

Soc. 136, Urban Sociology

U.C. Berkeley, Spring 2024

Tuesday/Thursday, 12:30-2:00pm

101 Morgan Hall

Instructor: Joanna Reed, Ph.D.

joannareed@berkeley.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-5pm (in-person and remote), and by appointment, 419 SSB. Sign up for appointments here: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/bbntp>

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to urban sociology that frames cities as physical spaces that magnify social inequalities and shape how we experience them in our daily lives. Although people may live in the same city, their daily experiences of place and private and public spaces are often radically different within short distances. In this class, we will explore why this is—how our experiences of the city vary so widely depending on where and who we are—and how where we live and conduct our lives shapes other aspects of them. We begin the course by considering research on how and why residential environments matter, and then turn to understanding the historical forces that shaped U.S. cities and led to such unequal spaces. We then explore how that history continues to shape and inform current urban experiences and controversies as we focus on the contemporary urban landscape and on topics typically considered as urban problems—homelessness and neighborhood violence. Our final topic will be to consider how the unfolding climate crisis is likely to deepen existing spatial inequalities in urban places. Throughout the course we will consider the relationships between spatial organization, social inequalities and social interaction.

The central questions we will address in this course are:

- How did our present urban social and spatial dynamics come to be and why do they matter?
- What are current trends in urban areas?
- What were/are important influences on these processes, and how are current trends related to the history of urban areas and places?
- How does the spatial organization of urban areas influence social interaction, both in general and in specific urban places?
- Can sociological research help us better understand the seemingly intractable problems of urban violence and homelessness?

By taking this course, you will:

- Learn how economic forces and social structures such as race, class, government policies and citizen activism influence how cities are socially and spatially organized, and how that has changed over time.

- Learn about how urban living shapes social interaction, past and present by focusing on specific examples in urban places.
- Consider how policies contribute to creating and solving urban problems.
- Gain experience with using and applying census data in sociological analysis.
- Gain experience with ethnographic observation.

Films: We watch several films (or excerpts) over the course of the semester to provide examples of concepts from lecture and readings, and to explore some topics in more detail. You should think of the films as “required” course materials; if you miss one, you should watch it. Details about films will be on the weekly pages.

Assignments and Academic Expectations:

Take-Home Midterm and Final Exams: (each exam is 20% of grade) These are essay exams that will test your comprehension of course material and ability to apply theories and concepts as well as synthesize and make connections between readings. Questions and instructions will be posted one week before each exam is due.

Urban Renewal Revisited Paper: (25% of grade) The first paper will consist of a profile of a neighborhood in Oakland or San Francisco that was a site of a past urban renewal effort based on your own ethnographic observations, U.S. Census data, and other sources, along with an analysis of salient issues currently facing the neighborhood and city in which it is located.

Urban Problems and Policy Paper: (25% of grade) This paper will be an in-depth investigation of one of the neighborhood problems we cover in this course from a policy perspective: gentrification and displacement, affordable housing shortages, homelessness, urban violence or the climate crisis. This paper will require students to engage in fieldwork and independent research about their topic as well as engage with class materials.

Reading Quizzes: (10% of total grade) This portion of your grade will be assessed based on a combination of Reading quizzes and other short reflection assignments. Students are required to turn in 4 of 5 quizzes/reflection assignments. The average of your best 4 quiz/reflection assignment scores will be used to calculate your final (cumulative) quiz grade. This means the last one is optional if you are happy with the cumulative average of your first four scores. Quizzes will be released after class

on Thursdays, and due before class on Tuesday. You will have two chances to take the quiz and I will count your highest score.

Due Dates:

Take Home Midterm: Feb. 22

Urban Renewal Revisited Paper: Mar. 14

Urban Problems and Policy Paper: Apr. 18

Take Home Final Exam: May 9

Reading Quizzes: released on Feb. 1, Feb. 15, Mar. 7, Apr. 4 and Apr. 25

Reading: Much of the work of this class consists of keeping up with and mastering the content of the assigned readings. Readings will be posted on bCourses, and you can also purchase a bound hard copy of the readings from the Copy Central Store (2411 Telegraph Ave.). On bCourses, you can find readings in two ways: by clicking “Files”> “Readings” and then the folder for the week, or by going to “Pages” and clicking on the appropriate page for the week. While not required, I strongly advise investing in your learning this semester by purchasing the hard copies. Numerous studies have shown that we retain material better when we read it offline. Also, you don’t need internet access or a functioning computer to do the reading and stay caught up!

For any given week, please read in the order listed on the syllabus. Readings are assigned for the week, rather than by the day, to allow for more flexibility in the class. That said, we will generally consider them sequentially. In general, try to complete the first reading before Tuesday’s class, and everything before Thursday.

Films: We watch several films (or excerpts) over the course of the semester to provide examples of concepts from lecture and readings, and to explore some topics in more detail. You should think of the films as “required” course materials; if you miss one, you should watch it. Details about films will be on the weekly pages.

Attendance: This is an in-person class and consistent attendance is a basic academic expectation. If you are not able, or not planning, to come to class regularly then please drop the class now. To reward students for attendance, we will have periodic random attendance checks for which you will earn extra credit points.

Email: Make sure to check the course syllabus, bCourses pages and announcements before emailing me about an assignment or administrative matter. It is best to ask questions about these things before or after class or during office hours. Please understand that I receive many emails from students and am not always able to respond right away. Do not expect a response after working hours or on weekends.

Office Hours: I encourage you to visit me in office hours sometime during the semester. I enjoy getting to know you and your interests in the course and this is a way to make a large class more personal. Please come see me especially if you are having trouble with the course. I can’t help you if you don’t communicate with me! My office is shared, so if

you need to speak with me confidentially, please try to let me know ahead of time so I can try to ensure privacy. If you cannot make these office hour times, please contact me to make another arrangement.

Grading Policies:

Readers: Graduate student Readers will do the bulk of the grading for this class. We will all work together to make sure the grading is as consistent and equitable as possible. Around the second or third week of the semester, students will be assigned a Reader that will be their primary contact for dealing with administrative matters around DSP extensions, other extension requests and other issues. This same person may grade all or some of your assignments.

Due dates and Grace Period: All assignments will have a due date, as usual. However, in the spirit of offering more flexibility to everyone, there will be a grace period that will extend for 24 hours after the deadline. An assignment turned in after the official due date, but before the end of the grace period will not be considered late. The grace period extends to all students and all assignments—you do not need to ask for permission or notify us if you plan to turn in work during the grace period.

Late Assignments Policy: If you have a personal emergency or are ill, contact your Reader at the *earliest opportunity* about an extension. Unexcused late assignments will be marked down 5% for each day after the grace period of 24 hours expires. At times, we may request documentation of an illness, emergency, or other situation.

Grading scale: Grades are not curved for this class and I use the typical letter grade scale when calculating grades, where an A is 93% and above, and A- is 90-92%, a B+ is 87-89%, a B is 86-83%, a B- is 82-80%, etc. If you are taking this course for P/NP credit, you need to earn a minimum of 70% to pass. A+ grades are awarded at my discretion to the very top students in the class.

Academic Accommodations: Ask for accommodations if you are a DSP student (according to your LOA). Make sure that the DSP office has sent me a copy of your letter. If you have an accommodation for take-home assignments, it is your responsibility to contact your Reader to ask for an extension. Please bear in mind that accommodations for extra time on in-class exams do not apply to take-home assignments. You are always welcome to reach out to me to discuss accommodations. Accommodations are also available for the observance of religious holidays, or due to conflicts related to student athletics. Please reach out to me if you have another issue not “officially” covered and we can talk about it. Here is a link to more information from UCB about academic accommodations and resources: <https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub>

Re-grade policy: Please first talk with the person who graded your assignment for more feedback. Readers have the authority to change grades if they believe it is warranted. If you believe a mistake was made on your assignment, and want me to review it, write a short statement explaining why you think your assignment deserves a different grade, making sure to reference the assignment rubric. This statement should be about the substance of your work, rather than effort. I will then re-grade your paper and determine the final grade for the assignment. All re-grade requests must be made within a week of when an assignment is handed back. Per University policy, no re-grades are possible for final exams.

Incomplete Grades: Incompletes are an option of last resort for students experiencing true medical or other emergencies that make it impossible for them to complete their coursework on time. To be considered for an incomplete grade, students need to speak with me about it by the end of RRR week, have completed at least half of the coursework, and provide documentation of the reason for the request.

Academic honesty is expected of all students. It is extremely important that everyone submits their own original work, produced specifically for this course, in order to receive credit. Suspected violations relating to this course will be reported to the office of student conduct and dealt with according to university policies. *Be aware of plagiarism.* Word for word use of even a single sentence from any author, publication or website without proper citation is plagiarism and is unethical and unacceptable. So is very closely following the structure and wording of another author's work. So is using an AI program to generate an essay or text. In addition, please be aware that you may not turn in any portion of *your own* previous work submitted for credit in another course without substantial revision. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the paper or exam in question with no opportunity to rewrite, as will any other kind of academic dishonesty. If you have questions about how to properly cite materials, or how to paraphrase appropriately, please ask! The student writing center is also a good resource for questions about this.

We are in a new era of much controversy and uncertainty about the role and use of artificial intelligence in academic assignments and writing. *My present position is that any use of AI programs to produce work for this class is another version of plagiarism and will be treated as such.* If the Readers or I have questions or suspicions about whether an assignment is your original work or was produced by AI, we will request to talk with you about it and orally assess your knowledge of the subject matter in the assignment.

Turnitin: All of your assignments will be checked for plagiarism by Turnitin. Please be aware that this program keeps a database of work previously turned in for this class by other students, as well as any of your own work that you turned in for credit in a previous class.

Notes and Circulation of Course Materials: DO NOT reproduce course materials or post them on-line or anywhere else. This includes the syllabus, lecture slides, your notes, handouts, rubrics and exams. While you may share your notes with other students in this semester's class, it is against university policy to share your notes broadly or attempt to use them for commercial purposes. It is also a violation of the policy to record lectures without my consent, and/or try to use recordings for commercial purposes. Please see <http://campuspol.chance.berkeley.edu/policies/coursenotes.pdf> for a detailed version of the policy.

Names and Pronouns: You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and with the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in university records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected. You can refer to me as Prof. Reed, Dr. Reed, or Joanna. My pronouns are she/her.

University Resources for Students

Your Health and Well-Being: Life as a college student can be full of excitement and possibilities, but at times may feel overwhelming or be difficult in other ways. New challenges and situations are an opportunity for learning about yourself, the world and the kind of life you want to live and some degree of discomfort and adjustment is to be expected. However, if you are experiencing distress or anxiety to the extent that it is negatively affecting your academic and social life, or have a pre-existing mental health issue, there are resources on campus to help. You are not alone; many others share your difficulties. Even if you don't think you need them, I encourage you to look at these websites now, so you know what is available. In addition to counseling appointments there are web tutorials and videos, support groups and mindfulness classes. Counseling center staff have told me these groups and classes can be a great preventative resource, and are a great way to get the semester off to a good start. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), (510) 642-9494, <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling>. More general resources on mental health, services are at <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/health-topics/mental-health>.

Remember that regular exercise, getting enough sleep, healthy eating, getting together with friends in-person to have fun and not spending too much time online/on your phone are important ways to support mental health.

Student Learning Center: "The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals."

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services: To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>.

Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter. You can speak to a Confidential Care Advocate.

Undocumented Students can find university resources and support at:
<https://undocu.berkeley.edu/>

Economic, Food, and Housing Support: If you need economic, food, or housing support, you can seek help at the Basic Needs Center (<https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu/home>).

Technology resources and support for students: Please see this page for the latest information on university-provided support, including borrowing laptops and other equipment from the University: <https://studenttech.berkeley.edu/home>

Course Schedule*:

Jan. 16 & 18, Week 1. Introduction to the course

Readings: Turner, M. (2011) “Neighborhoods and Life Chances”, *Urban Wire* (blog), The Urban Institute (April 20, 2011), <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/neighborhoods-and-life-chances>

Edsall, T. (2022) “How a Golden Era for Large Cities Might be Turning into an ‘Urban Doom Loop’”. *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 2022

Jan. 23 & 25, Week 2. Neighborhood inequality: why does it matter?

Readings: *The Opportunity Atlas*—explore the map and read two or more of the “stories”. Go to opportunityatlas.org. An introductory window will tell you how to get to the “stories” (also noted on the map with book icons). The Opportunity Atlas is a project from Opportunity Insights at Harvard University.

Sharkey, P. (2013). *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1

Rugh, J. & Massey, D. (2010). “Racial Segregation and The American Foreclosure Crisis”. *American Sociological Review*, 75:5

Sampson, R.J., & Loeffler, C. (2010) “Punishment’s Place: The Local Concentration of Mass Incarceration. *Daedalus*, 139(3) 20-31

Jan. 30 & Feb. 1, Week 3. Creating unequal spaces: post-World War 2 urban and suburban growth and development

Quiz #1 released Feb. 1

Readings: Sharkey, P. (2013). *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 3

Massey, D. & Denton, N. (1993). *American Apartheid*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Ch. 2

Recommended:

Choose one of the two readings below:

Bagwell, B. (1982 (2012)). *Oakland: The Story of A City*. Oakland Heritage Alliance. Pp. 25-32, 50-90

Wollenberg, C. (2008). *Berkeley: A City in History*. UC Press. Ch. 7, "World War II Watershed" pp. 105-119

Feb. 6 & 8, Week 4. Creating unequal spaces in the Bay Area

Readings: Self, R. (2003). *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Ch. 3 & 4. (Ch.6 about the Black Panther party and Black resistance is recommended)

Wilson, W.J. (1997). *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. Ch. 2. New York: Vintage

Feb. 13 & 15, Week 5. Creating unequal spaces: economic change and "urban decline"

Quiz #2 released on Feb. 15

Readings: Self, R. (2003). *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. From Ch. 8, pp. 316-327

Sassen, S. (2012) *Cities in A World Economy*. Ch. 6 "The New Inequality Within Cities", pp. 241-272

Foner, N. (2022) *One Quarter of the Nation: Immigration and the Transformation of America*. Ch. 3 "Changing Cities and Communities". Princeton University Press

Feb. 20 & 22, Week 6:

No new reading.

Take-home Exam due Feb. 22. No lecture on the 22nd.

Feb. 27 & 29, Week 7. Place entrepreneurship and changing urban landscapes: property markets and urban development

Readings: Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco's page on gentrification and displacement. Watch the videos "Gentrification Explained" and "Pushed Out". <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/initiatives/gentrification-and-displacement/>

Logan, J. & Molotch, H. (1990). *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley: UC Press. Ch. 2, "Places as Commodities" pp. 17-49

Zukin, S. (1995). *The Cultures of Cities*. Blackwell. Ch. 1, "Whose Culture, Whose City?" pp. 1-47

Austin Turner, M., Popkin, S. & Rawlings, L. (2009). *Public Housing and the Legacy of Segregation*. Ch. 1, "Transforming Distressed Public Housing" pp. 1-11. Washington DC: The Urban Institute Press

Mar. 5 & 7, Week 8. The housing crisis

Quiz #3 due Mar. 7

Readings: Shaw, R. (2018). *Generation Priced Out: Who Gets to Live in the New Urban America*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. Ch. 6, 7, 8.

Galvez, M., Brennan, M., Meixell, B., Pendall, R. (2017). "Housing as a Safety Net". *Research Reports*, The Urban Institute. Pp. 1-15. (the rest is recommended)

Mar. 12 & 14, Week 9. Housing, social policy and homelessness

Urban Renewal Revisited Paper due Mar. 14.

Readings: Reid, C. (2021) *On the Edge of Homelessness: The Vulnerability of Extremely Low-Income Households in the Bay Area*. Turner Center for Housing Innovation, UC Berkeley. Read the introduction, and skim through the rest, focusing on the graphs.

Desmond, Matthew. (2016). "Forced Out", *The New Yorker*, Feb. 8 & 15

Streeter, J. (2022) *Homelessness in California: Causes and Policy Considerations*. Stanford Institute for Economic and Policy Research.

Recommended: HUD Point in Time Count Reports (2022 most recent) for Alameda County. Report for Alameda County, CA:

<https://everyonehome.org/main/continuum-of-care/everyone-counts-2022/>

Mar. 19 & 21, Week 10. Homelessness

Readings: Gowan, T. (2010). *Hobos, Hustlers and Backsliders: Homeless in San Francisco*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN. Introduction, Ch. 3 and 7 (reader)

Herring, C. (2019). "Complaint-Oriented Policing: Regulating Homelessness in Public Space". *American Sociological Review*, 1-32

Mar. 25-29 Spring Break, no class.

Apr. 2 & 4, Week 11: Neighborhood violence

Quiz #4 released Apr. 4

Readings: Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: Norton. Ch. 2

Harding, D. (2010). *Living the Drama: Community, Conflict, and Culture Among Inner-City Boys*. University of Chicago Press. Ch. 2, "The Social Organization of Violence in Poor Neighborhoods" pp. 27- 67

Stuart, F. "Code of the Tweet: Urban Gang Violence in the Social Media Age". *Social Problems*, Vol. 67, no.2

Apr. 9 & 11, Week 12. Neighborhood violence

Readings: Martinez, C. (2016). *The Neighborhood Has Its Own Rules: Latinos and African Americans in South Los Angeles*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Introduction, Ch. 4, 5

McGillis, A. (2023) "Can Community Problems Help Slow the Rise in Violence?" *ProPublica*, Jan. 2023

Recommended: Miller, J. (2008). *Getting Played: African American Girls, Urban Inequality and Gendered Violence*. New York: NYU Press. Ch. 2, "Gender 'n the 'Hood: Neighborhood Violence Against Women and Girls

Apr. 16 & 18, Week 13. The climate crisis and urban disasters

Urban Problems and Policy Paper due Apr. 18

Klinenberg, E. (2002) *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Ch. 2 "Race, Place and Vulnerability" (reader)

Robertson, C. & Fausset, R. (2015) "Ten Years After Katrina". *The New York Times*. Aug. 26, 2015.

Sharkey, P. (2007). "Survival and Death in New Orleans: An Empirical Look at the Human Impact of Katrina." *Journal of Black Studies*, 37(4) 482-501

Apr. 23 & 25, Week 14. The climate crisis and urban futures

Quiz #5 released Apr. 25

Readings: Stillman, S. (2021) "Storm Chasers". *The New Yorker*

Romero, E. (2022) "'A Lesson in Discrimination': A Toxic Seal Level Rise Crisis Threatens West Oakland". *KQED News*, Sept. 13, 2022

Explore the Toxic Tides Study (UCB) website. Read the Richmond Case Study.
<https://sites.google.com/berkeley.edu/toxictides/home>

Apr. 29—May 3, Week 15. RRR week

No class and no new material. Use this week to review and catch up.

Final Exam: Due on May 9th. Instructions for completing and turning in the exam will be included on the prompt, which will be released to you one week in advance.

* Course Schedule remains subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.