

Prof. Isaac Martin
469 Social Sciences Building
Phone: x4-5589
Office Hours: M, T 4:00-5:00 PM

Spring 2009
MWF 10:00-10:50
Center Hall 214

URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING 3: THE CITY AND SOCIAL THEORY

This is a course in *how to read social theory*, with a focus on theories of the city. Social theory emerged in rapidly urbanizing societies, and the first social theorists were people who watched firsthand as rural life was transformed by the growth of cities. They were theorists because they asked what this transformation meant for human social life, and because they tried to come up with answers that were more *abstract* than the history of any particular city or society; that were reasonably *complete* in the sense that their assumptions were explicit; and that were *logically consistent*.

Every urbanizing society has had its social theorists. We will focus on the tradition of modern European and American social theory, with an emphasis on the last 120 years or so. By the end of the course, you will know a lot about the social theories that are foundational in contemporary urban studies as that subject is taught in American universities. You will also have new skills for reading and understanding difficult theoretical texts. And you will see the city around you differently.

The readings are arranged roughly in order of scale, beginning with the effects of urban life on the fleeting experiences of the individual city-dweller, and concluding with the permanent effects of urbanization on the planet as a whole.

Requirements

You are expected to attend all lectures, to do the reading on time, and to come to class prepared to discuss the reading. You are also expected to comply with the section attendance and participation policies of your TA.

Because this is a course in *reading* social theory, the most important and most distinctive requirement for this course will be a series of eight short, weekly *reading reflection assignments*. These assignments are designed to achieve two purposes: (1) to keep you on track with the readings and (2) to provoke careful and critical reading. These assignments will vary. Some of these assignments involve short-answer queries. Others involve writing assignments of at most 2-3 paragraphs.

The reading reflection assignments will be handed out or presented orally in lecture, and the due dates will be announced, at least three full days before they are due. *This means you need to come to lecture regularly to get the assignments*. One reading reflection assignment will be due every week beginning in week 2 and ending in week 9. Each is worth five points, and the grading rubric is simple: you will receive full credit (5 points) if you complete the assignment on time; you will receive zero credit if you do not complete the assignment on time, or if you turn in work that is copied or faked or obviously half-hearted.

You are required to complete seven of the eight reading reflection assignments, for a total of 35 points toward your final grade. These reading reflection assignments comprise the *greatest* part of your course grade. If—and only if—you keep up with the scheduled readings, these assignments should also be the *easiest* part of your grade.

The grade will be based on the following:

- Section attendance and participation (15%)
- Reading reflection assignments (35%)
- A final exam (cumulative) on Monday, June 8 (25%)
- A short final paper of no more than 5 double-spaced pages, due on Friday, June 5 (25%)

The dates of the lectures and midterm exams are subject to change. Any changes to the schedule of exams or lectures will be announced in class.

Schedule of topics and required readings

WEEK 1. THE PLACE OF THE CITY IN SOCIAL THEORY

We will use a classic theoretical essay in urban sociology to introduce the themes of the course, and to practice analyzing theoretical arguments.

Required For Wed., April 1:

Ferdinand Tönnies. 2001 (orig. 1887). *Community and Civil Society*. Edited by Jose Harris. Translated by Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis. New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 17-19, 27-29, 52-54, 247-261.

WEEK 2. THE METROPOLIS AND MENTAL LIFE

The city is a population cluster—a lot of strangers living very close together. This is still a new way of living for human beings. The rapid growth of cities in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century led many scientists to propose new theories of how urban living affected the behavior of individual humans. We will treat these theories as an occasion to discuss the theory of individual action.

Required for Mon., April 6:

Gustave Le Bon. 1896. *The Crowd: A Study in the Popular Mind*. New York: MacMillan. Pp. 1-69.

Required for Wed., April 8:

Georg Simmel. 1950 (orig. 1902). "The Metropolis and Mental Life." Pp. 409-424 in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Edited and translated by Kurt Wolff. New York: The Free Press.

WEEK 3. COMMUNITIES AND SUBCULTURES

Do cities have their own cultures? We will review a mid-twentieth century debate about cities in order to discuss a debate about the nature of society.

Required for Mon, April 13:

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

Required for Wed., April 15:

Herbert Gans. 1994 (orig. 1961). "Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life: A Reevaluation of Definitions." Pp. 170-195 in *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times*. Edited by Philip Kasinitz. New York: New York University Press.

