

SOC205H1S. Urban Sociology

Winter 2026 University of Toronto

Course Time: Wednesdays 11:10 – 1:00pm
Location: See ACORN

Course on Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca/> (login using your Utorid)

Instructor: Professor Brent Berry, Department of Sociology, University of Toronto
brent.berry@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm & by appointment
Location: (17th fl), 700 University Ave (SW corner of College and Univ Ave)
(I can also talk after class, arrange a phone call or teams meeting, just ask)

Teaching Assistant: TBA

Overview

The theoretical and methodological underpinnings of urban sociology are broad, reflecting a range of disciplines and approaches. This course first reviews theories of urban genesis and urban form; the interrelationship of urbanization, industrialization and modernization, issues in urban living (housing, transportation, urban-renewal, poverty, unemployment, etc.); urban social networks (ethnic and cultural heterogeneity, neighborhood, community, and other voluntary associations). In doing so, we will review different theoretical and methodological approaches for understanding urban life. Second, the course covers several contemporary issues in urban sociology: homelessness, gentrification, multiethnic cities, globalization, residential segregation, crime, and public space. Third, the course offers real world observation and examples that speak to the strength and limitations of theory, data, and methods for studying urban problems.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and apply key urban sociological theories to real-world contexts.
2. Analyze urban inequalities, including race, class, gender, and migration
3. Compare Canadian urban issues (e.g., affordability in Toronto/Vancouver) with global examples (e.g., megacity challenges in Lagos), incorporating rural-urban migration flows.
4. Interpret urban data (e.g., census statistics, GIS maps) and visuals (e.g., inequality indexes, migration trends).
5. Evaluate urban policies and their social impacts, and responses to rapid urbanization.
6. Communicate urban sociological arguments through writing and discussion.

Evaluation

Final marks will be based on four components –

- Ten short weekly written responses <500 words (Jan 14th-Mar 25th)..... 32%
- Quiz in Class, 2nd hour Feb 11th 13%
- Individual Research Paper, due March 25th30%
- Test in class on April 1nd25%

Prerequisites

Completion of SOC100H1 is required to take this course. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course.

Readings

- Most readings are from *Urban Canada: Sociological Perspectives* edited by Harry Hiller (3rd Edition, 2014), which can be purchased from the University Bookstore as a digital or physical copy.
 - Link for Digital options
 - <https://www.uoftbookstore.com/adoption-search-results?ccid=2829424&itemid=77395>
 - [Urban Canada 3rd edition | 9780199002740, 9780199011261 | University of Toronto \(vitalsource.com\)](https://vitalsource.com/Urban-Canada-3rd-edition-9780199002740-9780199011261)
- Any remaining readings are available through Quercus in the “Library Reading List” or as direct Online resources found at the web links provided. Contact the instructor if you encounter problems.
- Any readings listed as supplemental or optional are NOT required reading. The syllabus includes a variety of resources in case you wish to read further on particular topics.

Lectures and Lecture Slides

Lectures draw from various sources that may go beyond the required readings. The instructor tries to bring together insights and data from various sources into a cohesive discussion. The quiz and final test are based on all material delivered in lecture as well as the required readings.

The instructor posts slides the evening before class. They are provided to assist in-class notetaking. Besides the posted lecture slides, the presentation will incorporate a range of audiovisual materials. It is important to complete all required readings and attend class.

Email and the Course Webpage

In this course, email and use of the course webpage on Quercus is important. I will use e-mail for reminders, clarifications, and notifications. You can contact the instructor via e-mail with questions, requests or problems that were not --or could not be-- addressed in class.

Students who miss a paper, assignment, or test deadline will receive a mark of zero unless the reason is a circumstance beyond their control. **Within three days** of missing a deadline, 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

Late work will be accepted at the instructor’s discretion.

