Housing and Social Stratification in America

11.S943
Devin Michelle Bunten
MIT DUSP Spring 2020

Course Details

● Key times and places:
  ○ Class: Wed 2–5pm in 9-217
  ○ Office Hours: Thursdays 11:15am–12:15pm (drop-in) in 9-519
● Course instructor: Devin Michelle Bunten
  ○ Email: bunten@mit.edu
  ○ Pronouns: she/her/hers
● Class Format
  ○ We will meet once a week for three hours. The course will be a mixture of lectures (especially during section 1), student-led presentations on readings (especially during sections 2-4), and open discussion (throughout!).
● Course Site
  ○ The course site for 11.S943 will be an important resource for completing and submitting assignments, keeping track of due dates, and communicating with one another. Please take a few minutes to explore the site before the class begins.
● Pre-course survey:
  ○ Please fill out this survey before class on Wednesday (Feb 5). It will help me get to know you and have a better sense of where the class is going to go!
  ○ https://mit.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5gSVGDIDVIUjZP

Course description

Course questions
What are the structural roots of our housing crises today? How do housing policies and market mechanisms link the structural to the particular, and back again? Is housing a possible site of intervention for unmaking social stratification?
Handbook Description

Housing is a key site of social stratification. Race, class, gender, sexuality: all are enacted through our homes. Our homes provide access to our communities, and public goods like primary education are allocated less to families than to the occupants of houses. Housing is the key to wealth for the middle classes. Some families are able to use their homes to fund health care and elder care, unemployment and life insurance, or even vacations. Other families and individuals are unhoused. Many families are unable to find housing in their preferred city or neighborhood.

In this course, we will investigate how policy, markets, and private actions are used to stratify society, with a particular application to race in America. We will develop structural frameworks to better understand the processes of stratification and identify sites of intervention. We will identify the ways federal and local policy shape housing markets to reflect, reinforce, and (very occasionally) combat social inequities. We will frame our work in terms of overlapping housing crises: gentrification, displacements, white flight, shortage, homelessness, and car-dependence. We will ground our work in historical and social context. We will write, and rewrite—extensively. And we will center in our writing and conversation the ways in which planning can further the goal of building the just city.

More Detailed description

The course is going to be structured into four segments, with a fair amount of overlap.

- First, we'll spend ~2 weeks working through some useful urban economic models. The goal of this section is to provide a "structure" for understanding the "structural forces" that are pushing on individual choices and outcomes within cities. The assignments in this section will be problem sets to be completed with a small group (2-3 students).
- Second, we'll spend ~4 weeks going through some history up to the present, focusing on neighborhoods. We'll start with 19th century city growth, go through the great migration, and then talk about white flight, gentrification, and the changing immigrant experience in cities. For this section (and the next two), the assignments will be reading responses to be completed alone.
- Third, we'll spend ~5 weeks diving into different housing policies. We'll start with zoning, then rent control, public housing, and finally housing subsidies more broadly (rent subsidies, construction subsidies, and mortgage subsidies). We'll end with a discussion of transportation investments, focusing on highways.
- Finally, we'll spend the last ~2 weeks talking about Chicago. Chicago is perhaps the best-studied US city in terms of race and sociology. We'll read excerpts (or whole books, depending on time) by Mary Pattillo, Daniel Kay Hertz, and Eve Ewing.

syllabus 02/03/2020
Assignments and grading

The course will be discussion centered, and you will be expected to attend every class prepared to discuss the readings and to be an active participant in discussion. Requirements and grading are as follows:

- **Problem sets (10%)**
  - During section 1 of the course, I will assign two problem sets covering and extending the material discussed in class. These will generally have an empirical dimension but may also pose a theoretical question to dig deeper into the models. Problem sets are to be completed in small groups (of about 3-4). Ideally, you can pair with folks with different backgrounds/preparations in terms of math and economics. If you’re well-versed in both, helping classmates along will better solidify your understanding than simply handing in correct answers. If you’re new to economic reasoning, you can learn with your classmates. The problem sets will be graded as satisfactory (√) or unsatisfactory (√-), or incomplete.
  - (Especially if you're not an MIT student, please let me know if you feel that group work presents an insurmountable burden.)

- **In-class participation (15%).**
  - Be prepared with the readings, ask questions early and often, make arguments.