Required for Fri., April 17:

Claude Fischer. 1975. "Toward a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism." *American Journal of Sociology* 80 (6): 1319-1341.

WEEK 4. ZONES, ENCLAVES, AND GHETTOS

The city is a spatial order in which some people are brought together and others kept apart. We will review debates about how this spatial order arises, and we will use these debates as an occasion to discuss some different theories of social order in general.

Required for Mon, April 20:

Harvey W. Zorbaugh. 1926. "The Natural Areas of the City." Pp. 217-229 in *The Urban Community*. Edited by Ernest W. Burgess. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Required for Wed., April 22:

Thomas C. Schelling. 1972. "A Process of Residential Segregation: Neighborhood Tipping." Pp. 157-184 in *Racial Discrimination in Economic Life*. Edited by Anthony H. Pascal. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.

Required for Fri., April 24:

Loïc Wacquant. 2007. "Territorial Stigmatization in the Age of Advanced Marginality." *Thesis Eleven* 91: 66-77.

WEEK 5. LOCAL DEMOCRACY

The city is also a self-governing unit. We will look at some theories of how cities govern themselves in the United States, and we will pose some general questions about the quality of city-level democracy.

Required for Mon., April 27:

Charles M. Tiebout. 1956. "A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures." *The Journal of Political Economy* 64 (5): 416-426.

Required for Wed., April 29:

Harvey Molotch. 1976. "The City as a Growth Machine." *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (2): 309-332.

Required for Fri., May 1:

J. Eric Oliver. 2001. "The Rise of a Suburban Demos." Pp. 1-32 in *Democracy in Suburbia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

WEEK 6. CITIES AND STATES

Cities are also centers of political power: every state in the history of the world has had its capital. Why? We will use some classic readings here to discuss theories of the state.

Required for Mon., May 4: Max Weber. 1966 (orig. 1923). "Citizenship." Pp. 233-249 in *General Economic History*. Translated by Frank H. Knight. New York: Collier.

Required for Weds., May 6: Paul Peterson. 1981. "The Interests of the Limited City." Pp. 17-38 in *City Limits*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

WEEK 7. CITIES UNDER CAPITALISM

A city is an immense concentration of wealth, as well as a center of production and of exchange. We will look at theories of how these great concentrations of economic activity arise, in order to pose a more general question about the driving forces of social change.

Required for Mon., May 11: Edward Ullman. 1941. "A Theory of Location for Cities." *American Journal of Sociology* 46 (6): 853-864. [NB. An informal and math-free introduction to central place theory, which might otherwise be too technical for an introductory USP class.]

Required for Wed., May 13: David Harvey. 2008. "The Right to the City." *New Left Review* 53: 23-40.

WEEK 8. THE GLOBAL CITY

Thanks to technologies for communication and transportation, humans can interact with each other over greater distances today than ever before. Is it possible that cities as distant as London and Tokyo are now so connected that they are in some sense a single city? We will be discussing the limits of the concept of the city—and also the boundaries of other social entities.

Required for Mon., May 18: John Friedmann. 1986. "The World City Hypothesis." *Development and Change* 17 (1): 69-83.

Required for Wed., May 20: Saskia Sassen. 2001. *The Global City*, Second Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Pp. xvii-xxiii, 345-363.

WEEK 9. THE CITY AS A NORMATIVE IDEAL

Cities are many things, but are they good? We will consider whether the city, as a human institution subject to moral evaluation, is to be celebrated or condemned.

No class Mon., May 25.

Required for Wed., May 27: Iris Marion Young. 1990. "City Life and Difference." Pp. 226-256 in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

WEEK 10. THE CITY OF THE FUTURE

Social theory is not only about explaining the world as we find it: it is also about explaining how we might bring about the world as it could be. We will examine two very different visions of the desirable urban future—both of which were called "new urbanism"—in order to pose some questions about the relationship between theory and practice.

Required for Mon., June 1:

Ivan Chatcheglov. 2006 (orig. 1953). "Formulary for a New Urbanism." Translated by Ken Knabb. <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/Chatcheglov.htm>

Required for Wed., June 3:

Douglas Kelbaugh. 1997. "The New Urbanism." Pp. 111-138 in *Common Place: Toward Neighborhood and Regional Design*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

FINAL PAPER DUE FRIDAY JUNE 5

FINAL EXAM MONDAY JUNE 8