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

In this class, students can use artificial intelligence tools (AI, GPT, etc.) in certain instances or specific ways -- For conducting background research, asking questions about course themes, assimilating information for general understanding, refining language or grammar (i.e., ESL purposes), or identifying secondary literature. Students may use artificial intelligence tools for creating an outline for

an assignment, but the final submitted assignment must be original work produced by the individual student alone. Students may NOT use artificial intelligence tools to automatically generate essay assignments, discussion responses, or answers.

The University's plagiarism detection tool

'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 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.

Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see the "Code of Behavior on Academic Matters"). If you are using someone else's ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else's ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference --you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodation or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as> as soon as possible.

Feedback on Ideas and Writing

The instructor is happy to discuss your ideas and writing during online office hours, or through email within limits. However, more help can be provided to students who ask early. All too often, papers are one or two drafts short of excellence when time expires. We also encourage you to also use the university's writing resources and start early.

Class Schedule

Jan 7th -- Introduction, opening remarks, discuss syllabus and mutual expectations

- Overview on the history and development of urban sociology and broad range of topics and issues to be addressed in the course
- No readings for today's introductory lecture
- Watch Jane Jacob's NFB film "City Limits" (1971, 28 minutes)
https://www.nfb.ca/film/city_limits/

Jan 14th -- Canadian Urbanization in Historical and Global Perspective

Readings for Today's Class

- Hiller, Harry. "Urbanization and the City" (Introduction, *Urban Canada*)
- Hiller, Harry. "Canadian Urbanization in Historical and Global Perspective" (Chapter 1, *Urban Canada*)
- StatCan "Beyond Urban and Rural: Rethinking the social geography of Canada" (2025)
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2025002/article/00003-eng.htm>

In class short film if time permits:

- Robert Neuwirth on "shadow cities" (15 minutes)

Jan 21st – Dynamics of Canadian Urbanization

Readings for Today's Class

- Hiller, Harry. "The Dynamics of Canadian Urbanization" (Chapter 2, *Urban Canada*)
- International Organization of Migration (IOM). (2015). *Urbanization, Rural-Urban Migration and Urban Poverty*. (p 3-24)

In class short film if time permits:

- Watch NFB film: Farewell Oak Street, 1953, Grant McLean, 17 minutes

Jan 28th– Perspectives for Analyzing and Interpreting Cities and their Inhabitants, & Rural/Urban Distinctions

Readings for Today's Class

- Hannigan, John. "Analyzing and Interpreting the City: Theory and Method" (Chapter 3, *Urban Canada*)
- "Rural and Urban: Differences and Common Ground" (Chapter 4, *Urban Canada*)

Feb 4th – Social Ties, Social Capital, and Community

Readings for Today's Class

- Hampton, Keith. "Social Ties and Community in Urban Places" (Chapter 5, *Urban Canada*)
- Read the "community" entry from Grokopedia:
 - <https://grokopedia.com/page/Community>

Feb 11th– Poverty and Inequality in Canadian Cities

*** Quiz today in 2nd hour of class (13%)**

Readings for Today's Class (50 minute lecture before Quiz)

- Zuberi, Daniyal. "Urban Inequality and Urban Social Movements" (Chapter 7, *Urban Canada*)
- Hulchanski, David J. 2010. "The Three Cities within Toronto: Income polarization among Toronto's neighbourhoods, 1970-2005."
- Purcell, Mark 2013. "Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City" *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36(1) 141-154.

Feb 18th– Reading Week (No Class)

Feb 25th – Immigration, Race, and Ethnicity in the City

Readings for Today's Class

- Fong, Eric. "Immigration and Race in the City" (Chapter 8, *Urban Canada*)
- Buzzelli, M. 2001. From Little Britain to Little Italy: An urban ethnic landscape study in Toronto. *Journal of Historical Geography* 27, 4, 583 – 587

Note: Today's lecture will also review recent 2025 Statistics Canada data on immigration and urban growth, and examine urbanization and migration data from the Migration Data Portal "Urbanization & Migration" (<https://www.migrationdataportal.org/>)