- **Reading responses of *no more than a few tweets* (15%)**
  - During sections 2-4 of the course, you are responsible for responding to the week’s reading before class. Tweet your response (in a short thread?) to @HousingSocStrat or upload on stellar. The goal is to provide a starting point for class discussion.
  - These very short responses will offer a critical assessment or other response to the assigned material and not mere restatement of content. The critical inquiry can go in any direction: you can highlight threads that you see throughout the set of readings, pose questions that the readings brought to your attention, suggest critiques, raise concepts you would like to clarify, or something else entirely. You will be expected to submit one response per week, except the week you lead discussion. The responses will be graded as satisfactory (√) or unsatisfactory (√-).

- **Lead class introduction (15%)**
  - During sections 2-4 of the course, you will be responsible for introducing a week’s material to class. Most likely, this will entail presenting one of the paper’s/books/chapters under discussion and providing context. Your presentation should be about 15-20 minutes. In that time, you’ll mostly provide context, a bit of summary, and critical discussion. This project can be undertaken with a partner, but no groups of three.

- **Op-ed ~800 words (25%)**
  - Students will be expected to submit an argumentative “op-ed”-style essay of around 700-800 words on a housing-related issue of your choice. The argument can be for (or against) a policy, a way of thinking, or something else entirely.

syllabus 02/03/2020
The project will be completed in three parts:

i. First, a pitch. Lay out your argument in a thesis statement. That’s 1-2 sentences. Then mention your ideas for supporting evidence/sources. Then let’s talk—before or after you turn it in. Due Feb 21 at 6pm, but if you’ve got an idea you can send it in sooner! Worth 0% of your grade but if it is late, you will lose credit as detailed below.

ii. A real-ass draft. This is not your scribbled notes, this is a draft that you’d consider good enough to publish if your editor is in a hurry and needs some copy. Worth 12.5% of your grade. This is a real assignment. In exchange for your taking this draft seriously, I will engage seriously with your ideas, offering paths forward for improving the argument along both broad topical and narrow sentence-construction dimensions. Please turn this in via google doc: share with my MIT google account: bunten-google@mit.edu, so we can go back and forth on edits easily. Due March 4.

iii. A revised draft. Also worth 12.5% of your grade. This will incorporate my editing ideas—one way or another! During this revision, you should feel free to run improvement ideas past me—just tag me in the google doc, and I can take a look. Due March 20 at 6pm.

You should absolutely plan to talk to me about your idea in office hours early and often! Also, have some useful op-ed writing advice.

Long-form argumentative essay of ~3,000 words (20%)

Students will be expected to submit an argumentative long-form essay of around 3,000 words on a housing-related issue of your choice. Please do not use the same topic as your shorter op-ed. The argument can be a revisionist history, a way of experiencing the city, or something else entirely.

The project will be completed in three parts:

i. First, a pitch. A paragraph is ok. Due Apr 3 at 6pm. Late policy applies.

ii. A real-ass draft. As before, this is not your scribbled notes, this is a draft that you’d consider good enough to publish if your editor is in a hurry and needs some copy. As before it is 10% of your final grade. In exchange for your taking this seriously, I will engage seriously with your ideas. Please share with my MIT google account: bunten-google@mit.edu. Due April 24 at 6pm.

iii. A revised draft. This will incorporate my feedback. During this revision, you should feel free to run improvement ideas past me—just tag me in the google doc, and I can take a look. Due May 6 at 2pm.* Also worth 10%.

* I’m not mad if it comes in a bit later—take stock of your own end-of-term outlook and confer with me if you need extra time.

PhD students: see me about alternatives for this assignment (eg research proposal, lit reviews, etc)
A note:

The syllabus is a work in progress and subject to tweaks! The direction of change, should changes occur, will be towards a lighter and more engaging workload (unless I remember obvious papers that I meant to include! But I’ll try to balance those with demotions to “optional” status).

Books

(If the $90+ of books represents an insurmountable challenge at the moment, please talk to me and we will find a solution!)

