

URBAN COMMUNITY (Spring 2013)

SOCI 441/541 • Tu/Th 3:30-4:45pm

Jeff Kidder

Office: Zulauf Hall #816

Office Hours: Tu/Th 2:00-3:00pm

Office Phone: 815-753-6432

Email: jkidder@niu.edu

Website: www.niu.edu/~jkidder

INTRODUCTION

Cities represent the promises and threats of modernity. They are the hub of economic activity, political power, and cultural innovation. At the same time, cities are places of alienation, crime, and material inequality. Urbanism is a way of life, as Louis Wirth wrote over seventy years ago, but what does that really mean? Throughout this course, students will be asked to reflect on Wirth's phrase. In contemplating urbanism and urbanization from a sociological perspective, we will address several of the major issues facing contemporary America. Throughout the semester, students will be expected to demonstrate their proficiency with the course material by synthesizing theoretical literature and real world examples. In the final weeks of the course, we use our knowledge of urban sociology to critically assess the fourth season of HBO's fictional crime drama *The Wire*.

GRADING

Your grade in this class will be derived from the following:

• Participation.....	9
-In-class discussion.....	5
-Quizzes.....	4
• Writing Assignments.....	16
-Reading reviews (RR) [2 pt x 4].....	8
-Creative connections (CC) [2 pt x 4].....	8
• Exams.....	75
-Theorizing the City.....	20
-Urban Poverty and Racial Inequality.....	25
- <i>The Wire</i> (Fact and Fiction).....	30
TOTAL POINTS.....	100

NOTE: I use a standard 10-point scale and I do not round final grades up

COURSE READINGS

The following are the required readings for this class:

- Articles / book excerpts posted to Blackboard (which *must* be printed and brought to class)
- Venkatesh, Sudhir Alladi. 2006. *Off the Books: The Underground Economy of the Urban Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Graduate students: additional readings (denoted by "GS") posted to Blackboard

COURSE INFORMATION

Abbreviations

Reading reviews (RR), creative connections (CC).

Attendance

You are allotted a maximum of four absences for the semester. Every absence after your fourth will reduce your final course grade five points. Late arrivals and early departures will count as absences, as will checking emails, texting, surfing the Web, sleeping, or randomly excusing yourself from the room. More information can be found on Blackboard.

Email

I will use your school email account (whatever address is linked to Blackboard) to communicate course changes and reading or assignment updates. I will always give at least 12 hours notice (usually much more) for any substantial variation to the syllabus. It is your responsibility to check your school email regularly.

Assessment

Most weeks there will be quizzes, writing assignments, and/or in-class discussions. More information about these course requirements can be found on Blackboard. All writing assignments and exams for this class will be graded with an assessment sheet. More information on how your exams will be assessed (including writing guidelines and expectations) can be found on Blackboard.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for adhering to the university's policy on integrity of scholarship. Academic dishonesty (of any sort) will result in immediate course *failure* and the incident will be formally filed with the Sociology Department and NIU Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct. See Blackboard for more details.

Outstanding Papers

The Sociology Department provides awards for exceptional undergraduate papers. The final exam for this class has the potential of becoming an award-winning paper. Students may nominate themselves or I may submit outstanding papers on their behalf. Contact the Director of Undergraduate Studies for more information.

Nomenclature

I am a doctor of philosophy in sociology and I hold the rank of assistant professor at Northern Illinois University. The formal method for addressing me is "Dr. Kidder" or "professor Kidder." Alternatively, you are welcome to call me by my first name. However, please do *not* call me "Mr. Kidder" (that is my father's name).

LIST OF IMPORTANT DATES

- 01/29 – Deadline: petition for alternate assignment in lieu of *The Wire*
- 02/19 – Exam: Theorizing the city due
- 04/02 – Class meeting in the Capital Room (HSC) for Forrest Stuart talk
- 04/09 – Exam: Urban poverty and racial inequality due
- 05/07 – Exam: *The Wire* (Fact and Fiction) due

NOTE: Readings must be completed on the date they are listed. Homework is assigned the day it is listed and must be completed by the following class. Assignment that must be turned in for grading will be denoted by the phrase "Due:" on the date it is due.

SECTION ONE: THEORIZING THE CITY

Week One: Introduction to Urban Sociology

01/15: Introduction to the course

Homework: familiarize yourself with the course requirements

01/17: Urban fortunes

Reading: Gottdiener and Hutchison *The New Urban Sociology* (chp. 1); course syllabus and supporting materials (available on Blackboard) • GS: Huws "Fixed, Footloose..."

Quiz: course requirements, etc.

Video: *Requiem for Detroit?*

Homework: RR #1 (see Blackboard)

Week Two: Classic Urban Sociology

01/22: The Chicago School

Due: RR #1

Reading: Gottdiener and Hutchison *The New Urban Sociology* (chp.3) • GS: Park "The City..."

01/24: Urban psychology

Reading: Simmel "The Metropolis and Mental Life" • GS: Wirth "Urbanism..."

Homework: CC #1 (see Blackboard)

Week Three: Contemporary Urban Sociology

01/29: Political economy and the city

Due: CC #1

Reading: Gottdiener and Hutchison *The New Urban Sociology* (chp.4) • GS: Castells "Urban Sociology ..."

NOTE: This is the last day to petition for an alternate assignment to *The Wire*

01/31: Growth machines

Reading: Molotch "The City as a Growth Machine" • GS: Logan and Crowder "Political Regimes"

Homework: CC #2

Week Four: Urban Restructuring

02/05: The distribution of resources

Due: CC#2

Reading: Harvey "The Right to the City" • GS: Harvey *Social Justice and the City* (chp. 1 and pp. 237-240, 261-274)

02/07: Detroit

Reading: Chan "Re-Imagined Futures for Detroit" • GS: Hill "Crisis in the Motor City"

Homework: RR #2

Week Five: Globalization and Exam Review

02/12: Global cities

Due: RR #2

Reading: Sassen *Cities in a World Economy* (chp. 4) • GS: White “Old Wine...”