March 4th -- The New Urban Political Economy

Readings for Today's Class

- Hannigan, John. "The New Urban Political Economy" (Chapter 12, *Urban Canada*)
- Patterson, Matt and Daniel Silver. 2015. "Turning the Post-Industrial City into the Cultural City: The Case of Toronto's Waterfront". Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries, Edited by Kate Oakley and Justin O'Connor

Today's discussion will also delve into how Climate Change activism is shaping the new urban political economy (ref: UN-Habitat "World Cities Report 2024: Cities & Climate Action" (optional reading))

March 11th – Consumer Society and the Form of the City: Past, Present, and Imagined Future

Readings for Today's Class

- Bookman, Sonia. "Consumer Culture, City Space, and Urban Life" (Chapter 13, *Urban Canada*)
- The Form of the City: The Case of Toronto (Chapter 16)

Bridging lectures March 4, 11, 18 will be discussion of these recent issues–

1. Are global cities "destined" to rising inequality?
2. Canadian Institute of Planners "Plan Canada: Technology" (2025)--BigTech/AI role in urban futures, Smart cities. Canadian adaptations?
3. Post-pandemic recovery, changes, and new challenges
4. Special Discussion on urban signage as a lens for social inquiry

March 18th -- Urban Public Spaces, Safety, Social Pathology, and Crime

Readings for Today's Class

- Gillis, A.R. "Big Cities, Social Pathology, and Serious Crime" (Chapter 10, *Urban Canada*)
- Horgan, M. and Leslie Kern. "Urban Public Spaces: Streets, Strangership, and Securitization" (Chapter 6, *Urban Canada*)
- Special Discussion: Gun violence in Toronto, The role of the media, television, and entertainment on our perceptions of crime and its urban dimensions?

Film clip (time permitting)

Parts of: *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* 1988: An engaging and informative tour of the urban landscape, while exploring how it can be made more hospitable for those who must live in it. This film also shows what can be learned through systematic observation of people in urban environments.

March 25th -- Housing and Homelessness

*** Research papers due today by midnight (see Quercus for instructions on how to submit)**

Readings for Today's Class

- Berry, Brent "Sociology of Housing and Homelessness". (Chapter 14, *Urban Canada*)
- Stephen W. Hwang. 2001. "Homelessness and Health." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164(1): 229-33.
- David Ley (2017) Global China and the making of Vancouver's residential property market, *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 17:1, 15-34, DOI: 10.1080/14616718.2015.1119776

April 1st -- **Two-Hour Test Today in-class during Regular Class Time**

Note: Practice questions and answers, as well as a study guide will be posted to aid your study for next week's final test.

Appendix

Course Readings found in "Library Reading List" on Quercus

- C.D. Howe Institute. (2025). *Balancing Canada's population growth and ageing through immigration policy*. <https://cdhowe.org>
- Conerly, T. R., et al. (2021). *Introduction to sociology 3e*. OpenStax.
- Goldstone, J. A. (2002). Population and security. *Journal of International Affairs*.
- Hiller, H. H. (Ed.). (2014). *Urban Canada* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2006). *Cities in a world economy* (3rd ed.). Pine Forge Press. (Excerpts.)

Online Readings found on the internet (copy and past into your internet browser search)

- Statistics Canada. (2025). *Beyond urban and rural: Rethinking the social geography of Canada*. <https://statcan.gc.ca>
- UN-Habitat. (2024). *Cities & Climate*. <https://unhabitat.org>
- World Bank. (n.d.). Urban development data. <https://worldbank.org>
- IOM. (2015). *Urbanization, Rural-Urban Migration and Urban Poverty*. PDF
- Migration Data Portal. (2022). *Data on Urbanization and Migration*. <https://migrationdataportal.org>.
- World Research Institute. (2025). *Transformations in Equitable Sustainable Cities*. <https://publications.wri.org>.
- Selod, Harris, and Forhad Shilpi. "Rural-urban migration in developing countries: Lessons from the literature." *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 91 (2021): 103713.

