

SOC496H1S
Community, Identity, and Interaction in the City
University of Toronto
Winter 2024

Tuesdays, 11:10am-1:00pm

For room information, please see ACORN

Instructor: Dr. Jan Doering

- Email: 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. Room 17126 (17th 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 community, identity, and interaction. 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. If you don't fulfill this prerequisite, contact me right away.

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 challenging or 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 | 10% |
| City specialist presentation and material submission | Week 11 or 12 class session, as agreed upon by instructor and student | 15% |
| Final paper | Due date TBA | 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!
- *Research your specialization city.* As part of your preparation for weeks 3-6 and 9-10, I am asking you to spend at least one hour per week researching how the topics and findings of the readings relate to your specialization city (see “city specialist presentation”). For example, for our meeting in week 3, you might research issues related to driving behavior in your city. Your creativity is encouraged and appreciated in this context! In class, I may ask you what you have decided to research, how it relates to our reading materials, and what you have found. For your searches, you will be required to primarily use Factiva, an online

news database. Additionally, you must archive your sources using Zotero, a bibliography software. I may ask you to submit your list of sources.

- *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 (see below) 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, value of the contributions to the overall discussion (this includes etiquette and your impact on class morale), and preparedness to incorporate city specialist information in the course discussions.

Discussion facilitator assignment (5%)

You should serve as discussion facilitator during one of the class meetings that occur between week 3-5 and week 7-10. For that session, you should do the readings particularly carefully and come to class with a list of questions and text passages you think we should discuss. You must email me your preparation materials by midnight of the day before your session. If other students have also signed up for the session, prepare together with them and 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 (10%)

You will be asked to engage the course readings by using Perusall, a browser-based, collaborative reading tool. Perusall enables you to 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 insightful/useful annotations 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-tdzwc> and enter the course code DOERING-TDZWC.

City specialist presentation and material submission (15%)

During our meeting in week 2, I will ask you to select a city that you will continually research over the course of the semester to examine how issues we discuss materialize in that city. Moreover, 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.

Final paper (35%)

Your final paper may explore any theoretical or empirical topic of your choices 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 Term Work Policy

Students who miss their discussion facilitator assignment, city specialist presentation, or are late in submitting an assignment must provide acceptable documentation as soon as possible to avoid late penalties and/or receive a make-up accommodation. The following are recognized forms of documentation:

- Absence Declaration via ACORN
- U of T Verification of Illness or Injury Form (VOI)
- College Registrar's letter
- Letter of Academic Accommodation from Accessibility Services

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 you 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. 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.
- Normally, students may be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>). Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through Ouriginal will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, 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 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.

Schedule

Week 1. Tuesday, January 9. Introduction.

- No reading assignments.

Week 2. Tuesday, January 16. Theories of social experience and interaction in the city.

- 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.
- 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").

Week 3. Tuesday, January 23. Public interaction: movement, transit, and transportation (1).

- Katz, Jack. 1999. *How Emotions Work*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 ("Pissed off in L.A.").
- 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 4. Tuesday, January 30. Public interaction: movement, transit, and transportation (2).

- Kidder, Jeffrey L. 2009. "Appropriating the City: Space, Theory, and Bike Messengers." *Theory and Society* 38(3):307–28.
- Cahill, Spencer and Robin Eggleston. 1994. "Managing Emotions in Public: The Case of Wheelchair Users." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 57:300–312.

Week 5. Tuesday, February 6. Public interaction across social categories (1).

- 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.

Week 6. Tuesday, February 13. Screening of "Urbanized," directed by Gary Hustwit.

- No reading assignments.

No class on Tuesday, February 20 (winter break).

Week 7. Tuesday, February 27. Public interaction across social categories (2): higher levels of resolution.

- Duneier, Mitchell, and Harvey Molotch. 1999. "Talking City Trouble: Interactional Vandalism, Social Inequality, and the 'Urban Interaction Problem.'" *American Journal of Sociology* 104(5):1263–95.
- Rawls, Anne Warfield, and Gary David. 2005. "Accountably Other: Trust, Reciprocity and Exclusion in a Context of Situated Practice." *Human Studies* 28(4):469–97.

Week 8. Tuesday, March 5. Theories of community in the city.

- Park, Robert Ezra. and E. W. Burgess. 1925. *The City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 5, "Community organization and juvenile delinquency," pp.99-112.
- Fischer, Claude S. 1975. "Toward a Subcultural Theory of Urbanism." *American Journal of Sociology* 80(6):1319–41.
- Wellman, Barry, and Barry Leighton. 1979. "Networks, Neighborhoods, and Communities." *Urban Affairs Review* 14(3):363–90.

Week 9. Tuesday, March 12. Neighborhood community and neighboring.

- 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.
- 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 10. Tuesday, March 19. Neighborhood community under conditions of poverty.

- Klinenberg, Eric. 2001. "Dying Alone: The Social Production of Urban Isolation." *Ethnography* 2(4):501–31.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2012. "Disposable Ties and the Urban Poor." *American Journal of Sociology* 117(5):1295–1335.

Week 11. Tuesday, March 26. City specialist presentations and final paper writing workshop.

- No reading assignments.

Week 12. Tuesday, April 2. City Specialist presentations and final paper writing workshop.

- No reading assignments.