

**SOC496H1S**  
**Interaction and Identity in the City**  
University of Toronto  
Winter 2025

Tuesdays, 11:10am-1:00pm

For room information, please see ACORN

Instructor: Dr. Jan Doering

- Email: [jan.doering@utoronto.ca](mailto:jan.doering@utoronto.ca). If you have a question or comment that cannot be addressed in 2-3 sentences, please come talk to me rather than sending me an email.
- Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30pm. 17<sup>th</sup> floor, 700 University Ave. Please sign up online to avoid lines and let me know you are coming: <https://calendly.com/jandoering>. You can choose to attend in-person or via Zoom.

**Course Description**

Cities are unique environments for social interactions and relationships. For well over a century, urban sociologists have studied how anonymity, density, spatial mobility, and other features of urban life shape social identities, interactions, and communities. Underlying this body of work are fundamental worries about what urban life means for the individual and society. But is this skepticism warranted? Where, when, and how do conflict or positive social interactions materialize and what consequences do those interactions have? This course engages select contributions to this scholarly tradition while focusing on specific types of spaces, encounters, and relationships. Students will have the opportunity to learn the theories, methods, and findings that comprise this body of work. Moreover, each student will gain in-depth familiarity with some local aspects of community, identity, and interaction in one particular city of their choosing.

**Prerequisites**

1.0 SOC credit at the 300+ level. Students without the prerequisite will be removed without notice.

**Learning Goals**

After completing this course, you should:

- know the tradition of sociological research that focuses on community, identity, and interaction in the city.
- be able to analyze the fundamental features and dynamics of community, identity, and interaction in any urban environment.
- have gained familiarity with how certain urban interactions and relationships unfold in one particular city of your choice.
- be able to use Factiva as a news research tool and Zotero for archiving sources and creating bibliographies.

## Readings and materials

All readings will be made available on Quercus but especially through Perusall, a social annotation platform that enables you to collaboratively discuss reading assignments. Note that using Perusall is a graded course requirement. Contact me as soon as possible to discuss potential alternatives if you face challenges that make using Perusall impossible for you. You must have the readings accessible in class because we will actively work with them. Please bring a laptop computer to class if this is at all possible for you.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Assignment	Date/due date	Grade weight
Participation, including attendance	N/A	35%
Discussion facilitator assignment	One session, as agreed upon by instructor and student	5%
Perusall reading assignments (pass/fail per reading)	8am on the day of class for which the reading has been assigned	15%
City specialist presentation and material submission	Week 11 or 12 class session, as agreed upon by instructor and student	10%
Final paper	April 10	35%

### Participation, including attendance (35%)

The best-case scenario for a seminar is that we all thrive together—that the whole becomes larger than the sum of its parts. I am asking you to do everything you can to advance this goal. Among other things, you should:

- *Read and digest the course readings.* I expect you to read all assigned materials before class. “Reading” here includes developing a stance towards the materials you process. For example, in reading an article, you might develop a critique, formulate questions about unclear arguments or concepts, think about the article’s theoretical implications, consider its empirical extensions to other settings, link its arguments to other pieces we have read, do all of the above, and so on. If I ask you what you think about a reading in class, you should have something to say!
- *Come to class.* You are allowed to miss one session without this affecting your participation grade—no need to email me to explain your absence or to supply medical notes or other kinds of documentation. Of course, it will be your responsibility to catch up on the course materials. If you miss another session, you must justify your absence with appropriate documentation to avoid a reduced participation grade. For any session (beyond the first) you miss without supplying acceptable documentation, your participation grade will be reduced by 2.5%.
- *Stay engaged and constructive.* In class, make sure to raise topics, ask questions, and volunteer your knowledge. Talk when you have something to say that might

advance the discussion. (On the other hand, especially if you are an extroverted person, it is good to consider whether the discussion currently needs your intervention or not. If it does not, it might be better to listen. In other words, more isn't always better.) When you discuss a point (whether made in class or by an author in writing), you should always engage its strongest rather than its weakest version. That is, rather than looking for easy ways to criticize or dismiss a point, engage the strongest version of it that you can imagine. If you want to familiarize yourself with the downsides of engaging an argument's weakest-possible interpretation, watch an hour of Fox News or MSNBC.

I will use the following rubric to assess your participation: attendance, level of engagement and participation, analytic quality of contributions, level of familiarity with the readings, and value of the contributions to the overall discussion (this includes etiquette and your impact on class morale).