- Isabel Wilkerson: *The Warmth of Other Suns* ($5.62-12.53)
- Leah Boustan: *Competition in the Promised Land* ($4.89-22.95)
- Richard Rothstein: *The Color of Law* ($7.95-10.99)
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor: *Race for Profit* ($18.88-23.49)
- Karilyn Crockett: *People Before Highways* ($10.78-29.95)
- Daniel Kay Hertz: *Battle of Lincoln Park* ($8.00-12.79)
- Mary Pattillo: *Black on the Block* ($9.50-26.00)
- *Strictly optional, available at MIT libraries: Jan Brueckner Lectures on urban economics*

Schedule and Topics

**Section One: Intro and Some Economics**

Feb 5: Housing Crises and Spatial Equilibrium

- **Crises**
  - Me: *A Sense of Where You Are*
  - Jamelle Bouie: *Racism in Real Estate*
  - Kim-Mai Cutler: *How burrowing owls lead to vomiting anarchists*
  - Daniel Kay Hertz: *Why america can’t make up its mind about housing*
  - Jacqui Rabe Thomas: *Separated by Design: How Some of America’s Richest Towns Fight Affordable Housing*

- **Spatial Equilibrium**
  - Monocentric city notes extremely optional
Feb 12: Housing Market Structure

- Supply and demand for housing
  - Glaeser, Gyourko, and Saks (2005 JLE) Why is Manhattan So Expensive? intro
  - Saiz (2010 QJE): Geographic Determinants of Housing Supply intro
  - Do New Housing Units in Your Backyard Raise Your Rents? intro
  - Bunten (2017 working paper) Is the rent too high? optional
- Complementarities in cities and neighborhoods
  - Lee and Lin (2017): Natural Amenities, Neighbourhood Dynamics, and Persistence...
  - Blair (2017 working): Outside Options Now More Important Than Race optional

Section Two: Some History

Feb 19: Urban Growth and the Great Migration

- Development of US cities through WWI
  - Jackson: Crabgrass Frontier intro, 1-2, 5-9
  - Boustan, Bunten, and Hearey (2018) optional
  - Parman and Logan: The Rise in Residential Segregation
- The Great Migration
  - Wilkerson: Warmth of Other Suns 1-94 and 223-259
  - Boustan: Competition in the Promised Land Chapters 4-5

Feb 26: Midcentury Segregation

- Coates (2013): The Case for Reparations
- Rothstein The Color of Law: chapters 1, 3-4, 6, 8-9 (other chapters: optional, but good!)
- Models of Segregation
  - A Pure Theory of Local Expenditures Optional
  - Stratification Economics Optional
  - Bunten (2020): contingent on me writing this in time
- Racial Segregation in Housing Markets and the Erosion of Black Wealth Intro
- Racial rent differences in U.S. housing markets Intro

Mar 4: The “Urban Crisis”

- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor: Race for Profit
- Hoboken Is Burning: Yuppies, Arson, and Displacement in the Postindustrial City

syllabus 02/03/2020
Mar 11: Changing Communities: Immigration and Gentrification

- Immigrant and Ethnic Enclaves
  - Boustan (2018 working paper)
  - Weapons of Mass Construction
  - Chester buying property "to keep Hasidic out"
  - Underground Lives: The Sunless World of Immigrants in Queens
  - How Boba became an integral part of Los Angeles optional; fun

- Gentrification: Background and causes
  - Untangling the Housing Shortage and Gentrification
  - Aron-Dine and Bunten (if it’s ready)
  - Lin (2017, 3 centuries of Philadelphia)
  - Hwang and Lin (2016 Cityscape)

- Gentrification: Complementarities and outcomes
  - Waights (2018 working paper) optional
  - The truth about gentrification: It doesn’t accelerate displacement of low-income residents, though it may have other negative consequences
  - Urban myths - In praise of gentrification hate read

Mar 18: Homelessness

- The Rules of the Row
- Black, Homeless and Burdened by L.A.'s Legacy of Racism
- Martin v City of Boise
- Trump Is Readying Some Kind Of Homelessness Crackdown
- Plans to move California’s homeless population into centralized facilities gain steam
- LA's Harsh Sanitation Sweeps Don't Reduce Homelessness; They Deepen It
- A once homeless DC girl leaves a gentrifying city because her mom can’t afford the rent
- How a Collective of Mothers Flipped the Script on Housing
- Seattle Homeless Shelter Focuses On Native Populations
- Homelessness, Step by Step
- Employment and Earnings Trajectories During Two Decades Among Adults in New York City Homeless Shelters Intro and exhibits
- An Evaluation of the City of Philadelphia's Kensington Encampment Resolution Pilot Exec Summary, “Chapters” 1, 2, 4
- Life on the Dirtiest Block in San Francisco hate read
Section Three: Housing policies

