

**Urban Sociology**  
**SOCI2208 – Spring 2020**  
**Prof. Mark COHEN**

Thursdays 4:30 - 6:15 pm YIA Room 505

Link for this outline: <http://bit.ly/2SBN9qA>

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**Tutors**

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Office hours will be posted on Blackboard

**Course Description**

Sociology has always had an intimate relationship with cities. Urbanization — the increase of the share of the population living in cities — was one of the developments that early sociologists sought to study and explain. Since then, the global urban population has only continued to increase. Today, over half of humanity lives in cities and towns. Understanding urban society is no less essential than it was in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Urban sociology has many sides, but in this course you will learn about four main sets of questions and the answers urban sociologists have given to them.

The first set considers the “urban experience.” What is it *like* to live in a city? How do people interact with each other in cities? How is it different from life and social interactions in rural areas or smaller towns? The size and density of cities turn out to make for distinctive ways of living and interacting.

The second set of questions concerns the wider role of cities within society and how that role has changed over time. Why do particular industries cluster together in cities or neighborhoods? How is globalization and financialization changing cities? What are the challenges faced by cities in the Global South today?

The third set of questions deals with the dynamics of investment in urban land and the construction of the “built environment” in cities. What are the consequences of the fact that cities are both spaces where people live and work and investment markets for profit-seeking developers? This will touch on phenomena including gentrification and property bubbles.

The final part of the course looks at some major social problems facing urban areas today. How is increasing inequality impacting urban life? How can crises surrounding housing availability, control of public space, and climate change be dealt with? Cities are as much sites of struggle as they are of industry and commerce.

Through all of these topics, the readings and lectures will focus on international examples and trends. The assignments will then require you to reflect on your own experience of city life and to undertake hands-on observation and analysis of Hong Kong.

## Lectures

The lectures will elaborate on the major themes and arguments of the required and recommended readings as well as provide illustrations and examples. PDFs of the lecture slides will be posted on Blackboard under Course Content before each class meeting.

You are expected to attend lecture every week. However, attendance will not be checked formally to start. Nonetheless, I reserve the right to institute penalties for non-attendance if this proves to be a major problem during the semester.

## Tutorials

In addition to lectures, the course includes an interactive tutorial. The tutorials will serve as workshops for the assignments. Together with your tutor and classmates, you will brainstorm, share your work, and give each other feedback.

Please sign up for the tutorial at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2oqoCBB>. The first tutorials will be held in the week of 20 January. The specific agenda will be described by your tutor in the first session, but the tutorials will follow this rough schedule:

Session	Topics
1 and 2	Urban experience
3, 4, and 5	Industrial and post-Industrial cities; use and exchange of urban space; and neighborhood profiles
6	Urban Problems

## Assignments

This course has no exams and no traditional term paper. The primary goals of this course are not to test your ability to recall terms and definitions or to analyze texts. Instead, the point is to get you thinking critically about the urban society around you.

Descriptions of each assignment will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in lecture and the tutorials. As noted above, you will discuss and make presentations about your work on the assignments in the tutorials.

### *Reflections on Your Urban Experience*

The first assignment asks you to reflect on your own experience growing up in a city in light of the theories of the urban experience discussed in the first part of the course. (If you grew up in a non-urban area outside of Hong Kong, then the task will be to contrast your experience with those theories' image of urban life.)

You should choose and respond to three of the following four prompts:

1. The readings by Simmel and Wirth present certain stereotypical images of urban life. How plausible and accurate are these images for your experience? In what ways has your own experience of urban life diverged from their descriptions of it?
2. How well did or does the estate or neighborhood in which you grew up or live now fulfill the ideal of street life presented by Jacobs? Were there “eyes on the street” or “public characters”? Who were they, and in what way do you think they influenced the local environment?
3. Think about “behavior in public” that you have observed, in light of Goffman’s account. How might you add to his examples of how strangers interact in public, as strangers? What kinds of illustrations of and/or exceptions to his concept of “civil inattention” can you give?
4. What are examples of subcultures you have seen or even participated in? In what ways are they differentiated from “mainstream” culture? In what ways have they influenced, or been influenced by, other groups in the city?

In total, your responses should be about 1,500 words (excluding headings, notes, and references), but you need to use this space carefully. You will NOT have space to summarize the readings and concepts referenced in the prompt. Instead, you need to demonstrate your understanding by how effectively you describe and analyze specific examples.

