

Sociology/USP 901, Spring 2021:  
**Urban Social Structure**  
Thursdays, 3:00 – 5:40 pm, Microsoft Teams

Prof. Marcus Britton  
E-mail: [britton@uwm.edu](mailto:britton@uwm.edu)

### **Course Overview**

In sociology, structural perspectives emphasize that understanding social organization requires careful analysis of how individuals and other social actors are distributed across social positions, as well as the patterns of interactions and relationships between these positions. Such perspectives assert that examining the development and consequences of social structures is a more fruitful path to understanding human societies than attending to individual cognition or cultural values and norms, or “what goes on in people’s heads.” This course applies structural perspectives to the analysis of urban neighborhoods, cities, and metropolitan regions, while also comparing social structural perspectives with those that emphasize the social psychological and cultural dimensions of urban life. Our focus will be primarily on neighborhoods, cities and metropolitan regions in the contemporary United States, but we will also selectively compare and contrast these urban social structures with those in other times and places. While we will primarily consider sociological perspectives on urban social organization, we will also consider relevant perspectives from urban planning, geography, history, political science and policy research.

### **Required Texts**

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 2007. *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Gonzalez, George A. 2009. *Urban Sprawl, Global Warming and the Empire of Capital*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Neal, Zachary. 2013. *The Connected City: How Networks are Shaping the Modern Metropolis*. New York: Routledge. Available on-line at <https://www-taylorfrancis-com.ezproxy.lib.uwm.edu/books/connected-city-zachary-neal/10.4324/9780203101728>

Perry, Andre. 2020. *Know Your Price: Valuing Black Property and Black Lives in America’s Black Cities*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Perry, Evelyn M. 2017. *Live and Let Live: Diversity, Conflict and Community in an Integrated Neighborhood*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Stacey, Paul. 2019. *State of Slum: Precarity and Informal Governance at the Margins in Accra*. London: Zed Books.

Sullivan, Esther. 2018. *Manufactured Insecurity: Mobile Home Parks and Americans' Tenuous Right to Place*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

All other assigned readings will be available on the course Canvas site in PDF format.

### **Assignments & Grading**

Class Participation: I expect each student in the class to complete all the assigned readings each week and to participate actively in the class discussion.

Response Papers: Each student will write seven short response papers over the course of the semester. Students whose last names begin with a letter A – M should submit a response paper for each EVEN week of the semester (see the course schedule below), while students whose last names begin with a letter N – Z should submit a response paper for each ODD week of the semester. Response papers should include coherent reflections that demonstrate that you have completed the assigned readings and given them some thought. Each response paper may include brief statements of what you see as the major themes that cut across the assigned readings, findings you thought were particularly surprising or significant, and critiques of specific authors' logic, method or interpretation of evidence. Your response papers should NOT merely summarize each assigned reading but instead focus on identifying general themes and/or advancing critiques. Your response paper should end with 2 or 3 questions that will inform our class discussion.

Discussion Facilitation: During our first class, I will ask each student to sign up to be a co-facilitator for one class meeting. As co-facilitator, you will initiate the evening's discussion by making a brief (ca. 5-minute), informal presentation in which you provide a broad overview of the assigned readings and your reactions to them. Your informal presentation should NOT summarize each reading in detail, but instead identify general themes and present critiques, either of arguments or interpretations offered by specific authors or of the overall approach to the topic taken by the assigned readings as whole. Your goal should be to get the discussion going—so don't hesitate to be creative and even provocative! Toward that end, you should produce and e-mail to the class a document that includes at least 3-5 discussion questions about each assigned reading. You will then take a lead role (in collaboration with me) in keeping the discussion going throughout the evening's class.

Comparative Analysis of Cities: For this assignment, students will write a slightly longer paper (5 to 6 pages, double spaced), which compares and contrasts two cities and/or metropolitan regions on some specific dimension related to at least one of the broad topics we will cover this semester, such as design and use of public spaces, neighboring, policing and social control, urban sprawl, residential segregation, urban unrest, or some other closely related topic. The cities or

regions you select may but need not be in the United States. More detailed instructions for this assignment will be available on Canvas by mid-February. The comparative paper will be due before the beginning of our final class meeting before spring break (i.e., on March 18<sup>th</sup>, aka Week 8).

