academic integrity. As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity.

Scholarship, by its very nature, is an iterative process, with ideas and insights building one upon the other. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated. Students failing to meet these responsibilities should anticipate being asked to leave Columbia.

If you have any questions about what constitutes a primary source to be cited, please come to see me during my office hours and we can talk in more details. For further information, please see: <http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity>.