This first assignment will be due, uploaded to **both** Veriguide and Blackboard, on Friday 21 February.

### *Neighborhood Profile*

The second assignment, which corresponds to the second and third parts of the course, will involve first-hand observation of a neighborhood within Hong Kong. The graded assignment will be written individually, but to facilitate the process of data-collection, in the first tutorial session, you will form groups of two or three students. Each group will investigate and write on one neighborhood. For the purposes of this assignment, the definition of “neighborhood” is loose, meaning you may focus on any size of area of the city from a few blocks to an entire district.

For this assignment, in addition to print and online sources, you are expected to investigate the neighborhood in person. You should take some time to observe the built environment and the people in it, but you will also need to talk with individuals who live, work, or visit the neighborhood. You should seek to conduct at least **three** short interviews. I strongly recommend that the first-hand observations and interviews be carried out as a group. However, in cases where the group members are unable to coordinate working together, each student should be responsible for their own data collection. You should, either individually or as a group, prepare the questions you want to ask in advance, focused on the themes you choose for the assignment.

The assignment involves writing about **two** of the following themes, as they relate to the chosen neighborhood. There should be no overlap among the group members: i.e., no two

students in a single tutorial session should write in response to the same question for the same neighborhood.

1. Clusters of particular industries or specialized shops (Uzzi)
2. Financialization (Sassen)
3. The creative class (Florida)
4. Which “zone” the neighborhood occupies in Burgess’s model
5. The imperative for endless growth (Logan and Molotch)
6. Investment in public services (Harvey)
7. Gentrification (Smith)

You should begin each of the two sections with a summary of the relevant reading (indicated in the list in parentheses), before moving on to a discussion of the concrete details of the neighborhood. Again, you should mix secondary sources with first-hand observation and your interviews.

The essay should be around 1,800 words (before headings, notes, and references). It will be due on Friday, 3 April. The document should again be uploaded to **both** Veriguide and Blackboard.

### *Urban Problems*

The third assignment will require you to think about how one of the urban problems discussed in the final part of the course impacts Hong Kong and how it is being, or might be, responded to. You are strongly encouraged to use as your starting point one of the four themes covered in the readings and lectures: affordability, poverty, safety, or climate change. Nonetheless you may write about any problem you choose, though for other topics you should discuss with your tutor or me first.

The essay should begin with a description of the problem. Drawing on evidence from journalism, government documents, and first-hand observation, in what ways is this problem manifesting itself? Then, applying arguments from the readings and lectures, what social processes can be identified as contributing to the problem? Finally, you will need to find one or two proposals for or attempts at solutions to the problem, from government agencies, politicians, non-governmental organizations, academics, etc. Which groups’ interests does each proposal most closely follow? What other groups would be relatively disadvantaged by each? It is recommended that you consider two alternative solutions, because it will be easier to answer these questions by contrasting them.

This essay should be around 1,800 words (before headings, notes, and references). It will be due on Friday, 24 April, uploaded to **both** Veriguide and Blackboard.

### *Submission and Formatting*

All assignments are expected to be completed in English. The assignments should be submitted online through the appropriate entry on the Blackboard site under Course Outline/Assignments. Late submissions of final versions will be penalized one fraction of a

letter grade (e.g. B+ → B) per day.

Please keep in mind the university's policy on academic honesty ([bit.ly/2vRlsyb](http://bit.ly/2vRlsyb)). Plagiarism in the assignments will not be tolerated. The ideas and language should be your own, and any outside sources must be clearly and properly cited. To this end, all final versions of the assignments should also be submitted to VeriGuide ([bit.ly/2Mrt6Zh](http://bit.ly/2Mrt6Zh)).

Please follow these formatting guidelines:

- Microsoft Word (.docx) or OpenOffice (.odt)
- A4 size, 2.5 cm margins, body text in 12 pt, Times New Roman or Cambria font, double spaced. To confirm your formatting is correct, see the sample document posted here: [bit.ly/2Q8oKUY](http://bit.ly/2Q8oKUY).
- Name and a title at the top of the first page
- Include page numbers
- Citations in parenthetical format with a works cited list at the end, following the ASA style guide (see here: [bit.ly/2ve23Xx](http://bit.ly/2ve23Xx)). You do not need to include URLs or access dates for readings downloaded from the course website

## Grading

The grade for the course will be calculated as the average of four elements:

- |                        |             |
|------------------------|-------------|
| ● Tutorial             | (total 25%) |
| ○ Participation        | 10%         |
| ○ Presentations        | 15%         |
| ● Written assignments  | (total 75%) |
| ○ Urban Experience     | 25%         |
| ○ Neighborhood Profile | 25%         |
| ○ Urban problems       | 25%         |

The grading criteria are presented in a separate document, which is accessible online at [bit.ly/2F2qj3F](http://bit.ly/2F2qj3F).

