Class meetings: Fridays, 8:30 to 11:30 AM, MCI Norfolk.
Faculty: Justin Steil, Room 9-515, steil@mit.edu, 617-253-2017.
Teaching Assistant: Aditi Mehta, Room 9-268, aditim@mit.edu, 617-571-8261
Office hours: sign up online using BookIt.

Course Description:
This seminar introduces students to core writings in the field of urban sociology and explores the creative dialectic—and sometimes conflict—between sociology and urban policy and design. Topics include the changing conceptions of “community,” the effects of neighborhood characteristics on individual outcomes, the significance of social capital and networks, the drivers of categorical inequality, and the interaction of social structure and political power. We examine several of the key theoretical paradigms that have constituted sociology since its founding, assess how and why they have changed over time, and discuss the implications of these shifts for urban research and planning practice. The course has two primary aims: (1) To give students a more critical appreciation of the contemporary, comparative, and historical contexts in which planning skills and sensibilities have been developed and are applied; and (2) To offer a “sociology of knowledge” approach to the field of urban sociology.

Learning Approach and Evaluation:
The seminar will take place in the Massachusetts Correctional Institution in Norfolk with half of the class from MIT and half of the class from MCI Norfolk. The location and composition of the class was chosen based on the belief that bringing together students of sociology and urban studies who are incarcerated with those who are at MIT will create a unique and valuable environment in which to generate new knowledge about our social world and the repeated mechanisms that contribute to persistent socio-economic inequality and other pressing social problems. Participation in the course accordingly involves a commitment to a new learning environment and a significant dedication of time (from 7:30 am to 12:30 pm every Friday including travel time for those coming from MIT). Students should feel free to raise questions or concerns about the environment at any time, but should be prepared for the time commitment and the new context.

The seminar is centered on intensive and often Socratic discussion, as well as brief lectures, about the assigned readings and study questions. Students will be encouraged to discuss how the theoretical and practical concerns that have preoccupied sociologists can be applied to their individual interests and the future of planning.
Requirements and grading are as follows:

• **In-class participation** (20%). Be prepared, ask questions, make arguments.

• **A brief weekly response paper of roughly 500 words each** (15%). These will offer a critical assessment of the assigned material and not mere restatement of content. Nine response papers are expected—you will not be expected to write one on the day you are presenting or on the day we discuss the ethnographies, and will have one week of your choice off. The responses will be graded on a √+, √, √- scale. Students enrolled at MIT will submit this paper by 5pm every Wednesday night on Stellar. Students enrolled at Norfolk will submit this paper at the beginning of class.

• **Weekly presentation** (15%). Each student should find a partner and sign up to prepare a 10-20 minute presentation of one of the week’s materials. Each presentation should reference one current event in the presentation that is explained by the readings.

• **In-class team presentation of an ethnography** (10%). Students will divide themselves into four groups, each group will pick one of the four ethnographies listed, and half of each group will present that ethnography while the other half will present a critique of the ethnography. A detailed assignment will be provided closer to the date. (March 4)

• **Reflection paper on the learning experience** (15%). A reflection, drawing on the readings and class notes, not to exceed 1,200 words on how, if at all, your understanding of inequality has changed thus far through the course and how, if at all, the learning environment enhanced your understanding of key sociological readings. (MIT: Mar. 17 & BU Met Studies: Mar. 18th).

• **Term paper or research proposal**, not more than 3,500 words, on a topic of individual interest (25%). (MIT: May 3 & BU Met Studies: May 6)

COURSE MATERIALS will be made available as a reader for all students.

**Week 1 (February 5) – Introduction to the course at MIT and orientation at MCI Norfolk.**

*Recommended (on stellar only):*


**Week 2 (February 12) – The Sociological Imagination**

Durkheim, Emile. 1883. *The Division of Labour in Society.* (excerpts)


Weber, Max. 1922. *Economy and Society.* (excerpts)

Mills, Charles Wright. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination.* (Chapter 1, pp. 3-24)


**Week 3 (February 19) Early Urban Sociology**


Simmel, Georg. 1903. *The Metropolis and Mental Life.*


Weber, Max. 1921. *The City.* (Chapter 1, pp. 23-46)


**Week 4 (February 26) Community and How to Study It**


**Week 5 (March 4) The Ethnographic Tradition**

Choose 1 of the following 4 ethnographies to read and present to the class as a group:


Pattillo, Mary. 2007. *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race & Class in the City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Introduction, Chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 7)


**Week 6 (March 11) Urban Political Economy: Cities, Industrialization, Deindustrialization**


**Reflection Paper Due**
MIT: Thursday, March 17th @ 5 PM
BU Met Studies: Friday, March 18th @ 8:30 AM

**Week 7 (March 18) Urban Political Economy: Elites, Political Power, and Urban Dynamics** (191 pages)


*Recommended:*


**No Class March 25**

**2-Page Final Project Proposal Due**

MIT: Thursday, March 31st @ 5 PM

BU Met Studies: Friday, April 1st @ 8:30 AM

**Week 8 (April 1) Theories of Urban Inequality**


**Week 9 (April 8) Identities, Boundaries and Inequality**


**Week 10 (April 15) Social Capital and Social Networks**


**Week 11 (April 22) Neighborhood Effects: Order, Disorder, and Collective Efficacy**


Pattillo, Mary, Sherrilyn Ifill, Rucker Johnson, Pat Sharkey. Why Integration? Available at: http://furmancenter.org/research/iri/discussion1

Week 12 (April 29) Social Origins of Violence


Final Project Due
MIT: Tuesday, May 3rd @ 8:30 PM
BU Met Studies: Friday, May 6th @ 8:30 AM
Week 13 (May 6) Collective Action


