

L40 SOC 3810, Fall 2024
Film and the City

Instructional Team:

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Class Information:

Meeting Time: 4:00-5:20p

Mode: In-person, Seigle 103

Course Prerequisites: Previous SOC experience or instructor approval

Contents

The Basics2
 An Invitation to our Course.....2
 Learning Goals3
 A Note on Course Material3
Course Requirements4
 On Deadlines and Late Work6
 GenAI and Our Course6
 Books, Readings and Films7
Course Schedule and Readings8
Other Useful and Important Information.....11
Course Policies.....11
 Course Policies.....11
Appendix.....13
 Acknowledgements13
 Full Citations for Course Readings13

The Basics

An Invitation to our Course

“The city is, rather, a state of mind...”

– Robert Park, in *The City*, 1925

“Hey kid, this is the city. I don’t help anybody but myself.”

– Dawson, in *Adventures in Babysitting*, 1987

“And you thought we wouldn't have any fun. Shame on you.”

– Ferris Bueller, in *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*, 1986

What makes a city a city? Is there something unique about urban life, in comparison to the way life is lived in rural areas and small towns? Only recently has over half of the world’s population started to live in urban centers. What issues, if any, might have arisen from this development?

In this course, we will think about and explore how sociology and related disciplines have approached the study of cities. We’ll read classic and contemporary theorists on urban life and consider how cities shape the human experience. We’ll then apply what we learn to consider the city as portrayed in film. Movies will become our lab where we grapple with the good, the bad, the ugly, and also the beauty of cities.

We’ll use films because movies allow us to visit faraway places and examine the city in both its realistic and fanciful imaginings. Robert Park, one of the founders of the original Chicago School of urban thought, long ago argued that the city is a “state of mind.” The medium of film will let play with this idea, as each week we will view a different movie giving us a new presentation of urban life with a fresh take on the state of mind that a city cultivates. Taken together, films and a diverse array of scholarship tackling urban issues will allow us to gain a deeper understanding of contemporary social life.

The movies we will watch are set in many places, including the actual cities of New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Singapore, Manilla, and others. Some of the films take place in fictional locations like Wakanda in *Black Panther*, or the unnamed city featured in the futuristic utopia/dystopia of *Metropolis*. Their stories will help us work through that question of what makes a city and engage both the promise and challenges that they present. Each week you’ll watch one of these films on your own (think of it as part of your assigned reading) and we’ll discuss the film and related urban theory in class.

In addition to thinking about cities in film, the course also asks you to visit some St. Louis neighborhoods in person and make firsthand observations of what you find in order to compare what we’ve witnessed on the screen and in text with our local reality. The course then culminates in a final project for you to showcase what you’ve learned during the semester: either a research paper on a theme related to the course or a creative project of your choosing.

So, pop some popcorn, grab your reading glasses, and get ready to think about cities!

Learning Goals

The learning goals are the specific things that we're working towards this semester. Think of them as our destinations on a road trip. The rest of the syllabus is the map of how we get there.

In this course, participants should...

1. Become familiar with both classic and contemporary sociological approaches to studying cities and urban life.
2. Apply these theories to analyze the portrayal of urban life in film.
3. Apply these theories to analyze what they observe within the St. Louis metropolitan area and the larger world.
4. Use fictional portrayals of urban life in cinema to theorize about the past and current role of the city in human society.
5. Recognize major issues of inequality in cities and their causes.

A Note on Course Material

We will deal with some challenging subject matter over the semester in studying cities, such as racial violence, sex work, and other sexual content. Many of the films we watch are rated R and may contain adult themes, strong language, violence, and sexual content. Several of them are also older films and may depict some situations and groups in ways that we now recognize as problematic.

If there is a particular topic or issue that you cannot address for whatever reason (and I do not expect you to disclose personal history to me), I can provide an alternative assignment. Please contact me if this is the case. If you feel like you are unable to engage with a significant portion of the course content, then you may want to think about whether or not this is a class that would be good for you. You are responsible for reviewing the topics, films and readings during the add/drop period.

If ever feel the need to step outside during one of our discussions, you may leave the room session without explanation, excuse yourself from a conversation, or contact me about alternative assignments. If you find yourself unexpectedly troubled by content and need to talk to a mental health professional, please practice good self-care and make an appointment with the [Center for Counseling and Psychological Services](#) or speak to someone using the [TimelyCare App](#). I recognize that these themes can bring sensitive topics to the fore, and I hope that you will communicate with me by email or during my informal chat times to work together to address any concerns you might have.