#### Discussion facilitator assignment (5%)

Together with another student, you should serve as discussion facilitator during one of the class meetings that occur between week 3 and week 9. For that session, you should do the readings particularly carefully, meet with your co-facilitator, and come to class with a list of questions and text passages you think we should discuss. You and your co-facilitator must email me your preparation materials by midnight of the day before your session. Submit one shared file to me. Text passages you select may include those that reveal a key finding, passages that are unclear but seemingly important, passages that reveal a methodological challenge or limitation, etc.

#### Perusall reading assignments (15%)

You will be asked to engage the course readings by using Perusall, a browser-based, collaborative reading tool. Perusall enables you to prepare and discuss the readings together with other students. Perusall will grade your reading engagement for each individual reading on a pass/fail basis. It considers the quantity and quality of comments and the degree to which your comments stimulate and contribute to student discussion. Your Perusall grade will be the average of your pass/fail credit per assigned reading. To receive credit for a reading assignment, you have to make about six insightful/useful annotations per reading by 8am of the day of class. Completing a reading assignment late will not result in credit. To access Perusall, go to <https://app.perusall.com/join/doering-hze7m> and enter the course code DOERING-HZE7M.

#### City specialist presentation and material submission (10%)

During our meeting in week 2, I will ask you to select a city that you will research over the course of the semester to examine how issues we discuss materialize in that city. For either our week 11 or week 12 course meeting, you must prepare a short presentation (of about 10 minutes) that engages one or more issues related to our course in your city of choice in some detail. For example, you might present on problems of social isolation in New York City, accessibility in Montreal, or road rage in Cape Town. I will grade your presentation as well as the strength of the underlying corpus of materials, which you should submit to me by the time of class during which you present on your city. For your

research, you will be required to primarily use Factiva, an online news database. Additionally, you must archive your sources using Zotero, a bibliography software.

### Final paper (35%)

Your final paper may explore any theoretical or empirical topic of your choice that is clearly related to our course topic and materials. For example, you might write an exploration of scholarship on a particular setting for social interaction or relationships (sidewalks, public transit, or relationships among neighbors, for example). You might also write a paper about your specialist city, applying the course readings to a local issue of interest. Feel free to consult with me about your ideas to ensure that they are feasible and fit the assignment. The paper should consist of 8-10 double-spaced pages of text (12 point font), not counting images, the bibliography, and other auxiliary material you might include. The paper must contain a bibliography and citations that have been produced with the help of Zotero.

### **Missed Tests or Assignment Deadlines**

Students who miss an assignment deadline or a test will receive a mark of zero unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a deadline or test, students must send the instructor a request for consideration. Students must document their request with **one of the following**:

- Absence declaration via ACORN
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form
- College Registrar's letter (e.g., in case of personal/family crisis or emergency)
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services. Note, however, that academic accommodations must generally be requested before (rather than after) deadlines or tests.

### **Late Assignment Submission Policy**

Do everything you can to meet assignment deadlines. Late submissions will incur a late penalty of 10% for any 24-hour period that has begun after the submission deadline. For example, an assignment that is one hour late will receive a 10% penalty, while an assignment that is 25 hours late will receive a 20% grade penalty.

### **Other Course Policies**

- The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights, and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. The University of Toronto does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.
- You are expected to consult the syllabus for relevant information if have questions about assignments and other course-related matters. If you email me with questions that reading the syllabus would resolve, I reserve the right to ignore your email.
- As the instructor for this course, I strive to provide an accessible learning environment. If you have a consideration that may require accommodations,

please contact Accessibility Services: <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>, 416-978-8060, or [accessibility.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:accessibility.services@utoronto.ca). Feel free to approach me as well if you believe I can improve your learning experience.

