

Urban Sociology

Last Updated: Wed, 12/17/2025

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3012

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
34976

Instructor First Name: Costas

Instructor Last Name: Spirou

Semester: Spring

Academic year: 2026

Course description:

This course explores the city, urbanization and urbanism, urban change and community development by focusing on evolving social and economic conditions which proved critical in shaping cities across the United States and beyond. The formation of urban centers has been historically the outcome of globalized circuits of finance, transportation, migration, and related forces. Furthermore, cultural factors are increasingly playing an important role in influencing the social relations and political economy of cities. Competition has forced extensive infrastructural investments which in turn have created social stresses, often exemplified in areas like housing, school reform, crime and transportation. Scholars have reached a consensus that the most recent period of urban change is qualitatively different - different enough that it can be distinguished by the term, globalization. In this course, we will examine the contours of these transformations and consider decentralization, economic development, regionalism and the broader transition from production to consumption. In the end, we are not only concerned about the physical realm and the way that cities grow but also about the influences of city life on the human experience.

Course learning outcomes:

- Students will describe major social science concepts in the study of cities.
- Students will compare the major theoretical perspectives and methodological issues in studying cities.
- Students will identify how macro forces, like decentralization, globalization, and economic restructuring shape cities and suburbs.
- Students will analyze the American and international trends in cities and urban life and how geographic, social, and temporal context shapes these processes.

- Students will understand the relationship between structure and agency, the processes of social and cultural change, and how these forms assist our understanding of the urban environment.

Required course materials:

The Urban Sociology Reader, 2nd edition. Edited by Jan Lin and Christopher Mele. 2013. Routledge.

Other readings are also required; they will be posted to Canvas as PDFs or hyperlinks to web readings.

Grading policy:

Grading Scale:

A	90-100
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
F	Under 60 points

Attendance policy:

Attendance will be taken in every class period, and this, along with your engagement in discussions, will determine the classroom participation. Your full attendance is expected, and it is critical that you attend all scheduled class sessions. Students should not come to class late, and/or leave early as this will impact the participation grade. Students that miss classes on numerous occasions will receive “0” points on participation.

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

- This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.
- Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students’ broad academic and career goals.

- This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question: How do I understand human experiences and connections?
- Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes: Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.
- Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies: Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, Persuasion.