## Questions

I will always leave time in my lectures for questions. It is a good rule of thumb that if there was something you found difficult to follow in the readings or lecture, there will be other students who will benefit from hearing the answer to your question. You can also bring your questions to tutorial, or feel free to email me with questions or come to my office hours.

## Schedule and Reading List

The schedule below lists the readings for each week. The required readings should be completed *before* that week's lecture.

The schedule also includes recommended readings for each week. These additional texts elaborate on themes introduced in lecture. They can provide more depth and other perspectives in addition to what you get in the required readings. Although you are not expected to read all of the recommended readings, you are *strongly encouraged* to look at a few that address topics that interest you or are relevant to your assignments.

All readings will be scanned and uploaded to the Blackboard site, under “Course Content,” except for entries marked with a \*, which can be downloaded on the University network from journal websites at the links given.

9 January Introduction

### *Part I – The Urban Experience*

16 January City and “Community”

#### Required

- Georg SIMMEL, “The Metropolis and Mental Life”
- Louis WIRTH, “Urbanism as a Way of Life”

#### Recommended

- Mark GOTTDIENER and Ron HUTCHINSON, *The New Urban Sociology 4th Edition*, pp. 49-58
- Herbert GANS, “Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life”

23 January Social Order on the Street

#### Required

- Erving GOFFMAN, *Behavior in Public Places*, Ch. 6 section 1 and Ch. 8 section 3
- Jane JACOBS, selections from *The Life and Death of American Cities*, “The Use of Sidewalks”
- Mitchell DUNEIER, *Sidewalk*, pp. 3-8, 17-19, 25-30, 43-49, 66-80

#### Recommended

- Mitchell DUNEIER, *Sidewalk*, the rest of “Introduction,” “The Book Vendor,” and “The Magazine Vendors”

30 January NO CLASS: Lunar New Year Break

6 February Subcultures

#### Required

- \*Claude S. FISCHER. 1975. “Toward a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism.” *American Journal of Sociology* 80(6):1319-1341. [www.jstor.org/stable/2777297](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2777297)

#### Recommended

- George CHAUNCEY, “Building Gay Neighborhood Enclaves: The Village and Harlem”
- Sy ADLER and Johanna BRENNER, “Gender and Space: Lesbians and Gay Men in the City”
- Paul STOLLER and Jasmin Tahmaseb MCCONATHA, “City Life: West African Communities in New York”

- Jan LIN, “Globalization and the Revalorizing of Ethnic Places in Immigration Gateway Cities”

## *Part II – Industrial and Post-Industrial Cities*

13 February                      The Logic of Urban Industrial Clusters

### Required

- Allen J. SCOTT, “Metropolis: From the Division of Labor to Urban Form”
- \*Brian UZZI. 1996. “The Sources and Consequences of Embeddedness for the Economic Performance of Organizations: The Network Effect.” *American Sociological Review* 61(4):674–698. [www.jstor.org/stable/2096399](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2096399)  
– **Read only up to p. 685** –

### Recommended

- Mark GOTTDIENER and Ron HUTCHINSON, *The New Urban Sociology 4th ed.*, pp. 23-41
- \*Michel FERRARY. 2003. “Trust and Social Capital in the Regulation of Lending Activities.” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 31:673-99.  
[doi.org/10.1016/S1053-5357\(02\)00145-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1053-5357(02)00145-2)

20 February                      The Creative Economy or Financial Globalization?

### Required

- Saskia SASSEN, *Cities in a World Economy 2nd ed.*, Ch. 1
- Richard FLORIDA, *Cities and the Creative Class*, Ch. 2

### Recommended

- Manuel CASTELLS, “An Introduction to the Information Age”