Final Paper: My goal with the final paper assignment is to give you an opportunity to reflect more deeply on some of the assigned readings from the semester, delve further into one or more of the topics we covered (or a closely related one), and make progress on a major task that you are required to complete to finish your degree (e.g., a preliminary exam, your master’s proposal or thesis, or your dissertation). Accordingly, you may select some variation on one of the following options: a literature review, a “white paper”/policy recommendation, or a research proposal. Whichever option you choose, the final product should comprise approximately 15 double-spaced pages and should include complete documentation of your sources using ASA or APA format for both in-text citations and your reference list. Your cited sources should include, but not be limited to, several of the assigned readings from the course. Due dates associated with this assignment are as follows:

- 1) You must submit a one-page prospectus outlining your topic and approach at the beginning of class on April 15th. You should also be prepared to discuss your topic briefly with the class.
- 2) Your final paper must be uploaded to Canvas by 11:59 pm on Saturday, May 22nd.

In addition, I encourage you to submit a rough draft of your paper in advance of the deadline, ideally by the last day of class (Thursday, May 6th). I will do my best to provide feedback on your draft if I receive it after that, but I cannot guarantee that you will receive a detailed review.

#### Grading Scale

Class Participation	15%	Discussion Facilitation	15%
Comparative Analysis Paper	10%	Response Papers	25%
Final Paper	25%		

95% = A; 90% = A-; 97% = B+; 94% = B; 80% = B-; 70% = C-; 60% = D- ; >60% = F

#### Policies

*Attendance and class participation.* As noted above, it is essential that you come to each class meeting prepared, having completed all the assigned readings and prepared to participate actively in class discussion. Attendance is required. *Repeated absences and/or failure to participate in discussions will result in a lower grade.* Please err on the side of leaving your camera on during the duration of each class meeting. Meeting virtually tends to limit the community-building and collective participation benefits of a doctoral seminar, so let’s mitigate that as much as we can by remaining as “present” as possible.

*Classroom environment.* Many of the assigned readings express strong, controversial political views, explicitly or otherwise. I encourage you to challenge the perspectives offered by the

assigned readings, by me, and by your fellow students. However, please voice opinions, disagreements and criticism in a respectful tone; I will make every effort to do the same. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the classroom environment provides both a venue for the free exchange of ideas and perspectives and a welcoming, respectful environment.

*Grading:* Except in cases of medical or family emergency or similar circumstances, late work will not be accepted. Please contact me via e-mail as soon as possible in the event of such an emergency.

*Disability Accommodation:* To request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the UWM Accessibility Resource Center and inform me as soon as possible about special accommodations so that I can best meet your needs. The Accessibility Resource Center, Mitchell Hall Room 112, (414) 229-6287, <http://www4.uwm.edu/arc/>

## Course Schedule

### Part I: Social Structures, Social Psychology & History: Perspectives on the Urban

*Week 1: Introductions (1/28)*

*Week 2: Sociological Perspectives on Social Organization & Social Structure (2/4)*

Mayhew, Bruce H. 1980. "Structuralism vs. Individualism: Part 1, Shadowboxing in the Dark." *Social Forces* 59(2):335–74.

Blau, Peter. 1977. "A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure." *American Journal of Sociology* 83(1):26–54.

Britton, Marcus L. 2011. "Close Together, but Worlds Apart? Residential Integration and Interethnic Friendship in Houston." *City & Community* 10(2):182–204.

Small, Mario L. 2002. "Culture, Cohorts and Social Organization Theory: Understanding Local Participation in a Latino Housing Project." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(1):1–54.

*Week 3: Cities and Urbanism – Social Psychological and Historical Perspectives (2/11)*

Wirth, Louis. 1938. "Urbanism as a Way of Life." *American Journal of Sociology* 44(1):1–24.

Lofland, Lyn. 1973. "Chapter 1 / The Problematic World of Strangers" and "Part 1 / Urban Public Order: The Historical Transformation." Pp. 3–91 in *World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Space*. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Oliver, J. Eric. 2003. "Mental Life and the Metropolis in Suburban America: The Psychological Correlates of Metropolitan Place Characteristics." *Urban Affairs Review* 39(2):228–53.

Massey, Douglas S. 2005. "Chapter 6: Post-Industrial Urbanism." Pp. 203–52 in *Strangers in a Strange Land: Humans in an Urbanizing World*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

### Part II: Special Event

*Week 4: Guest Speaker, Esther Sullivan (2/18)*

Sullivan, Esther. 2018. *Manufactured Insecurity: Mobile Home Parks and Americans' Tenuous Right to Place*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

### **Part III: Public & Parochial Spaces; Neighborhoods as Sites of Social Interaction**

#### *Week 5: Public Space (2/25)*

Jacobs, Jane. 1993 [1961]. “Chapter 2 / The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety” and “Chapter 3 / The Uses of Sidewalks: Contact.” Pp. 37–96 in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Modern Library Edition. New York: Modern Library.

