

**Syllabus for SOCI 425A 001: Urban Sociology**

**Department/Program:** Sociology  
**Year:** 2012-2013  
**Course Title:** Urban Sociology  
**Course Schedule:** Tu, Th 3.30-5.00  
**Location(s):** ANSO 205

**Instructor:** Nathanael Lauster  
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**Course Description:** (*Calendar Version*) *Demographic, behavioural, and organizational aspects of urban structures and of urbanization in different societies and periods.* This iteration of the course will provide a quick and broad sketch of urban sociology as a field. Then it will focus on developing a nuanced understanding of the city as a heavily regulated and varied space. Discussion of urban regulatory experiences will be rooted in a North America, with special attention provided to the case studies of New York, Toronto, and Vancouver. Implications of readings will be drawn out and applied through student participation in one of a selected set of hands on research projects, each using Vancouver as an urban laboratory. Research projects will generally focus on how regulatory and planning processes within the city work. Projects remain in development, but most will *likely* include the City of Vancouver (through City Studio).

**Course Goals:** 1) provide a sketch of the field of urban sociology, 2) provide a detailed examination of how urban regulation works and matters, and 3) provide hands-on experience working with a community partner on research projects that matter.

**Required Reading:**

Mitchell Duneier (1999) *Sidewalk*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Mariana Valverde (2012) *Everyday Law on the Street: City Governance in an Age of Diversity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

*Spacing Vancouver Blog:* <http://spacingvancouver.ca/>

Selected Other Readings (See Schedule & on-line)

**Course Organization:** The first half of the course will be organized mostly around intensive discussion of readings, partially in readings groups, and partially in full class discussion format. After the first week and a half, students will be organized into reading & discussion groups of approximately 6-8 people each. These will meet during the first half (@ 30 min) of every class until the end of February, when students will be re-assigned into research project groups. Within discussion groups, two students will be assigned roles leading the discussion for each class.

They will each come independently prepared with a brief summary and set of questions to guide discussion. During the course of discussion, they will be assigned by their groups into writing a majority report and minority report on the readings discussed during the day (see below for details). I may sit in on group discussions. During the second portion of each class, the discussion of readings will move from groups to the full room.

During October, students will be directed to join a selection of research groups organized around specific research projects. Student preferences will be taken into account, but I will ultimately assign students to projects as needed. The content of research projects may change as the semester develops, but at this point, likely research projects all involve working with the City of Vancouver through City Studio on illuminating how city processes work, including, for instance: planning processes, decision-making processes, inspections processes, and development.

During the first two weeks of March, students will work intensively within their research groups. They will organize their own class readings and assign group members to lead discussions in the same way as before. They will also organize their research activities toward preparing reports on the research topics assigned. During the third week of March, students will prepare a preliminary presentation on their progress for the class. During the fourth week of March, students will prepare a preliminary presentation of their findings for the class. During the first week of April, students will work with their community partners in order to find a time to provide them with their final presentation of findings. Final reports will also be provided to me at this time (see below).

### **Means of Evaluation:**

#### **Quick Quiz Tally (10%)**

A series of very short quizzes on readings will be employed to motivate everyone to keep up with the course material, and come to class prepared to discuss the readings. Performance on these quizzes will be tallied at the end of the year, accounting for 10% of student grades.

#### **Majority/Minority Reports (40%)**

Reports on readings and the discussions they generate will provide an important basis for evaluation. Reports will be compiled and provided to me no more than one week after the discussion. Reports will follow a format, divided into the majority report and the minority report. The majority report will provide a) a short, one paragraph summary of the readings, b) a short (one page) description of the group discussion, and c) a short (one page) developed reflection on the implications of the reading and group discussion. The minority report will provide a critical review of the majority report as written, highlighting dissent in sections a, b, and c (max. two pages). Students will be expected to write a total of four majority or minority reports (as assigned by the group), with each assigned 10% of the student's total grade. The majority report writer needs to send their report to the minority report writer within three days of the class discussion, so the minority report writer has time to respond by the next class, when the assignment is due. Grades will be assigned independently for majority and minority reports. For the final set of majority/minority reports, students will be working as part of research project teams. They will be required to first work together to select and distribute, no less than one week ahead of time, the readings to be discussed by their group. Then they will lead discussion and

write up results, as above, emphasizing within their discussion how the readings relate to their research project.