Course Requirements

This part of this syllabus explains what you actually do as a member of our course community.

1. Film & Reading Engagement Assignments (20%)

In this course we will use 14 films to explore issues surrounding modern cities. You are responsible for viewing each week's film outside of class (think of them as part of your assigned reading). Films will be on reserve in the library for streaming online. Links will be provided in Canvas.

For 7 of the 14 films, you must complete and submit an engagement assignment by the start of class on Monday or Wednesday of that week. Four should be completed during the Studying Cities unit (roughly the first half of the course) and the remaining three should be completed during the Issues of Urbanism and Global Cities (roughly the second half of the course).

These engagement assignments are a chance to reflect on a week's film and its relationship to the course readings. As they are due before we've discussed that day's reading in class, they also ensure that each week there are several of us who have spent some extra time thinking carefully about the topics we'll be covering. This helps enrich the overall class discussions. Finally, the guides are a chance to try out ideas, practice writing, and get feedback from the instructional team in preparation for the final project of the semester.

Sometimes the prompts for the assignments may ask you specific questions about the film and its relationship to the week's readings or ask you to complete an annotation exercise in Canvas using a tool called Hypothesis. Other times the assignments will allow you to explore whatever themes you find most relevant (much like response papers often used in seminars). Assignments and instructions for each film can be found on Canvas.

The engagement assignments will be graded on the following scale:

- Complete (100/100)
- Getting there (80/100)
- Not yet (0/0)

If you receive a "Getting there" or "Not yet," you may submit for another reading in that unit with no penalty and it will replace your zero.

2. Class Participation, in-class exercises (10%)

This course is based on [active learning](#) principals where more class time is spent doing and discussing, and less time is spent listening to the instructor talk. I structure the class like this because there's [a lot of evidence](#) that people learn better this way, sometimes even [learning more than they think they do](#).

This means, however, that your attendance and participation are vital to our collective learning project. If people don't come prepared or don't participate fully, our class won't work. Therefore, attendance is mandatory, but only as long as it's safe for you to do so.

However, please do not come to our in-person class if you feel sick or you suspect that you have COVID. *Missing class due to health reasons will not adversely affect your class participation grade as*

long as you keep in touch with me. If for some reason you cannot come to class please refer to the procedures in the course attendance policy located under COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocols and the General Course Policies section of this syllabus. In addition, if you have to miss class because of health reasons, we'll make sure that you still get a full learning experience.

Course participation will be evaluated around midterms and at the end of the course. Participation can take many forms, including being a strong group member during groupwork, contributing to online activities, asking questions, making comments, etc.

When it is safe to be in class, remember that class participation is more than just attendance: You should come to class having viewed the week's film, read the assigned readings for that day, and be prepared to discuss both of them in detail. Bring copies of the readings to class; we will refer to and discuss specific pages. Most days there will also be ungraded exercises to complete in class. In-class exercises cannot be made up at a later date.

3. Analytical Essays & Field Visits (40%)

You will write several short analytical essays where you will relate concepts from the films, readings and in-class discussions to our immediate urban environment here in St. Louis. One essay will be related to the first section of the course (Studying Cities) and the second will be related to the following sections (Issues of Urbanism). Each essay will require you to visit various parts of the St. Louis metro to make firsthand observations of urban life.

Essay topics and further instructions will be distributed in class.

Essays due dates:

- Writing Field Notes (10%): Friday, September 27th at 5p
- Essay 1 (15%): Friday, October 11th at 5p
- Essay 2 (15%) Friday, November 1st at 5p

4. Final Project Proposal (10%)

You will complete a final project that will be an analysis of cities or a concrete issue of urban sociology of your choosing. The analysis should draw on course readings, films, as well as other additional outside material. A short proposal for your final project be due in November. The purpose of the proposal is to help get you started on your final project early and to give you feedback on your ideas before you get too far in the project.

Proposal Due: Friday, November 15th at 5p

5. Final Project (20%)

This project is an opportunity to showcase what you've learned throughout the semester. Further information will be distributed later in the semester. You have 2 choices for the format:

Option 1: You can write a traditional research paper of 3,000 – 4,000 words on a theme from the course. Your paper must be more than simply descriptive; it should contain both an analysis and an argument.

Option 2: Propose a creative alternative project (e.g video, podcast, website, interviews, etc.). Think of this option having to do analytical work similar to that which is required in a standard research paper, but instead of writing a paper you're presenting your analysis in a different format or making significant use of primary data. If you choose this option, you and I will agree to the details of the chosen format/method in advance during the proposal phase.

