

Jacques Leclercq Chair, UC Louvain
“Studying Cities: Urban Sociology in the Twenty-First Century”
March 6-10, 2023
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Course Description:

This course will be an intensive overview of a variety of sociological theories, topics, and approaches for studying cities and urban life. The aim is to expose students to key explanations and debates in the subfield and show them how to situate their own work in urban theoretical frameworks. The course will look at such topics as urban political economy, race and space, inequality, segregation, racial capitalism, gentrification, and global urban sociology. Most importantly, students will discuss their own topics in relation to these and other urban sociological literatures.

As the editor of *City & Community*, the official journal of the Community and Urban Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association and a leading journal in urban sociology, I will be drawing heavily from my experiences and familiarity with its authors and content. I will also offer guidance and tips with the journal article publication process.

Assignments:

Along with doing the readings and regular in-class participation, students will also be required to submit a short paper of 5 pages (double-spaced) that introduces a topic for a (feasible) research project and situates that topic in an urban literature. This would ideally be a topic you will actually be studying, but this is not required. If you do not plan to ultimately conduct an “urban” study and contribute to an urban literature, then this assignment will serve as an exercise in how to place your work within a different framework and ask different research questions. I will provide specific details on this assignment during the week.

Course Schedule:

Monday, March 6: Classical and Contemporary Urban Sociology: An Overview

The first session will situate urban sociology among other subdisciplines in urban studies and as a distinct subfield within the discipline of sociology. We will also briefly discuss the subfield’s history, current key debates, emerging topics and theories, and existing gaps in the literature.

Readings:

- Wolman, Harold, William Barnes, Jennifer Clark, Samantha Friedman, Richard Harris, Jeffrey Lin & Thomas Ogorzalek. 2022. “The State of Urban Research: Views Across the Disciplines.” *Journal of Urban Affairs*. DOI: 10.1080/07352166.2022.2080073
- Sampson, Robert. 2019. “Foreword: *The City* for the Twenty-first Century.” In *The City*, by Robert Park and Ernest Burgess. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Tuesday, March 7: Inequality

This session will focus on the first of three main areas of inquiry in urban sociology. Urban inequality has been a central concern in sociological scholarship, covering such topics as race and space, segregation, poverty, and uneven economic development. We will discuss key theories and frameworks for making sense of unequal conditions in today's city.

Readings:

- Hunter, Marcus Anthony and Zandria F. Robinson. 2016. "The Sociology of Urban Black America." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 42:385-405.
- Hwang, Jackelyn and Tyler W. McDaniel. 2022. "Racialized Reshuffling: Urban Change and the Persistence of Segregation in the Twenty-First Century." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 48: 397-419.

Wednesday, March 8: Displacement

Displacement is the next area of inquiry in urban sociology that we will cover. As a cause and consequence of a variety of urban problems, direct and indirect displacement is an important issue in urban sociology. In this session we will discuss displacement in relation to such topics as gentrification, housing, urban renewal and development, and environmental disasters.

Readings:

- Brown-Saracino, Japonica. 2017. "Explicating Divided Approaches to Gentrification and Growing Income Inequality." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 43: 515-39.
- DeLuca, Stefanie and Eva Rosen. 2022. "Housing Insecurity Among the Poor Today." *Annual Review of Sociology*. Volume 48.

Thursday, March 9: The Global

The final area of inquiry for this course is "the global," or the different ways that global forces act upon cities. We will discuss how a variety of global migrations, markets, and mobilities shape urban life and are being theorized. This session will also consider the potential transferability of urban sociological theories that have been developed in distinct global contexts to other, very different urban contexts.

Readings:

- Garrido, Marco; Ren, Xuefei; and Liza Weinstein. 2021. "Toward a Global Urban Sociology: Keywords." *City & Community*. 20(1): 4-12.
- Hoekstra, Erin and Joseph Gerteis. 2019. "The Civic Side of Diversity: Ambivalence and Belonging at the Neighborhood Level." *City & Community*. 18(1): 195-212.

- Aalbers, Manuel. 2017. "The Variegated Financialization of Housing." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 41(4): 542-554.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2005. "The Global City: Introducing a Concept." *Brown Journal of World Affairs*. 11(2): 27-43.

Friday, March 10: Talk

"A Better Gentrification: Moral Justifications and Race in a Small American City"

Abstract:

Based on a forthcoming book, this talk addresses the puzzle of how stakeholders in gentrification come to justify the process as morally good amid racial difference and potential harm. Gentrification has long had two strong, intertwined associations. One is with White gentrifiers' appreciation for racial and ethnic minorities and the working class, and the other is with the residential and social displacement of those groups. Combining them reveals a moral dilemma: gentrifiers put at risk the very people and conditions they appreciate and don't want to displace. And small city gentrification's distinct characteristics make this dilemma quite pronounced. When agents of gentrification know about the process's harms toward vulnerable minority groups, what explains their optimism toward it? How do they come to identify themselves and gentrification as morally good? How do these moral ideas shape their actions within their city? And what roles do racial meanings play in how they make sense of the process? Based on the case of Newburgh, a small postindustrial city of 28,000 people located sixty miles north of New York City, this talk addresses these questions. It argues that when small cities revitalize through gentrification, the stakeholders in the process end up occupying powerful roles that lead them to morally justify their actions, which includes accounting for social differences in fundamentally self-serving ways that reproduce inequalities.