- Accommodations for religious holy days: The University provides reasonable accommodation for students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Please alert me as early as possible about religious observances and anticipated absences that may interfere with assignments and other course requirements.
- If you believe an assignment was graded incorrectly or unfairly, you may submit a regrading request. Before contacting me, you must wait until three days have passed since the grade was shared with you. Write a memo in which you describe and justify your grade complaint and email it to me. I will regrade the entire assignment, not just specific parts or issues you may have flagged. Your grade may go up or down as a result.
- All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. You are expected to inform yourself about academic integrity. For general information, see <https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>. If you have additional questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me.
- The use of generative artificial intelligence tools or apps for assisting in the preparation of assignments for this course, including tools like ChatGPT and other AI writing or coding assistants, is permitted. However, these tools may be used only as assistive tools. Your submitted assignments must reflect your own writing, ideas, arguments, analytic and organizational skills, research, and materials.
- Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service is described on the Turnitin.com web site.
- Assignments not submitted through *Turnitin* will receive a grade of zero (0 %), unless a student instead provides, along with their position paper, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via *Turnitin*) is in place because, strictly speaking, using *Turnitin* is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.
- Regardless of circumstances, I never give extra credit, "round up" grades, or change the relative grade weight of assignments. I follow this policy because tailoring grades or grading procedures to individual students is fundamentally unfair to the other students. Please do not ask me to do so.

## **Schedule**

### Week 1. Tuesday, January 7. Introduction.

- No reading assignments.

### Week 2. Tuesday, January 14. Urban social psychology.

- Karp, David A., Gregory P. Stone, William C. Yoels, and Nicholas P. Dempsey. 2015. *Being Urban: A Sociology of City Life*. 3rd edition. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger. Chapter 2 (“Classical Observations of Urban Life”)
- Simmel, Georg. 1971 [1903]. “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” Chapter 20 in Donald Levine (ed.), *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

### Week 3. Tuesday, January 21. Interaction and non-interaction.

- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*. New York, NY: Free Press. Selection from chapter 6 (“Face Engagements”).
- Lofland, Lyn H. 1973. *A World of Strangers. Order and Action in Urban Public Space*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 7 (“Privatizing Public Space: Symbolic Transormation”)

### Week 4. Tuesday, January 28. Materiality and interaction.

- LeVan, Carrie. 2020. “Neighborhoods That Matter: How Place and People Affect Political Participation.” *American Politics Research* 48(2):286–94.
- Bissell, David. 2010. “Passenger Mobilities: Affective Atmospheres and the Sociality of Public Transport.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28(2):270–89.

### Week 5. Tuesday, February 4. Spatial movement in the city.

- Katz, Jack. 1999. *How Emotions Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 (“Pissed off in L.A.”).
- Cahill, Spencer and Robin Eggleston. 1994. “Managing Emotions in Public: The Case of Wheelchair Users.” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 57:300–312.

### Week 6. Tuesday, February 11. Race and ethnicity in public space.

- Anderson, Elijah. 2004. “The Cosmopolitan Canopy.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 595:14–31.
- Aptekar, Sofya. 2019. “The Unbearable Lightness of the Cosmopolitan Canopy: Accomplishment of Diversity at an Urban Farmers Market.” *City & Community* 18(1):71–87.

No class on Tuesday, February 18 (winter break).

### Week 7. Tuesday, February 25. Gender and sexuality in public space.

- Gardner, Carol Brooks. 1989. “Analyzing Gender in Public Places: Rethinking Goffman’s Vision of Everyday Life.” *The American Sociologist* 20(1):42–56.

- Humphreys, Laud. 1970. *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places*. Rutgers, NJ: Transaction. Chapters 1 (“Public settings for ‘private’ encounters”)

Week 8. Tuesday, March 4. Sharing neighborhoods with “others.”

- Doering, Jan. 2016. “Visibly White: How Community Policing Activists Negotiate Their Whiteness.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 2(1):106–19.
- Tavory, Iddo. 2016. *Summoned: Identification and Religious Life in a Jewish Neighborhood*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 7, “The Neighborhood as Moral Obstacle Course,” pp.122-144.

Week 9. Tuesday, March 11. Neighbors.

- Kerr, Sophie-May, Chris Gibson, and Natascha Klocker. 2018. “Parenting and Neighbouring in the Consolidating City: The Emotional Geographies of Sound in Apartments.” *Emotion, Space and Society* 26:1–8.
- Stack, Carol B. 1997. *All Our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community*. Basic Books. Chapter 3 (“Swapping: What Goes Round Comes Round”).

Week 10. Tuesday, March 18. Screening of “Urbanized,” directed by Gary Hustwit.

- No reading assignments.

Week 11. Tuesday, March 25. City specialist presentations.

- No reading assignments.

Week 12. Tuesday, April 1. City Specialist presentations.

- No reading assignments.