GRADUATE SEMINAR IN URBAN SOCIOLOGY

SYD 6418

Fall 2011
Wednesdays 2-4:50 PM
SIPA 503

Instructor:
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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 11 AM to 12 PM

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

This course provides an overview of the major subtopics and debates in urban sociology, with some integration of research from urban geography and urban anthropology. We will focus primarily on issues of importance to American cities but will bring in comparative, international, and global perspectives where appropriate. Given the course’s cross-listing with Asian Studies, there will be special attention to cities in the region, especially Japan. The course will provide you with an opportunity to develop an original research project within a community or about a major issue confronting urban societies. These projects can be in various stages at the beginning of the course, but the point is to develop the project by engaging it with contemporary (and some classical) research and theory in urban sociology.

Some of the questions this course will address are: How have modern cities developed? What does it mean for culture, social ties, and subjective experience to live in a city? How are contemporary cities transforming? What pressures are cities experiencing as a result of heightened economic, demographic, and (neoliberal) ideological globalization? What are some of the mechanisms and effects of social exclusion and inclusion in contemporary cities? What are the recent trends and impacts of residential segregation? What are the experiences of recent immigrants and their communities in cities? How have recent structural trends affected concentrated inner city poverty? What are the causes and dynamics of homelessness in major urban areas? What is gentrification and how is it affecting communities? What are the causes of crime in urban areas? How have recent changes in welfare policy affected poor people in urban areas? How have structural pressures affected the ability of local governments to provide services? What are some of the political challenges involved in addressing contemporary urban social problems?
In pursuing these questions, we will also discuss issues of race, ethnicity, immigration and gender, and more broadly, inequality and stratification. This is because many of these issues are central to understanding the most pressing issues regarding life in contemporary cities across the world. Thus, our examination of the central questions in urban sociology will also contribute to your knowledge of other important subfields in sociology such as race and ethnicity, immigration, gender, inequality, and stratification.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Since this seminar is designed to be student-centered, we will share responsibility in addressing the questions above through discussion of course readings. Much of my responsibility has been met by organizing the readings. Thus, you will be responsible for bringing this design to a fruitful form in the classroom by engaging in the following activities.

1. “Reaction Paper” for Reading Assignments: Each week, you will prepare a “reaction paper” for the reading assignments of that week. Although the format will vary according to your individual style, your papers will generally contain the following components: a) summarization of what you identify as the two or three major ideas, findings, arguments, and/or innovations (theoretical or methodological) in the reading assignments; and b) an articulation of at least two questions stimulated by the readings that can be used as the basis for discussion. These should be a few to several solid paragraphs and are to be posted on-line by midnight before the class meets. You will be given more specifics about how to post these at our first meeting.

2. Discussion Leading: Each week, a student (or students, depending on enrollment) will lead the seminar discussion of that week’s readings. You should summarize your observations of the readings and state your focal questions for discussion in about 10 to 20 minutes to allow the class adequate time to discuss them. Since you will be doing a brief topical report on your topic of specialization (see below), you will most likely lead a discussion on a topic that is not your specialty.

3. Précis Reading: Each week, a student will present a summary (a précis) of an additional reading on the topic. This should include covering the research question, theory, methods, major findings, and contribution to the literature (argument and conclusions). You should write this up and post it on Moodle along with the discussion reading, but as a separate file. You will present this to the group in about 10 minutes to 15 minutes.

4. Discussion Participation: Since the quality of the seminar depends greatly on student participation, you are to be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for each meeting. Thus, you should have read closely all of the readings assigned for that week.