**21 February                      Urban Experience Assignment Due**

27 February                      Worldwide Urbanization

### Required

- Michael DEAR and Hector Manuel LUCERO, “Postborder Cities, Postborder World”
- Mike DAVIS, *Planet of Slums*, pp. 1-19 and 61-69

### Recommended

- Saskia SASSEN, *Cities in a World Economy 2nd ed.*, pp. 34-42
- John FRIEDMANN, “China’s Urban Transition: Backward into the Future”
- PENG Zhong-Ren and ZHU Yi, “Urban Transport in Chinese Cities: The Impact on the Urban Poor”
- Sujata PATEL, “Mumbai: The Mega-City of a Poor Country”

## *Part III – Use and Exchange of Urban Space*

5 March                              Human Ecology or the Growth Machine?

### Required

- Ernest W. BURGESS, “The Growth of the City”
- John R. LOGAN and Harvey L. MOLOTCH, selections from *Urban Fortunes*

Recommended

- Mark GOTTDIENER and Ron HUTCHISON, *The New Urban Sociology 4th ed.*, pp. 58-68
- \*Robert E. PARK. 1936. "Human Ecology." *American Journal of Sociology* 42:1-15. [www.jstor.org/stable/2768859](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2768859)

12 March Capital, Labour, and the City

Required

- \*David HARVEY. 1978. "The Urban Process under Capitalism." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 2(1-3):101-31. [doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1978.tb00738.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1978.tb00738.x) **Read pp. 101-108 and 113-130**

Recommended

- David HARVEY, *The Urban Experience*, Ch. 1

19 March Gentrification

Required

- \*Neil SMITH. 1979. "Toward a Theory of Gentrification A Back to the City Movement by Capital, Not People." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 45(4):538-48. [doi.org/10.1080/01944367908977002](https://doi.org/10.1080/01944367908977002)
- \*Catherine LAI, "'30 Houses': Illuminating trendy SOHO's historic past as a working class Hong Kong neighbourhood," *Hong Kong Free Press* 26 August 2018. [bit.ly/2005mYD](http://bit.ly/2005mYD)

Recommended

- \*Sharon ZUKIN. 2016. "Gentrification in Three Paradoxes." *City & Community* 15(3):202-7. [doi.org/10.1111/cico.12184](https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12184)
- Christopher MELE, "Globalization, Culture, and Neighborhood Change"

*Part IV – Urban Problems; Whose Solutions?*

26 March The Divided City

Required

- Saskia SASSEN, *Cities in a World Economy 2nd ed.*, Ch. 6
- Neil SMITH, "After Tompkins Square Park"

Recommended

- Ann R. MARKUSEN, "City Spatial Structure, Women's Household Work, and National Urban Policy"
- *Jacobin* issue 15/16 (Fall 2014)

2 April NO CLASS: Reading Week

- Start reading Mitchell DUNEIER, *Sidewalk*, "Talking to Women" and "A Christmas on Sixth Avenue" (for the final week)

9 April Spatially Concentrated Poverty

Required

- \*Douglas S. Massey. 1990. "American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the



Underclass.” *American Journal of Sociology* 96(2):329-57

[www.jstor.org/stable/2781105](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2781105)

- Loic J. D. WACQUANT, “Urban Outcasts: Stigma and Division in the Black American Ghetto and the French Urban Periphery”
- Continue reading Duneier

Recommended

- James S. DUNCAN, “Men without Property: The Tramp’s Classification and Use of Urban Space”

**10 April                      Neighborhood Profile Assignment Due**

16 April                      Urban Safety and Climate Change

Required

- Daniel Aldana COHEN, “Urban Policy Planning for Climate Change” (you can skip the box on “Canadian Cities and Climate Change” on pp. 164-6)
- Teresa P. R. CALDEIRA, “Fortified Enclaves”
- Mitchell DUNEIER, *Sidewalk*, “Talking to Women” and “A Christmas on Sixth Avenue”

Recommended

- Erving GOFFMAN, *Behavior in Public Places*, Ch. 8 section 4
- \*Laura S. LOGAN. 2015. “Street Harassment: Current and Promising Avenues for Researchers and Activists.” *Sociology Compass* 9(3):196-211.  
[doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12248](https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12248)
- The following websites provide useful resources: [www.stopstreetharassment.org](http://www.stopstreetharassment.org) and [www.ihollaback.org](http://www.ihollaback.org)

**24 April                      Urban Problems Assignment Due**