Course Description:

This course provides students an introduction to the field of urban studies. The course maintains that the “urban” is not a mere backdrop of human life. Urban environments affect all aspects of who we are. The places we live affect our access to the resources we need to survive and the opportunities we need to thrive. They shape who we hang out with, the groups we identify with, and the groups we oppose. Our urban worlds even affect our health and life expectancy. Major forces like global capitalism, immigration, racism, and politics are important, but they become real and meaningful to people through our concrete urban worlds. Racism, for instance, becomes concrete in cities because people are segregated into different worlds on the basis of their race or ethnicity. These racialized worlds become the places where people acquire unequal resources like education, housing, and jobs. People also become friends with others like themselves and develop cultures that reflect their unequally racialized groups. Whereas racial minorities often draw on their cultures to assert their equality, dominant racial groups draw on their culture to
assert the legitimacy of an unequal urban system. Just as race becomes real in cities, so too does
social class, sexuality, gender, and other categorical inequalities. The course therefore examines
how broad social forces become concrete inequalities in cities, and how people work to contest
these inequalities.

The course addresses this dynamic through three major themes: First, the class examines the
particularities of the urban environment in advanced capitalist societies. It posits that rapid
industrialization spurred massive population growth and concentrations in particular
geographical areas. Just as important, markets governed how goods, people, and services were
distributed within these spaces. Capitalist urbanization (as this process is known) generated
environments that fundamentally shaped the cultures, psychologies, life chances, health, and
social relations of their residents. Cities became spaces that offered great opportunities but that
also radically changed how people related to one another in their daily lives. The course
introduces the concept of capitalist urbanization by identifying the formation of large cities, how
these unique environments affected all aspects of human life, and how cities in the global North
have changed over time. Second, the class provides an overview of the major social divisions
and inequalities found in today’s cities. It begins by identifying the principal political and
economic forces that have been responsible for creating today’s divided cities. Following this,
the lectures will examine how different groups have been affected by socioeconomic changes.
Third, the course examines how groups resist their marginalization in today’s large urban areas.
We will examine how urban areas have become environments for producing cultural expressions
(from music to art) that criticize dominant norms, values, and hierarchies within society.
Lectures will also examine how marginalized groups pursue different forms of action (from riots
to protests) to express their grievances and their “right to the city.” Ultimately, urban
environments help generate groups, cultures, and mobilizations that question the established
order and call for substantial change.

In sum, the course examines the forces that generate urban inequalities and the conditions that
favor resistance and calls for change. While economic, political, and cultural forces create
unequal cities and major social problems, these cities also nourish groups of activists and
residents with a strong will to resist. The dynamic nature of changing cities can be found at the
intersection of the two.

Required Readings and Materials:
Most readings are available through UCI’s Canvas. Please go to your Canvas website
(https://canvas.eee.uci.edu/) and click on UPPP 4: Introduction to Urban Studies. Under the files
tab, you will find a link for “readings.” Most of the course readings can be found there.
In addition to weekly readings, you will be required to read two books.

  Verso Books

Students are also expected to purchase an IClicker (or equivalent) and bring it to class.

Attendance and Late Submissions:
Students are expected to attend all lectures.

Late submissions are not accepted. The only acceptable excuses for absences and late submissions are: 1) a medical problem, and 2) a serious family emergency. Both require proof.

Electronic Equipment:
Students using a portable computer for notes must NOT use it to surf the web or check emails during class hours. Also, turn off your cell phones before class.

Fraud and Plagiarism:
Plagiarism and fraud are not tolerated. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, plagiarism is, “to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own: use another's production without crediting the source.” In other words, using the words and ideas (copying or paraphrasing) of an author without referencing is plagiarism.

Exams will be processed through the plagiarism program, Turnitin. This program allows the instructor to identify plagiarized text. If the instructor suspects fraud or plagiarism, he will refer the case to the appropriate authorities. In the event that such suspicions are confirmed, students will receive a 0 and referred to the administration for disciplinary action.

Course Requirements:
There are four course requirements. Students are required to hand in assignments through Canvas.

1. The midterm exam covers the first three weeks of the class. Students are expected to answer one question that addresses several key concepts. The answer cannot exceed two-typed pages (double space, 12-point font and normal margins). The midterm is worth 50 points.

2. The book review essay will be on Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State. The essay will ask you to evaluate the book while also drawing on readings from weeks 4 and 5. The essay cannot exceed two-typed pages (double space, 12-point font and normal margins). The book review essay is worth 50 points

3. The final exam will require students to answer one mandatory question. The exam is cumulative and worth 100 points (maximum four pages, double space, 12-point font and normal margins). The final will be distributed on the last day of instruction.