Quiz: Sassen

Homework: Begin studying for exam; come to class prepared to ask questions about the course material

02/14: Review for the exam

Homework: Complete exam one; do not wait until the last minute to start working on the exam; it will be intellectually challenging and time consuming to complete

SECTION TWO: URBAN POVERTY AND RACIAL INEQUALITY

Week Six: Exam and Spatial Mismatch

02/19: Exams (no class meeting)

Due: Theorizing the city exam

Follow instructions on exam and in the additional course information file (see Blackboard)

02/21: Spatial mismatch

Reading: Wilson *When Work Disappears* (chp. 1) • GS: Massey and Denton *American Apartheid* (chp. 4)

Homework: CC #3

Week Seven: Defining the Ghetto

02/26: Poverty and racial exclusion

Due: CC #3

Reading: Wacquant “Janus-Faced” • GS: Anderson *Code of the Street* (chp.1)

02/28: Decent and street

Reading: Anderson “Toward Knowing...” • GS: Wilson ...*Truly Disadvantaged* (chp.1, 6)

Homework: RR #3

Week Eight: The Underground Economy

03/05: Living underground

Due: RR #3

Reading: Venkatesh *Off the Books* (prologue, chp. 1) • GS: Hutchison “Where is...”

03/07: Working off the books

Reading: Venkatesh *Off the Books* (chp. 2, 3) • GS: Wacquant “Scrutinizing the Street” (pp. 1468-1471, 1486-1501, 1520-1527)

Homework: RR #4

Spring Break

03/12: No class

03/14: No class

Use the break to catch up on readings and/or reading ahead

Week Nine: The Underground Economy (continued)

03/19: Hustlers

Due: RR #4

Reading: Venkatesh *Off the Books* (chp. 4) • GS: Anderson “Ideologically Driven”

Video: *Dislocation*

03/21: Preachers

Reading: Venkatesh *Off the Books* (chp.5) • GS: Rosen and Venkatesh “Perversion...”

Week Ten: The Underground Economy (continued)

03/26: Gang leaders

Reading: Venkatesh *Off the Books* (chp. 6) • GS: Bourgois “...in a Shooting Gallery”

03/28: Finishing *Off the Books*

Reading: Venkatesh *Off the Books* (chp. 7) • GS: Small *Villa Victoria* (chp. 6)

Homework: Begin studying for exam; come to class prepared to ask questions about the course material

Week Eleven: Urban Ethnography, Exam Review, and The Wire

04/02: Forrest Stuart talk (class meets in Capital Room, HSC)

Reading: GS: Stuart “Police Abuse”

Homework: Continue studying for exam; come to class prepared to ask questions about the course material

04/04: “Boys of Summer”

Video: *The Wire* (4.1)

Reading: *The Wire* season synopses

Homework: Complete exam two; do not wait until the last minute to start working on the exam; it will be intellectually challenging and time consuming to complete

SECTION THREE: *THE WIRE* (FACT AND FICTION)

Week Twelve: Exam and The Wire

04/09: “Soft Eyes”

Due: Urban poverty and racial inequality exam

Video: *The Wire* (4.2)

Homework: Watch *The Wire* “Home Rooms” (4.3) and “Refugees” (4.4); keep up with the assigned readings

04/11: “Alliances”

Reading: Weaver “Baltimore...”; Clandfield “Crime, Development...” • GS: Harvey *Spaces of Hope* (chp. 8)

Quiz: *The Wire* (chapters and episodes)

Video: *The Wire* (4.5)

Homework: CC #4; watch *The Wire* “Margin of Error (4.6) and “Unto Others” (4.7); keep up with the assigned readings

Week Thirteen: The Wire (continued)

04/16: “Corner Boys”

Due: CC #4

Reading: Beliveau and Bolf-Beliveau “Posing Problems...” • GS: McMillan “Heroism...”

Video: *The Wire* (4.8)

Homework: Watch *The Wire* “Know Your Place” (4.9) and “Misgivings” (4.10); keep up with the assigned readings

04/18: “A New Day”

Reading: Peterson “Corner-Boy...” • GS: Read “Stringer Bell’s Lament...”

Video: *The Wire* (4.11)

Homework: Keep up with the assigned readings

Week Fourteen: The Wire (continued)

04/23: “That’s Got His Own”

Reading: Lucasi “Networks of Affiliation...” • GS: Klein “The Dickensian Aspect...”

Video: *The Wire* (4.12)

Homework: Catch up on any necessary readings or missed episodes

04/25: “Final Grades”

Reading: Bonjean “After the Towers...” • GS: Duran “Legitimated Oppression”

Quiz: *The Wire* (chapters)

Video: *The Wire* (4.13)

Homework: Devise an essay question for the final exam and outline the answer (see Blackboard for more information)

Week Fifteen: Putting It All Together

04/30: Sociology and *The Wire*

Due: Essay question and outline of answer

Reading: *Dissent* debate

Homework: Devise a *different* essay question and outline the answer

05/02: Review for the exam

Due: Essay question and outline of answer

Homework: Complete exam three; do not wait until the last minute to start working on the exam; it will be intellectually challenging and time consuming to complete

Week Sixteen: Final Exam Week

* Final exam is due

Follow instructions from the additional course information file (available on Blackboard)