

Instructor: Brenden Beck ([bbeck@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:bbeck@gc.cuny.edu))  
5:35pm – 6:50pm Tuesdays and Thursdays (HW 405)  
Office hours: Thursdays 4:30pm – 5:30 or by appointment (HW 1636)

## **Hunter College Soc 211: Urban Sociology**

### **Course Description**

Welcome! This course will expose you to urban sociology. We will look at how geography shapes and is shaped by society. We will read about immigration, segregation, city economics, suburbanization, policing, innovation, and more. This course will expose you both to the topics that urban sociologists study and the methods we use. As the semester progresses we will each develop a research project that pursues our individual interests. We will also ask how to create social justice in cities.

### **Course Objectives**

1. To think sociologically and spatially—to see how social forces, urban space, and individual actions shape one another.
2. To think critically about society—to question and change the status quo.
3. To learn research methods and writing skills.

### **Required Texts**

Kleniewski, Nancy & Thomas, Alexander R. (2010/2011). *Cities, Change & Conflict: A political economy of urban life*. Cengage Learning. Fourth Edition.

The other texts will be posted on Blackboard as PDFs under “Course Materials”. Be sure your Blackboard account is up and working and that it is connected to an email address you check regularly.

The book is for sale at Shakespeare and Co. on Lexington and 69<sup>th</sup> St. Unfortunately, the book is expensive. I looked far and wide for a book of similar quality and lower price, but to no avail. You might try online used booksellers, but note you will need the book by September 9th. Electronic copies and previous editions will not work.

You will need to bring each day’s readings to class in hard copy or on a tablet or laptop. You will not be allowed to access the readings on a phone during class. Most of the readings (besides the book) are on Blackboard now under “Course Materials”, so my suggestion would be to print them all off as soon as you can. At a cost of 5 cents per page this is an economical solution.

### **Requirements and Grading**

#### **20% - Class Attendance and Participation**

- 1) Students are expected to actively participate in all aspects of class. Participation is not only talking; it also listening to speakers and asking questions when confused.

- 2) Chronic lateness and/or absences will negatively affect your participation grade.
- 3) You are required to have read and annotated all assigned readings regardless of whether they are discussed in class. Failure to bring the readings will result in a loss of participation points for that day.

### **20% - Quizzes**

Five times throughout the semester, during the first ten minutes of class, you will complete a short quiz. The quizzes will ask questions about the readings for that day's class. You will be allowed to refer the readings during the quizzes, another good reason to annotate the readings and bring them to class. If you are absent with a legitimate excuse the day of a quiz you can make it up during my office hours in HW 1636 or schedule another make-up time no later than one week after the quiz. Your lowest quiz score of the semester will be dropped. You will need to bring a pen or pencil to class.

### **20% - Midterm Exam**

You will have a take-home essay exam that will cover multiple topics from the readings and classes. You will need to demonstrate both an understanding of the readings and a critical analysis of them in two short essays.

### **20% - Research paper and presentation**

You will complete a 6 to 8 page research paper on a topic or place of your choosing. At the end of the semester you will present your research to the class with a five-minute presentation. I'll provide details about the research paper in the first few weeks of class.

### **20% - Final Exam**

You will have a take home, essay exam that will cover all the topics covered in class (with emphasis on the second half of the course). There will be two short essays.

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism of any kind will be grounds for failing the course. Review Hunter's academic honesty policies at: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/student-conduct/academic-integrity>.

### **Classroom Discussion**

Most of our class sessions will involve discussion. Good discussions require that everyone participate but also that everyone listen so be sure to "step up and step back". If you have spoken a lot, speak less, and if you haven't contributed recently, add your voice. I will cold call on students so you should be prepared to answer when called on.

You are not allowed to use your cell phone or the internet during class. If a student does use a laptop or tablet for purposes other than reading or note taking, they will lose participation points for the day and no longer be able to use the device in class.

## **Reading**

You will complete the assigned readings by the day for which they're assigned. I have selected a manageable amount of reading (about 30 pages per class), but completing it will still require considerable butt-in-chair reading time. Probably about two hours for each class. As with any college course, most of your learning will occur outside the classroom. If you get stuck on or bored with a passage try reading out loud or setting a timer with planned breaks. Turning off the internet and phone is helpful too.

Always annotate while you read and come to class with the reading's (1) take-home message and (2) a question you still have about the reading written down. The best way to prepare for class and for the exams is to read each text twice.

## **Contacting Me**

Before you email me, check the syllabus. Many questions are answered herein. If that doesn't work, email a fellow student. If that is similarly fruitless, email me. If I don't respond within 48 hours, email me again.

## **Food in Class**

Sometimes, especially in evening classes like this one, a snack helps one stay energized and engaged. Please confine your snacks to the non-smelly kind so as not to distract the rest of us. Granola bars, carrots, and beef jerky are good options. French fries, soup, and jambalaya are not as good.