Other Urban Sociology Textbooks (optional, for further general reading if interested)

- Hutter, Mark. *Experiencing Cities*. 4th ed. Taylor and Francis, 2020. Web. 15 Oct. 2022.
- Bunting, T., et al. (2020). *Canadian cities in transition* (6th ed.). Oxford University Press.

- Lin, J., & Mele, C. (Eds.). (2012). *The urban sociology reader* (2nd ed.). Routledge. (Supplemental excerpts.)

Further optional reading on [Particular Topics]

- Mommaas, Hans 2004. "Culture clusters and the post-industrial city: towards the remapping of urban cultural policy" *Urban Studies* 41(3) 507-532 [new urban political economy]
- Michelson, William 2005 "The City as a Social Organization" from the first edition of *Urban Canada* (Ed. Harry Hiller). [organization, budgets and administration of cities]
- Stren, Richard, et al. 2010 (June) "Governance in Toronto: Issues and Questions" Discussion Paper #1, Cities Centre, University of Toronto. (11 pages) [urban governance]
- Ben-Shahar, Danny. 2007. "Tenure choice in the housing market: Psychological versus economic factors" *Environment and Behavior* 39: 841-858 [housing and human decision making]
- Joseph Mensah & Christopher J. Williams. 2014. Cultural Dimensions of African Immigrant Housing in Toronto: A Qualitative Insight, *Housing Studies*, 29:3, 438-455 [housing, ethnicity and multicultural city]

Other Urban Sociology Resources

Maps:

- Toronto Demographics and Neighbourhood Profiles: <http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/neighbourhoods.htm>:
- Toronto Community Health Profiles: <http://www.torontohealthprofiles.ca/>

Films: several short film clips shown in class may include but not be limited to the following--

- Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (William H White 1980) <https://youtu.be/5QkJkT3M-Us?si=NUPQM9zl9yYAmy8>
- A short history of the highrise, part 1-4, Katerina Cizek, 2013, 20 min https://www.nfb.ca/film/short_history_of_the_highrise_part_one_mud
- City Limits, Jane Jacobs, 28 minutes, https://www.nfb.ca/film/city_limits
- Farewell Oak Street, Grant McLean, 17 minutes, https://www.nfb.ca/film/farewell_oak_street
- Mobility, 36 minutes 1986 <https://www.nfb.ca/film/mobility>

Interactive Sites

- Out my window (interactive site) <http://interactive.nfb.ca/#/outmywindow/>

Interesting Urban Talks Online video

- Robert Neuwirth on "shadow cities" (15 minutes) https://www.ted.com/talks/robert_neuwirth_the_hidden_world_of_shadow_cities
- Rob Forbes on "ways of seeing" (15 minutes) http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/rob_forbes_on_ways_of_seeing.html
- Steven Johnson tours the "Ghost Map" [about the cholera outbreak in 1854 London and the impact it had on science, cities and modern society] (10 minutes) http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/steven_johnson_tours_the_ghost_map.html
- Carolyn Steel on "How food shapes our cities" (15 minutes) http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/carolyn_steel_how_food_shapes_our_cities.html
- Ellen Dunham-Jones on "Retrofitting suburbia" (19 minutes) http://www.ted.com/talks/ellen_dunham_jones_retrofitting_suburbia.html

News and Events: A few sources that regularly research, advocate or cover urban issues

- Canadian Urban Institute <https://www.canurb.org/>
- U of T School of Cities <https://www.schoolofcities.utoronto.ca/>
- Spacing Magazine <http://spacing.ca>
- Urban Toronto <http://urbantoronto.ca>
- CityLab by Bloomberg <https://www.citylab.com/>
- Steve Munro Toronto Transit Expert's blog <https://stevemunro.ca/>

Academic Journals and Publications

- City and Community: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/15406040>
- Canadian Journal of Urban Research: <https://cjur.uwinnipeg.ca/index.php/cjur>