**Research Project (30%)**

The second half of the course will be organized around a small set of research projects. Students will be re-organized into working research groups around these projects and where possible provided with contacts to their community organizations. They will work toward the production of (at least) two deliverables: 1) a written report and 2) a presentation. The length and format of the report will be determined partially in consultation community partners, and may include other materials (for instance, a poster demonstrating their findings) depending upon the consultation. Students should expect to devote significant time and energy to the collection of data, primarily via interviews and archival research. Students will report on their findings by writing up their own document. A presentation will also be prepared. The presentation should detail and discuss the key findings of the report in an engaging way. Students will be evaluated collectively on the content of both the report and the presentation. Where possible, instructor evaluations will be supplemented by evaluations obtained from community partner. The balance of evaluation (between report and presentation, community partner and instructor) may vary from project to project.

**Participation / Peer Evaluation (20%)**

Students will be evaluated by their peers – twice: once by their reading group, and again by their research project group. Evaluations will come in the form of brief reflections by students of their own and others' contributions. These evaluations will be joined to my own evaluations of their contribution to class discussions and research projects. Because of the importance of student contributions to discussion, missing classes will be counted against participation marks. Note: good participation in class means showing up prepared and on time, having read the readings under discussion for the day, staying engaged, asking questions, providing insight, and actively avoiding introducing any distractions to the classroom. It also means being respectful of peers and guest speakers, and fostering an inclusive discourse.

**Note:** all written work should consist of your own thoughts, interpretations, and words. Do not copy or cut & paste the prose of another. Plagiarism is often relatively easy to detect, and I will send cases on to the university administration if I encounter them. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see the University calendar: <http://students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

**A Note on General Grading Policies:** Please note that my grading reflects an evaluation of how you have met course expectations outlined above. It does not reflect an assessment of what I think of you as a person. In general, the grading policies will follow those outlined in the UBC Calendar. Students should note that I consider grades in the “B” range to be good grades, representing solid performance. Grades in the “A” range tend to be exceptional in my courses.

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| Percentage (%) | Grade | Percentage (%) | Grade |
|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| 90-100         | A+    | 68-71.9        | B-    |
| 85-89.9        | A     | 64-67.9        | C+    |
| 80-84.9        | A-    | 60-63.9        | C     |
| 76-79.9        | B+    | 55-59.9        | C-    |
| 72-75.9        | B     | 50-54.9        | D     |

A score lower than 50% is considered failing.

**COURSE SCHEDULE** (subject to change!)

| Week | Day    | Topic                            | Reading                                    | Notes                     |
|------|--------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1    | Th S5  | Intro                            |  |                           |
| 2    | Tu S10 | Foundations                      | Hannigan; Burgess                          |                           |
|      | Th S12 | Political Economic               | Molotch; Ley & Dobson                      | Group Assign              |
| 3    | Tu S17 | <i>*Field Trip Flex*</i>         | MacDonald                                  |                           |
|      | Th S19 | Community                        | Jacobs; Wellman                            |                           |
| 4    | Tu S24 | Subculture                       | Florida; Zukin                             |                           |
|      | Th S26 | Justice                          | Young; Ross                                |                           |
| 5    | Tu O1  | Informal Life                    | Sidewalk: Intro & Part I                   | Research Gs               |
|      | Th O3  | Sidewalk Habitat                 | Sidewalk: Part II; Chambers (Dependent)    |                           |
| 6    | Tu O8  | Social Control                   | Sidewalk: Part III                         |                           |
|      | Th O10 | Regulation & Decency             | Sidewalk: Parts IV & V                     |                           |
| 7    | Tu O15 | <i>*Sidewalk Movie Break*</i>    |  |                           |
|      | Th O17 | Regulation & Taste               | Everyday Law: Ch 1, 2, & 3                 |                           |
| 8    | Tu O22 | Bureaucracy & Zoning             | Everyday Law: Ch 4 & 5                     |                           |
|      | Th O24 | <i>*Food Cart Guest Speaker*</i> | Everyday Law: Ch 6 & 7; Brocki (Dependent) |                           |
| 10   | Tu O29 | Mosques & Planning               | Everyday Law: Ch 8 & 9; Talen              | Group Reform              |
|      | Th O31 | The Trouble with Houses          | Lauster House: Intro & 1; Smart Growth BC  |                           |
| 11   | Tu N5  | Building Vancouver               | Lauster House: Ch 2 & 3                    |                           |
|      | Th N7  | Project Readings                 | TBD by project – r1                        |                           |
| 12   | Tu N12 | Project Readings                 | TBD by project – r1                        |                           |
|      | Th N14 | Project Readings                 | TBD by project – r2                        |                           |
| 13   | Tu N19 | <i>*AWAY*</i>                    | <i>*AWAY*</i>                              |                           |
|      | Th N21 | Class Presents                   |  |                           |
| 14   | Tu N26 | Class Presents                   |  |                           |
|      | Th N28 | Class Presents                   |  | Final Project Reports Due |