Lofland, Lyn. 1998. “Chapter 1: Toward of Geography and History of the Public Realm” and “The Normative or ‘Legal’ System: Patterns and Principles.” Pp. 1–50 in *The Public Realm: Exploring the City’s Quintessential Social Territory*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Blumenberg, Evelyn, and Renia Ehrenfeucht. 2008. “Civil Liberties and the Regulation of Public Space: The Case of Sidewalks in Las Vegas.” *Environment and Planning A* 40: 303–22.

Britton, Marcus L. 2008. “‘My Regular Spot’: Race and Territory in Urban Public Space.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 37(4):442–68.

#### *Week 6: Neighbors and Neighboring (3/4)*

Neal, “Chapter 2 / Community: Lost or Found,” “Chapter 3 / Subculture / Finding Your Crowd in a Crowd,” and “Chapter 5 / Form / Getting from Here to There,” pp. 11–49, 69–87

Hampton, Keith, and Barry Wellman. 2003. “Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet Supports Community and Social Capital in a Wired Suburb.” *City & Community* 2(4):277–311.

Rothman, Hal. 2002. “Chapter 11 / Community from Nothingness: Neighborhoods of Affinity.” Pp. 291–316 in *Neon Metropolis: How Las Vegas Started the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge.

Shaw, Todd C., Kirk A. Foster, and Barbara Combs. 2020. “Disconnected in the Mecca? Black Social Media Usage and Levels of Engagement in Atlanta.” *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2020.1826326>

#### *Week 7: Neighborhood Boundaries, Social Cohesion & Social Control (3/11)*

Suttles, Gerald. 1972. “Chapter 2: The Defended Neighborhood” and “Chapter 3: The Expanding Community of Limited Liability.” Pp. 21–65 in *The Social Construction of Communities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sampson, Robert. 2012. "Chapter 6 / 'Broken Window' and the Meanings of Disorder," and "Chapter 7 / The Theory of Collective Efficacy." Pp. 121–78 in *The Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Carr, Patrick J. 2003. "The New Parochialism: The Implications of the Beltway Case for Arguments Concerning Informal Social Control." *American Journal of Sociology* 108(6):1249–91.

Hirschfield, Paul. 2020. "Policing the Police: U.S. and European Models." *Journal of Democracy* 31(4):166–81.

*Week 8: Neighbors & Neighborhood: Case Study (3/18)*

Perry, Evelyn M. 2017. *Live and Let Live: Diversity, Conflict and Community in an Integrated Neighborhood*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press. (read all ca. 200 pages)

Spring Break: March 21<sup>st</sup> – March 28<sup>th</sup>

#### **Part IV: Place-based Inequality in Urban America and Beyond**

*Week 9: Urban Sprawl and Metropolitan Regions (4/1)*

Neal, "Chapter 7 / Regional: From City to Metropolis," pp. 109–24  
Gonzalez, *Urban Sprawl, Global Warming and the Empire of Capital*, (read entire book)

*Week 10: Residential Segregation & Place-based Inequality (4/8)*

Selections from Rast, Joel. 2019. *The Origins of the Dual City: Housing, Race and Redevelopment in Twentieth Century Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*Week 11: Residential Segregation & Place-based Inequality, continued (4/15)*

Korver-Glenn, Elizabeth. 2018. "Compounding Inequalities: How Racial Stereotypes and Discrimination Accumulate across the Stages of Housing Exchange." *American Sociological Review* 83(4):627–56.

Perry, Andre. 2020. *Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America's Black Cities*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.

*Week 12: Placed-Based Inequality in the Global South (4/22)*

Garrido, Marco Z. 2019. *The Patchwork City: Class, Space and Politics in Metro Manila*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

*Week 13: Place-based Inequality in the Global South, continued (4/29)*

Stacey, Paul. 2019. *State of the Slum: Precarity and Informal Governance at the Margins in Accra*. London: Zed Books.

*Week 14: Urban Unrest as Resistance to Segregation & Inequality (5/6)*

Abu-Lughod, Janet L. 2007. *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*. Oxford University Press. READ pp. 3–125 and (a) pp. 129–94 (NYC) OR (b) pp. 197–295 (LA)