Grading Breakdown
- Midterm exam 50
- Book review 50
- Final Exam 100
- Total 300
Introduction to Urban Studies

Meeting 1: Big Cities in Industrial Times

Description:
The first week of the course provides students a general introduction to the course. The lectures address two main issues. First, what do we mean by the urban? Is this environment different from other forms of human settlement (small town, villages, etc.)? How do we define the boundaries of the urban? Where does the urban begin and where does it end? Second, what do we mean by “capitalist urbanization”? The lecture will address this particular question by examining the historical rise of the capitalist city in the 19th and 20th century. By examining this historical process, we will be able to identify the specific set of attributes that make “urban” environments distinct from other human settlements.


Meeting 2: Change and Order in the Big City

Description:
In 1892 the University of Chicago established the first sociology department in the United States. With the arrival of Robert Park, the rapidly industrializing city of Chicago became the principal laboratory to explore how urban environments and settlements shaped the lives of people within them. On the one hand, they examined how these environments ripped apart established group ties and spurred individualism. On the other hand, they examined how new groups were created in these increasingly unstable environments. To understand these seemingly contradictory forces, early urban observers drew inspiration from ecological theories, essentially laying down the principles of human ecology.


Meeting 3: Segregating the Postwar City

Description:
In the United States, racism has played a major role in shaping the structure of our major urban centers, past and present. This week examines how racism gave rise to predominantly African American inner cities and predominantly white suburbs. How did racist beliefs result in institutions that segregated and isolated racial and ethnic minorities?


Meeting 4: Globalization and Restructuring Cities

Description:
The 1980s and 1990s reflected an important shift in the underlying structures of large urban centers. Two large economic forces caused these changes. Rapid changes in technologies transformed how things were produced and where they were produced. For large cities in the United States, this weakened heavy manufacturing, encouraged massive growth in the service economy, and increased globalization of certain cities (and marginalization of others). The changes during this period radically transformed the urban environments of earlier decades and set in place the basic features of today’s urban regions.


Meeting 5: Governing the Neoliberal City

Description:
The governance of cities changed dramatically over the past fifty years. While once cities had the revenue to invest in large infrastructure and welfare projects, their fates became increasingly tied to meeting the needs of businesses. Elected officials embraced policies that would attract
businesses, spur development, and foster the growth of upper middle-class residents. As policies prioritized the privileged, they also de-prioritized low-income communities.


Meeting 6: Housing and Gentrification

Description: During the postwar period, cities faced a growing crisis because middle class people were moving out to the suburbs. The sharp and sudden loss of this population contributed to lowering tax revenue, eating into economic activities, and sharpening socioeconomic segregation. In the past 20 years, we have witnessed a partial reversal. Some middle class people have moved back to the city. Growing demand for urban areas has unleashed efforts by developers and speculators to transform previously low-income areas into places of consumption and pleasure for middle class “hipsters”. The influx of investors and middle class gentrifiers has contributed to increasing rents and housing prices, which has pushed low-income residents out of their neighborhoods.


Meeting 8: Migrant City: Between Settlement and Exclusion

Description: Immigration has transformed American urban areas. Following the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, there was a sharp increase in rates of immigration. Many new immigrants were attracted to the opportunities found in large urban areas like Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. Since then, immigrants have dispersed out to other large cities and smaller towns throughout the country. This week examines how immigrants have settled in these cities. While they have confronted major challenges, they have also formed robust communities that have facilitated their abilities survive and thrive in their new countries.


Meeting 9: Riotous Cities and Rebellious Culture

Description:
Cities have for many years been seedbeds for explosive politics and cultures. When marginalized people in a particular face persistent oppression over extended periods of time, they may engage in highly disruptive protests against the authorities. In this meeting, we closely examine the conditions in that have contributed to explosive protests. In particular, we will examine the political and economic conditions that contribute to creating this bubbling urban rage while also assessing the effects of these struggles for achieving more equitable cities. Additionally, we will examine the factors responsible for producing one particularly subversive cultural form: punk rock. While punk rock first became prominent in New York and London, it resonated greatly with youths in Southern California.


Meeting 10: Subversive Politics: Struggling for Rights and Equality

Description:
The last meetings of the quarter examine how urban environments have fostered subversive politics over past two centuries. From the revolutions of the 19th century to today, cities have been at the center of major disruptive political forces demanding equality and recognition. This meeting assess the attributes of the urban environment that have made them fertile places to grow small resistances into large scale sociopolitical mobilizations.