The final project is due on **Monday, December 16th at 9a**. Further information for both options will be distributed later in the semester. There is no final exam, and we will not meet during exam week.

Course Requirements Summary:

Film Viewing Guides	20%
Class Participation	10%
Analytical Essays & Field Visits	40%
Final Project Proposal	10%
Final Project	20%
TOTAL	100%

On Deadlines and Late Work

As someone once said, "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it." To help you look around and/or to deal with anything unexpected that comes up, you have two automatic 48-hour extensions on an assignment, no questions asked. Just email me and say that you're taking your extension. The only exception to this is the final research project (so I can grade them in time to meet the university deadline for final grades).

Other assignments that are accepted late may be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day overdue – for example, A will become A-, B- will become C+ etc. In theory, late assignments could receive grades below failing (< 59%) as there may be a continued reduction of 3.3% credit each day late beyond the time the work would receive an F. In-class assignments and quizzes will not be accepted late and cannot be made up. No work will be accepted after the end of exam week, which for purposes of this course is 12/18/2024 at 5p.

All of that said, if you find yourself getting behind for any reason, come talk to me and I can help you get back on track.

GenAI and Our Course

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is a powerful tool that can in some cases help learning and in other cases hinder it. For example, it is vital to learn the fundamental concepts of our field without using outside aids before moving to more advanced material. Part of that learning process involves struggling on your own with difficult material without any help from GenAI. Yet at other times, GenAI can be productive for generating ideas, summarizing texts, correcting grammar, or even producing first drafts.

In this course, whether or not (and to what extent) the use of GenAI will be permitted will be decided on a case-by-case basis for each assignment and be included in the assignment instructions.

- Unless stated otherwise, you should not use GenAI to complete coursework and the use of GenAI in this course will be considered an [academic integrity violation](#) that would be referred to the university academic integrity process. Violations could potentially result in grade penalties, such as a zero on the assignment, and/or other university-level sanctions.
- However, in some circumstances the use of GenAI will be allowed. In that case, the assignment instructions will reflect this. In those cases, you must state in the assignment that you used GenAI, which GenAI tool you used, and any other information that the assignment asks for in regards to AI.

If you have any questions on whether or not you may use GenAI to work on a specific assignment, please contact Prof Moore for clarification before you complete the assignment.

Books, Readings and Films

The readings in this course were chosen to provide an introduction to the sociological analysis of cities and urban life. Reading and engaging with these texts is a vital part of your learning journey in this course.

All required readings will be posted on Canvas or available on e-reserve. Please bring copies of the readings (paper or electronic) to class on the day that reading was assigned.

Films:

In addition to readings, each week will also include a film that you need to watch outside of class. All of these films should be streaming on library reserves. Links will be posted on Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE ON NEXT PAGE

Course Schedule and Readings

All readings will be posted on Canvas. Readings may change and additional readings may be added. Weekly engagement assignments are due each week.

Please check Canvas for the most up-to-date information.

<u>Wk</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Topic / Film</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Due</u>
1	Introduction	Intro	8/27	N/A	
			8/29	Sutherland and Feltey (2013) - "Cinematic Sociology - Introduction" (selections, 8 pages); Ward (2015) - "Ferris Bueller's Day Off and the History of Teen Film" (6 pages)	
2	Studying Cities	City as Celebration	9/3	Park (1925) "The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment" Ch 1 (45 pages);	
		<i>Ferris Bueller's Day Off</i>	9/5	No new reading	
3		City as a Problem	9/10	Simmel – "Metropolis & Mental Life," (15 pages)	
		<i>Adventures in Baby Sitting</i>	9/12	Lefebvre (1996) "The Specificity of the City" (4 pages, but dense, read slowly) / Wirth (1938) - "Urbanism as a Way of Life" in M (28 pages)	
4		Chicago School	9/17	Burgess – "Growth of the City," in The City (16 pages)	
		<i>Taxi Driver</i>	9/19	Drake & Cayton - Ch 8, The Black Ghetto (38 pages)	
5		L.A. School & Beyond	9/24	Dear (2002) - "Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate" (24 pages) / Abbott	