Apr 1: Zoning

- Why is there zoning?
  - The Cleveland Zone Plan (1921)
  - The Zoning Strait-Jacket
- Health and safety or exclusion?
  - "Quality Housing" Zoning Nearing a Vote
  - Meeting Boston's Housing Code
    - MIT dorm size statistics
    - Boston's Smallest, Cheapest Apartment?
  - Regulation and Housing Supply intro
  - When Do Renters Behave Like Homeowners? High Rent, Price Anxiety, and NIMBYism
  - Who Participates in Local Government? Evidence from Meeting Minutes
  - Mayoral Views on Housing Production: Do Planning Goals Match Reality? Optional

- Considering Alternatives
  - Carson ends Obama-era AFFH policy
  - It's Time to End Single-Family Zoning
  - ADUs: Two Homes are more affordable than one
  - Why Tokyo is the land of rising home construction but not prices
  - Schleicher (2012 Yale LJ): City Unplanning

April 8: Rent control and public housing

- Rent control
  - The Morning After [rent control]
  - Boston must bring back rent control to protect tenants
  - Diamond et al (2018 NBER): Effects of Rent Control Expansion Intro
  - Glaeser and Luttmer (2003 AER): Misallocation of Housing Under Rent Control Intro
  - Does eviction cause poverty? Quasi-experimental evidence from Cook County, IL

- Public housing
  - Empathological Places: Residents’ Ambivalence toward Remaining in Public Housing
  - The Pruitt-Igoe Myth
  - Little Decline in Number of Children in Public Housing With High Lead Levels
  - Hoping for more: redeveloping U.S. public housing without marginalizing low-income residents?
April 15: Current Housing Subsidy Programs

- Construction Subsidies & Mandates
  - Diamond and McQuaide (2018 JPE): LIHTC Spillovers
  - Hertz: Where should low-income housing go?
  - Separated by Design: Why Affordable Housing Is Built in Areas With High Crime, Few Jobs and Struggling Schools
  - Schuetz, Meltzer, and Been (2009 JAPA): 31 Flavors of Inclusionary Zoning

- Culturally-Specific Housing Development
  - Sustainable Construction in Indian Country: Expanding Affordability With Modular Multifamily Infill Housing
  - Best Practices in Tribal Housing: Case Studies
  - Housing for LGBT Older Adults
  - Boston Welcomes New England’s First LGBTQ-Friendly Senior Housing Facility

- Rent Subsidies
  - How Wealthy Towns Keep People With Housing Vouchers Out
  - What You Need to Know About How Section 8 Really Works
  - Ellen (2017) What Do We Know About Housing Choice Vouchers?
  - Eriksen and Ross (2015 AEJ: Policy): Housing Vouchers and Price of Rental Housing
  - Hillside Villa Motion and Can LA Save Affordable Housing Through Eminent Domain?

April 22: Transportation

- Brinkman and Lin (2018 Working paper): Freeway Revolt! Skip Sections 7-8
- Karilyn Crockett: People Before Highways Chapters TBD
- Duranton and Turner (2011 AER): The Fundamental Law of Road Congestion Intro
- Miller (2018 NBER): When Work Moves: Job Suburbanization and Black Employment Intro
- Feigenbaum (2016 EEH): Lead exposure and violent crime in the early 20th century Optional
- Why Violence Against Women on the South and West Sides Is a Mobility Justice Issue
- Untokening 1.0 — Principles of Mobility Justice

Section Four: Chicago

April 29: Gentrification and More

- Daniel Kay Hertz: The Battle of Lincoln Park
- Mary Pattillo: Black on the Block Chapters TBD
May 6: Education

- Eve Ewing *Ghosts in the Schoolyard*
- Nikole Hannah-Jones: *Segregation Now*
- Nikole Hannah-Jones: *Choosing a school in a segregated city*

**Additional**

**A note on readings:**

The reading load for the course is high; most weeks have multiple articles or book chapters. Texts listed as "Additional/optional" are just that, there were far too many texts I wanted to include. Feel free to use these for reading response assignments however. The graduate school expectation is reading for overall argument and illustrative examples, not memorization of the entire text. For books, the expectation is that you will read the entire assigned chapters.

