Sociology 476-0-22: Urban Sociology and Urban Problems
Wednesday 11 – 1:50, Parkes Hall Room 222

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Course description: This seminar is a graduate-level introduction to urban sociology with a focus on urban social problems. Topics covered include classic urban sociological theories, post-industrial urban economies, urban social networks, suburbanization, segregation, poverty, crime, subcultures, schooling, and public policy. Classes will be mostly discussion with occasional short lectures. The course will focus on U.S. cities with selected comparisons to Western Europe. The course assumes no background in urban sociology, but basic knowledge of classic sociological theory (Marx, Weber, Durkheim) and basic social science methods would be helpful.

Course requirements:
1. A term paper due at the end of the quarter (50%).
2. Active and prepared participation in all class discussions (30%).
3. Co-leading one or more class discussions during the course of the quarter (20%).

Term Paper:
The term paper may be one of three types:
(1) A research design (proposal) for a future empirical study on a topic related to metropolitan studies. The paper should include a literature review and a design for a study you could do. Partial or pilot results can also be included if available.
(2) An original research study on a topic in metropolitan studies, usually continuing work that is partly completed or improving a prior research project. This may involve taking an existing paper you have written in another context (in another course, or as a master’s paper) and improving it.
(3) A critical review of the literature on some problem or issue in urban sociology.
Proposal: A two-page proposal for the paper is due April 22nd by 5 PM. If you propose to work further on an existing paper, you are required to turn in a copy of the prior paper with your proposal.

Leading class discussions: Each student will be assigned to lead discussion with another student a few times during the quarter. The discussion leaders are responsible for guiding the discussion and should send out a few discussion questions on the readings via e-mail by Monday at 9 PM. The instructor will also act as a discussion leader each week.

Readings: The schedule below lists a first set of readings, the core readings for each week, and a set of additional readings. All students are expected to complete the core readings before each class. For students who intend to focus on a particular topic in their paper or other work, the additional readings are recommended. The instructor will often summarize or cite some of the additional readings in short lectures in class.

The core readings for each week will be available on the course blackboard site (aka “the course management system”), with the exception of readings from three books ordered listed below. You should be able to access the blackboard site from https://courses.northwestern.edu/
Books ordered (in the NU bookstore):


Preliminary Schedule
(Note: Some changes will likely be made as we go along.)

**Week 1, March 30**: Introduction to the course

**Week 2, April 6**: Classic Urban Sociological Theory


Additional:


**Week 3, April 13**: Subcultural and Political-Economic Theories


Additional:

**Week 4, April 20: Changing Urban Economics and Geography**


Additional:

**Week 5, April 27: Theories of “The Urban Crisis”**

Wilson, William Julius. 1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Knopf. Chapters 1-5. (My assumption is you have probably read this before. If not, you may have a lot of reading for this week.)


Additional:

Week 6, May 4: Segregation.


Additional:


Week 7, May 11: Crime.


Additional:

Week 8, May 18: Neighborhood Effects


Additional:


**Week 9, May 25:** Immigration.


Recommended:


**Optional Topics**: We could substitute one of these for topics above or cover one on June 1st.

**Problems and Solutions (?) for Urban Schools**


Saporito, Salvatore, and Deenesh Sohoni. “Mapping Educational Inequality: Concentrations of Poverty among Poor and Minority Students in Public Schools.” *Social Forces* 85(3):1227-1253.

Additional:


Urban and Housing Policy


Additional:
