URBANIZATION AND COMMUNITY

SOC 420, Winter 2017
M/W 2:00-3:50 CH 269

Instructor: Julius McGee (cjulius@pdx.edu)
Office Hours Cramer 217O (hours Tuesday 1:00-3:00)

TA Kyla Tompkins (kto2@pdx.edu)
Office hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course, we will first examine the origins and forces of modern cities and then take a detailed look at five issues that have specific relevance for urban areas: globalization, slums, cars, social stratification, and the environment. Your intellectual development in this course depends on you attending lectures, reading the assigned materials, watching film clips, and contributing to class discussions. As a sociology class, the overall objective of this course is to recognize that urbanization and city-life are social constructions and embedded in social systems. To that end, there are four general lessons I hope to communicate to you:

1) Urbanization is a recent event in human history
2) Cities and city-life vary over time and place
3) Modern cities present great challenges, but…
4) They offer potential for positive social development and environmental sustainability

Graded Assignments: There are three graded components of the course: 1) Weekly Quizzes. You must complete the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned. Your quiz grade depends on you having read. Out of ten quizzes, the two lowest grades will be dropped. 2) One essay assignment. 3) Two exams.

Quizzes 20% (10 @ 2% each): At the beginning of each week you will be given a quiz on the readings that you will be required to answer in a handwritten response on a sheet of paper (please bring your own paper). Quizzes are not intended to be challenging. They are simply there to keep you honest about your reading. The quizzes will consist of 2-3 short answer questions, which should be answered in 3-5 sentences minimum.

Take home exams 40% (2 @ 20% each): You will be asked to complete 2 (one after week 5; one after week 10) take home exams in this course. The exams will be handed out on Wednesday and due the following Monday. Exams will consist of 4 questions – you will be required to answer 1 question and pick from 2 of the remaining three (A total of 3 questions to answer). Each answer should be no less than 500 words typed (please include a word count at the top of each answer and bibliography).
Essay assignment and peer reviews 40% (Peer reviews 2 @ 7.5% Essay 25%): You will be required to write one 2,000-word essay during this course. The paper topic will ask the basic but in depth question of: “Should We Live in Cities?” The primary objective of this project is to synthesize what you have hopefully learned in this course, and then use this knowledge to critically evaluate the pros and cons of urban settlement. This paper will be due to me at the beginning of class of week 10. Before this paper is handed in to me, however, it will go through a peer review process. In the beginning of the course students will split into groups of four. In addition to serving as the primary group for various in class group discussions, the members of your group will also serve as peer evaluators for your paper. At two points during the term, you will hand in a copy of your paper to each of your group members, who will review your paper over the weekend. The drafts of the paper do not have to be completed essays, in fact, I do not anticipate anyone having all 2,000 words written until the final draft. The drafts should be substantial, however, demonstrating to your reviewers how you intend to frame of your argument and thesis. The goal for the reviewers is to challenge each writer by pointing out potential flaws within arguments or encouraging writers to incorporate other readings or course materials. Peer reviewers are required to respond to papers in two to three typed double-spaced paragraphs (around 300 words). Peer reviewers will be evaluated on their ability to provide helpful feedback. More detail on this assignment will be given to you at a later time. The goal is to provide students with a chance to learn from one another and generate an ongoing dialogue throughout the term.

Calendar of Topics and Readings:

Week 1 (January 9th/11th): Gatherers, Hunters, Villages, and the First Cities
Objective: Recognize the long history of human settlement and our modern pro-urban bias.
Readings: A. Lawler “Uncovering Civilization’s Roots”; W. Cronon “Bounding the Land”

Week 2 (January 16th/18th): The Origins of Urban Sociology
Objective: Understand the merits of urban sociological analyses and their influence on modern sociology

Week 3 (January 23rd/25th): Theory of Modern Urban Growth
Objective: See how political and economic elites depend on and influence urban land use.
Readings: H. Molotch “The City as a Growth Machine”; J. Jacobs Chapter 8. The need for mixed primary uses

Week 4 (January 30th/February 1st): Globalization, Slums, and the Third World
Objective: Study how the global economy has created both the metropolis and the slum.
Readings: M. Davis. “Slum Ecology”; The Prevalence of Slums
First Draft of Papers due Wednesday.
Week 5 (February 6th/8th): Gender
Objective: Examine how various forms of social stratification are connected to urbanization.
Readings: D. Hayden. “Non-Sexist City”; D. Hayden. Introduction
Peer reviews due Monday.
First Exam handed out Wednesday (Take home exam)

Week 6 (February 13th/15th): Urbanization and Race
Objective: Explore how intra continental migration effects minority populations.
First Exam due Monday.

Week 7 (February 20th/22th): Urbanization and Race cont.
Second drafts of papers due Wednesday.

Week 8 (February 27th/March 1st): Urbanization and Race cont.
Objective: Discuss the issues and merits of gentrification.
Readings: There Goes the Hood: Chapter 4 “Making Sense of Gentrification”; Hern Chapter 1 “Under all is Land”
Second peer reviews due Monday.

Week 9 (March 6th/8th): Urbanization and the Environment
Objective: Discuss the challenges and possibilities in making cities more sustainable.
Readings: Clement “Urbanization and the Natural Environment: An Environmental Sociological Review and Synthesis”; Pulido “Rethinking Environmental Racism”

Week 10 (March 13th/15th): Urbanization and Environment cont.
Final Paper due Wednesday
Second Exam handed out Wednesday (Take home exam)

*** Disclaimer***

Syllabus is subject to change.