Course Description

Whether one lives in the city, its suburbs, or in a small town, the changes affecting urban America are vast and significant in our lives. Some view the modern city as an open sore that repels and infects us with crime, vice, and congestion. Others view the city as an open invitation to explore, be anonymous, or to just have fun. Throughout this course we will try to understand how the city as a public space is evolving, what this means for different people, and how people deal with these changes. How do people negotiate the city as “a world of strangers” and deal with the unfamiliarity and incivility of public space? What is the impact of deindustrialization and gentrification on minority groups and the urban poor? How do the homeless cope in an often hostile and unforgiving environment? What struggles are waged to define an urban identity? Is the city becoming an image to consume as much as a place to consume? In considering many perspectives I hope by the end of the semester we might begin to reflect upon the complexity of urban life—the good, the bad, and the ugly—in a manner that helps us deal with it in a more humane and progressive way.

Evaluation

There will be three in-class exams (two midterms and a final). Each exam is worth 1/3 of your course grade and each will consist of an in-class exam and a take-home essay of no more than 5 double-spaced (12-font) typewritten pages. Make-up exams will be penalized one grade except for students with a doctor-verified medical reason.

Texts


Students will also be responsible for a small collection of assigned readings that are on reserve in the library and any video materials presented in class. If you are having any trouble with the course, readings, or lectures, please see me immediately so we can work things out. I am available during office hours and by appointment, or you can E-mail me at the address noted above.
Course Outline

*denotes reading on reserve.
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Week 1; Aug. 30 - Sept. 3.  Introduction to course.
Life in the pre-industrial city.


Week 2; Sept. 8 - 10.  Industrialism and the urban experience.

Read: *Lofland, chapters 3-4.

Week 3; Sept. 13 - 17.  Gender and public space.


Week 4; Sept. 20 - 24.  The urban tradition in sociology.


Week 5; Sept. 27 - Oct. 1.  Midterm exam #1, Monday, Sept. 27. Essay Questions due Wed.

Begin Conflict perspective on urbanism.


Week 6; Oct. 4 - 8.  Suburbanization: choices by design.

~Boddy, Trevor. “Underground and Overhead: Building the Analogous City.”

Week 7; Oct. 11 - 15. Gentrification and the struggle over public space.

Week 8; Oct. 18 - 22. Changing subcultures in an urban community.

Read: Anderson, chapters 3-4.

Week 9; Oct. 25 - 29. Street wisdom: negotiating public civility.

Read: Anderson, chapters 6-8, conclusion.

Week 10; Nov. 1 - 5. Homelessness: private lives in public spaces.


Week 11; Nov. 8 - 12. Continue previous topic and **Midterm exam #2, Friday, Nov. 12.**

Read: Liebow, part 2.

Week 12; Nov. 15 - 19. The making of a multicultural city. **Essay questions due Monday.**

Read: Portes, Alejandro and Alex Stepick. *City on the Edge*, chapters 1-4.

Week 13; Nov. 22 - 24. Ethnic relations: solidarity and difference.

Read: Portes and Stepick, chapters 5-9.

Week 14; Nov. 29 - Dec. 3. Changing forms of urban space.

~Soja, Edward. “Inside Exopolis: Scenes from Orange County.”
~Winner, Langdon. “Silicon Valley Mystery House.”

Week 15; Dec. 6 - 10. Consuming public places.

Read: ~Crawford, Margaret. “The World of the Shopping Mall.”
~Boyer, M. Christine. “Cities for Sale: Merchandizing History at South Street Seaport.”
~Sorkin, Michael. “See You in Disneyland.”

**Final Exam and essay question due:**
10:15am - 12:15pm, Monday, December 13.
Room: Amador-250