To be more specific, the most useful way to read economics papers (especially) is as follows. Read the introduction carefully, and treat the entire rest of the paper as appendix: one appendix describes the data, another describes the model, a third provides more detailed results, and a last appendix provides discussion and conclusion. Appendixes can be useful to check for the details when you aren't sure what the authors mean precisely, or to find out if they're being weaselly with their descriptions; the bulk of your understanding will come from the intro.

**Accessibility and Accommodations (ODGE)**

Students gain access to academic learning in a variety of ways, and MIT is committed to full inclusion of all students. The Office of the Dean for Graduate Education ([OGE.mit.edu](http://OGE.mit.edu)) is an Institute-wide support and referral office for graduate students. The ODGE aims to be helpful to all graduate students at MIT and should be able to refer you to the right resource for any issue. ODGE can provide more guidance, but in general, exceptions to the expectations provided in this syllabus (e.g., about assignments) are only accepted with approval through the Office of Student Disability Services: [http://web.mit.edu/uaap/sds/students/info_specifics.html](http://web.mit.edu/uaap/sds/students/info_specifics.html).
Names and Pronouns:

If you go by a different name or different gender pronouns than the ones under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me. Students are always expected to respectfully refer to each other by preferred names and pronouns.

Safe and Equitable Learning Environment:

MIT is dedicated to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the Institute. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Title IX Office. This is important for the safety of the whole MIT community. Violence Prevention & Response’s hotline, 617-253-2300, provides 24/7 confidential support. Please visit https://titleix.mit.edu/ for more information on reporting options and other resources.

Under Title IX and MIT policy, I am a "Responsible Employee"--i.e., a mandatory reporter--and therefore obligated to inform the Title IX Coordinator if I hear that any student may have experienced any sexual misconduct (harassment, assault, etc) during their time at MIT.

Basic Needs:

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact SSS for support: https://studentlife.mit.edu/ss3. If you are comfortable doing so, please also notify Professor Bunten. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.

Late submissions

All submissions should be submitted via Stellar. In the event that medical or other personal circumstances arise that interfere with your ability to complete assignments on time, extension requests can be made to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education (http://odge.mit.edu). If the ODGE decides that an extension is warranted, they will send a generic note that your assignment deadline should be extended without penalty. This policy is intended to preserve your privacy. Any assignment submitted after the deadline, without a request for an extension that was approved by ODGE, will be marked down 5 percentage points. Any assignment more than 3 hours late will be marked down a further 10 percentage points. A further 10 percentage points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late.

For the paper deadlines (not the reading responses), you have one free 24-hour extension to use at your leisure, with no ODGE intervention required.
Writing help

The WCC at MIT (Writing and Communication Center) offers free one-on-one professional advice from communication experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are all are published scholars and writers. Not counting the WCC’s director’s years (who started the WCC in 1982), the WCC lecturers have a combined 133 years’ worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 4 to 24 years). The WCC works with undergraduate, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alums, and spouses. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). No matter what department or discipline you are in, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps English language learners in a variety of ways, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in E18-233, 50 Ames Street. To guarantee yourself a time, make an appointment. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to https://mit.mywconline.com/. To access the WCC’s many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.

Academic integrity

Fundamental to the academic work you do at MIT is an expectation that you will make choices that reflect integrity and responsible behavior. Honesty is the foundation of good academic work. Do trust the value of your own intellect and credit others for their work. Do not copy ideas or phrases without citing them appropriately. Do not submit projects or papers that have been written for a previous class. See https://integrity.mit.edu/.

Please note that collaboration is actively encouraged, and indeed is also fundamental to academic and professional work. You should be engaged in conversations with your classmates on the material. Different assignments may have different expectations for collaboration, but the key is to always appropriately credit others. As an example, if a classmate suggests an idea that you use in a reading response, class presentation, or final paper, you should mention this (e.g. in a footnote). For problem sets, the entire group gets credit for the assignment as a whole. If you talk to folks from another group, that’s ok--just be sure to credit them (e.g., “we realized that the chart will look like this through conversations with XYZ”).