Wk	Unit	Topic / Film	Date	Reading	Due
				(2002) - "Los Angeles and the Chicago School: A Comment on Michael Dear" (5 pages)	
		<i>The Big Lebowski</i>	9/26	Lloyd (2012) - "Urbanization and the Southern United States" (18 pages)	Fieldnotes: Friday 9/27
6		Structure of Urban Space	10/1	Jacobs (1961) – "The Use of Sidewalks," Ch 8 in M (18 pages)	
		<i>Tangerine</i>	10/3	Ellingson et al (2004) - "The Theory of Sex Markets" (selections, 30ish pages, but includes some tables and things to skim)	Essay 1: Friday, 10/11
7		Migration and Enclaves	NO CLASS		
		<i>TBD</i>	10/10	TBD	
8		Suburbia	10/15	Readings according to film (on Canvas)	
		<i>Revolutionary Road / Les Misérables</i>	10/17	Lacy (2016) - "The New Sociology of Suburbs: A Research Agenda for Analysis of Emerging Trends" (14 pages)	Last Chance for 1st half engagement assignment
9	Issues of Urbanism	Class Inequality	10/22	Marx and Engels (1848) - "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (Selections, 14 pages)	
		<i>Metropolis</i>	10/24	Desmond (2016) - Evicted (Selections, 40-ish pages)	
10		Global Cities	10/29	Robinson (2009) - "Saskia Sassen and the Sociology of Globalization" (26 pages)	
		<i>Crazy Rich Asians</i>	10/31	Hoang (2022) - Selections from <i>Spideweb Capitalism</i> (25 pages)	Essay 2: Friday 11/1
11		Racial Tensions	11/5	Braga et al (2019) - "Race Place, and Effective Policing" (14 pages)	

Wk	Unit	Topic / Film	Date	Reading	Due
		<i>Do the Right Thing</i>	11/7	Doering (2020) - "Racial Identities and Political Standpoints" (20 pages)	
12	??	Urbanization	11/12	Work on Proposals Day; No Class; Short asynchronous assignment	
		<i>Manila in the Claws of Light</i>	11/14	Ren (2018) - "From Chicago to China and India: Studying the City in the Twenty-First Century"	Project Proposal: Friday 11/15
13		Dystopian Futures	11/19	Various (on Canvas)	
		<i>Blade Runner (The Final Cut)</i>	11/21	Zuboff (2015) - "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization" (14 pages)	
14		Class Choice	11/26	TBD	
		<i>Thanksgiving</i>	NO CLASS	None.	
15		Hopeful Futures	12/3	Podcast and short reading (on Canvas)	
		<i>Black Panther</i>	12/5	Wright (2011) - "Real Utopias" / Wright (2007) - "Guidelines for Envisioning Real Utopias"	Last Chance for 2st half engagement assignment
N/A		Finals Week			Final Project Due, 12/16

Other Useful and Important Information

Course Policies

Course Policies:

University-wide policies and student resources can be found on our Canvas page and are also part of the syllabus for this course. I encourage you to read through them by following the links below.

University-Wide Policies: <https://wustl.instructure.com/courses/141477/pages/university-wide-policies>

Student Resources: <https://wustl.instructure.com/courses/141477/pages/student-resources>

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is at the core of all academic work, and I encourage you to uphold the highest standards in this area. Naturally, all work that is not your own must be cited appropriately. Academic dishonesty *of any sort* will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade for an assignment, the entire course and/or other actions the instructor and university deem appropriate.

Using an AI-content generator to complete coursework on assignments where it is not explicitly allowed is a form of academic dishonesty in this course. If you are unsure about whether using a particular tool may constitute plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please contact me to discuss the issue. Also, unless I have informed you otherwise in writing, reusing material from previous work you wrote for this class or other classes also constitutes an academic honesty violation. Finally, you should work on assignments individually unless instructed otherwise. It's ok to talk to your peers about your assignments, but what you turn in needs to have been written by you.

Ignorance of academic honesty expectations (including citation practices) or “unintentional plagiarism” do not excuse violations; it is your responsibility to ensure that your work and conduct comply. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic honesty, please speak with me and I will be happy to help you.

WashU's Academic Integrity Policy: <https://students.wustl.edu/academic-integrity/>

Arts & Sciences Academic Integrity Policy: <https://artsci.wustl.edu/academic-integrity>

A helpful page with resources for citation practices is <http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/cite>

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory as long as you are healthy because of the active learning structure of the course. If you are sick or you suspect that you have COVID-19, do not come to our in-person class. If you do become sick (or suspect you may have COVID) please email me within 24 hours of the class you missed and we will work out accommodations.

For other excused absences (e.g. athletic participation), please notify me by email at least 48 hours before the absence in order for it to count as excused. Absences on exam days should be avoided whenever possible as long as you are healthy; if the absence cannot be avoided you must email me at least 2 weeks before the exam date to arrange an alternate time to take the exam. Frequent or extended absences may require additional documentation.