5. Brief Topical Reports (on Research Paper/Proposal): Over the course of the semester, you will be required to prepare a relatively brief report to present to class. This report is to be about a particular social or theoretical issue facing urban areas that you are focusing on in your graduate studies. You should discuss the social causes of the problem or the context of the theoretical issue and its importance to broader society. These reports are to be based on existing sources and can draw on but should go well beyond the assigned readings. You can use the suggested readings on the syllabus as a start. You should think of these reports as a way to move forward your research proposal or paper. If applicable, you can include
preliminary analysis of your own data. Each report will be presented and discussed during the seminar meeting to which it is most relevant. Your presentation will generally follow and compliment the course discussion of the assigned readings and will last from 15 to 30 minutes followed by questions and discussion.

6. Research Paper/Proposal: You are required to prepare a research proposal or original research paper depending on your stage in the research process upon entering the seminar. For example, if you came into the seminar without an ongoing research project, you can write a research proposal based on a theoretical or substantive issue you have learned about. If you started the seminar with an ongoing research project, you can use this as an opportunity to write up your findings and explore what they say about a particular theoretical issue. I will use time in the seminar to go over what the components of these proposals should be and will be available to meet individually to discuss your efforts. In general, proposals should be around 10 to 15 double spaced pages, whereas research papers should be longer, around 25 to 30 pages, and you should have the objective of submission to a journal or a conference in mind. This length assumes double spacing, 1 or 1.25 inch margins, and a font size of 12.

Note: A book you might find helpful for writing up research findings are:

SEMINAR GRADES:
Your grade for the seminar will be based on the quality of your performance with respect to the above course requirements. The allocation of points to these requirements is as follows:

1. Reaction Papers: 20%
2. Discussion Leading: 15%
3. Discussion Participation: 10%
4. Brief Topical Report: 20%
5. Research Proposal/Paper: 35%
TOTAL 100%

SEMINAR READINGS:
Readings are available on-line through the library website either through electronic reserves (for book chapters), electronic versions of journals (for articles), or as e-books.

SEMINAR OUTLINE:

Aug 24. Introduction

Skim through the *City and Community* 2006 (5:3) special issue on Jane Jacobs.

**Aug 31. Development of the Modern City and Urban Sociology**


*Précis Reading*


*Suggested Readings*


**Sept 7. Schools of Urban Sociology-- Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles (and Miami and Beijing?)**


Michael Dear (2002). “Los Angeles and the Chicago School: An Invitation to a Debate,” *City and Community*. 1(1):5-32. (If you have time, also skim comments and responses in the issue by Andrew Abbott and Harvey Molotch).

Précis Reading

Alex Stepick, Guillermo Grenier, Max Castro, Marvin Dunn. (2003). This Land is Our Land: Immigrants and Power in Miami. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press. (Chapter 1)

Suggested Readings


Andrew Abbot (1999). Department and Discipline: Chicago Sociology at One Hundred. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.


Précis Reading

Suggested Readings


Sept 21. Urban Sprawl and Suburbs


Précis Reading

Suggested Readings


Sept 28. Residential Segregation


Précis Reading

Suggested Readings


Oct 5. Immigration, Ethnic Enclaves, and the Second Generation


Précis Reading


Suggested Readings


Li Zhang (2001). Strangers in the City: Reconfigurations of Space, Power, and Social Networks Within China’s Floating Population. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (Chapters 1,2)
Oct 12. Concentrated Poverty


Précis Reading


Suggested Readings


*(Crime-related Materials)*


**Oct 19. Concentrated Poverty (Cont.), Welfare Reform, and Social Service Institutions**


**Précis Reading**


**Suggested Readings**


**Oct 26. Homelessness**


**Précis Reading**

**Suggested Readings**


**Nov 2. The Creative Class**


**Précis Reading**

**Suggested Readings**


**Nov 9. Culture, Consumption, and Bohemia**


**Précis Reading**

URBAN SOCIOLOGY SEMINAR/MARR

Suggested Readings


**Nov 16. Gentrification**


Précis Reading

Suggested Readings


**Nov 23. Politics and Resistance**


**Précis Reading**


**Suggested Readings**


Nov 30. **CLASS PROJECTS DUE**