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## **Schedule**

### **August 28<sup>th</sup> – Introduction**

Syllabus

### **September 2<sup>nd</sup> – Introduction**

Review Syllabus

Baldwin, "Fifth Avenue, Uptown"

### **September 4<sup>th</sup> – Urban Theory**

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 2: Theoretical Perspectives on the City", available on Blackboard

### **September 9<sup>th</sup> – U.S. Urbanization**

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 4: Urban Development in the United States"

Solnit, "The Octopus and its Grandchildren"

### **September 11<sup>th</sup> – U.S. Suburbanization**

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 5: Cities, Suburbs, and Metropolitan Areas"  
Vega & Eligon, "Deep Tensions Rise to Surface After Ferguson Shooting"

### **September 16<sup>th</sup> – Modernism and Modernization**

\*\*Research Assignment Handed Out

Berman, "Robert Moses: the Expressway World"

Richlin-Klonsky et al., "A Guide to Writing Sociology Papers", pages TBD

Optional reading: Jacobs, "The Use of Sidewalks: Safety"

### **September 18<sup>th</sup> – Racism, Segregation, and Ghettoization**

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 9: African Americans in Cities", pages 191 – 206 only

Logan and Stults, "The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis", skim for main trends and ideas

Look at the "Racial/Ethnic Distribution" map for your area here (you might have to click "View More Maps"):

<http://projects.nytimes.com/census/2010/explorer>

### **September 23<sup>rd</sup> – No Class**

Classes follow a Friday schedule

### **September 30<sup>th</sup> – Postmodernism and Los Angeles**

Davis, "City of Quartz"

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Restructuring of the Metro Los Angeles Economy" p. 112, Box 5.4

### **October 2<sup>nd</sup> – Class Division and "Development"**

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 10: Social Class and Neighborhoods"

Ulam, "Subsidizing Inequality"

Look at the "Median Household Income" map for your area here (you might have to click "View More Maps"):

<http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2014/01/05/poverty-map/>

### **October 7<sup>th</sup> – Gender and Sexuality in Cities**

\*\*Research Topic Due

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 11: Women in Cities"

Chauncey, "Building Gay Enclaves", pages TBD

### **October 9<sup>th</sup> – Political Economy of Cities**

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 12: The Urban Economy"

### **October 14<sup>th</sup> – Political Economy of Cities**

\*\*Midterm handed out

Kleniewski & Thomas, "Chapter 13: Local Government and Finances"

### **October 16<sup>th</sup> – Global Cities**

Choose *one* of the following readings:

Kleniewski & Thomas, “Chapter 6: Cities in Europe”

Kleniewski & Thomas, “Chapter 7: Cities in the Developing World”

Davis, “The Urban Climactic” from *Planet of Slums*

Katz, “Why Don’t American Cities Burn?”

Sassen, “The Global City: Introducing A Concept”

### **October 21<sup>st</sup> – Midterm Due**

### **October 23<sup>rd</sup> – Gentrification – Guest Professor: Jacob Lederman**

Readings TBD

### **October 28<sup>th</sup> – Gentrification – Guest Professor: Jacob Lederman**

\*\*Online assignment due before class

### **October 30<sup>th</sup> – Housing and Homelessness**

DeFilipis and Fraser, “Why Do We Want Mixed-Income Housing and Neighborhoods?”

This American Life, “House Rules”, listen to “Act One: Rental Gymnastics”

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/512/house-rules?act=1#play>

Navarro, “Public Housing in New York Reaches a Fiscal Crisis”

### **November 4<sup>th</sup> – Housing and Homelessness – Guest Professor: Christian Seiner**

Reading TBD

### **November 6<sup>th</sup> – Culture of Poverty**

\*\*Annotated syllabus due

Wilson, “The Truly Disadvantaged”

Katz, “The Undeserving Poor”

### **November 11<sup>th</sup> – Social Control and the City**

Goffman, “On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City”

Optional reading: Wacquant, “Deadly Symbiosis”

### **November 13<sup>th</sup> – Social Control and the City**

Sampson, “Broken Windows and the Meaning of Disorder”

### **November 18<sup>th</sup> – Social Control and the City – Guest Professor: Jack Norton**

Gilmore, “Forgotten Places”

### **November 20<sup>th</sup> – Im/migration**

Kleniewski & Thomas, “Chapter 8: Immigrants, Ethnic Groups, and the City”

Optional reading: Dear and Lucero, “Postborder Cities, Postborder World”

### **November 25<sup>th</sup> – What Is to Be Done?**

Harvey “Right to the City”

Additional reading TBD

### **December 2<sup>nd</sup> – Student Presentations**

**December 4<sup>th</sup> – What Is to Be Done?**

Guest speakers: Activist Lauren Melodia from Milk Not Jails; an activist from the Right to the City Alliance; and a representative from City Councilmember Juamanee Williams' office.

**December 9<sup>th</sup> – Student Presentations**

**December 11<sup>th</sup> – Student Presentations**

\*\*Final exam handed out

**December 19<sup>th</sup> – Final Exam Due**

By 5:00pm to Turnitin.com

**December 23<sup>rd</sup> – Research Paper Due**

By 5:00pm to Turnitin.com

**Note:** I may change part of the course structure during the semester to better fit the flow of the class.