Course Changes:

Over the quarter there might be changes made to the syllabus, especially concerning the exact readings. If any changes are made, we will go over them in class.

Grade Changes:

If you feel that I, or an AI/TA, have graded something incorrectly, or not entered the correct grade in the Canvas gradebook, please contact us within one week from the time the assignment was returned (or graded on Canvas) to discuss the possibility of any changes.

Grade checks:

If you require a grade check form signed for any reason, please inform me via email 48 hours before you would like me to sign it. If I do not receive an email from you ahead of time, I cannot sign any grade check forms.

Grading Scale:

A	> 93%	A-	90.0 – 92.9%	B+	88.0 – 89.9%
B	83.0 – 87.9%	B-	80.0 – 82.9%	C+	78.0 – 79.9%
C	73.0 – 77.9%	C-	70.0 – 72.9%	D+	68.0 – 69.9%
D	63.0 – 67.9%	D-	60.0 – 62.9	F	< 60%

An A+ may be awarded in rare circumstances at my discretion.

Email and Electronic Etiquette:

Communication between us and our classmates is a big part of this course. Therefore, it's important that you regularly check your official WashU email account, as important class messages will be periodically sent to it. Having not checked that account or having technical problems are not excuses for missing something in the course. We will also post things on Canvas and using Canvas announcements, so you are also responsible for being aware of any items posted on our Canvas page. I [recommend turning on email \(or others\) notifications](#) for this class so that you don't miss anything.

I and any AIs or TA's do our best to answer emails quickly. However, I cannot guarantee that last minute emails will be answered as soon as you might wish. I generally don't work evenings and I try to limit my working time on weekends (especially Saturday), so please do not expect an answer to your email faster than 48 hours. Most likely I'll answer much sooner but there are no guarantees - please plan accordingly. Also, I will not answer emails related to an assignment after 5p the day before the assignment is due.

Computers are great for taking and organizing notes but can also be distracting from class discussion. If you choose to bring a laptop or tablet to class, please be respectful and do not use it for anything except taking notes relevant to this class (i.e. no browsing the web, email, messaging, working on other assignments, etc.). And of course, resist temptation to mess around with your phone. Remember, active participation is part of your class grade, as described in other parts of the syllabus.

Exceptions:

Any exceptions to standard course procedures due to exceptional circumstances must be worked out with me over email in addition to any in-person discussions we might have. This helps prevent any misunderstandings.

Inclusive Space:

This course is an inclusive space that strives to be LGBTQIA+ friendly. Check out these [LGBTQIA+ resources at WashU](#).

Incompletes:

An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix

Acknowledgements

Parts of this syllabus draw on syllabi written by Omar McRoberts, Jeffrey Parker, and: Halasz, Judith R. "Sociology of Film Syllabus." Assignment, Film List, Syllabus published in *TRAILS: Teaching Resources and Innovations Library for Sociology*. Washington DC: American Sociological Association. (<http://trails.asanet.org>).

The section "A Note on Course Material" draws on language and policies used by Caitlyn Collins in her syllabi.

Full Citations for Course Readings

(only contains those included in the syllabus as of 8/18/24)

- Abbott, Andrew. 2002. "Los Angeles and the Chicago School: A Comment on Michael Dear." *City & Community* 1(1):33–38.
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- Braga, Anthony A., Rod K. Brunson, and Kevin M. Drakulich. 2019. "Race, Place, and Effective Policing." *Annual Review of Sociology* 45(1):535–55. doi: [10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022541](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073018-022541).
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- Dear, Michael. 2002. "Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate." *City & Community* 1(1):5–32.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Crown.
- Doering, Jan. 2020. *Us versus Them: Race, Crime, and Gentrification in Chicago Neighborhoods*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
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- Ellingson, Stephen, Edward O. Laumann, Anthony Paik, and Jenna Mahay. 2004. "The Theory of Sex Markets." in *The sexual organization of the city*, edited by E. O. Laumann, S. Ellingson, J. Mahay, A. Paik, and Y. Youm. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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- Lefebvre, Henri. 1996. *Writings on Cities*. 1 edition. edited by E. Kofman and E. Lebas. Cambridge, Mass, USA: Wiley-Blackwell.

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- Park, Robert E., and Ernest W. Burgess. 2012. *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
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- Robinson, William I. 2009. "Saskia Sassen and the Sociology of Globalization: A Critical Appraisal." *Sociological Analysis* 3(1):26.
- Rowley, Stephen. 2006. "False LA: Blade Runner and the Nightmare City." Pp. 203–12 in *The Blade Runner Experience*, edited by W. Brooker. Columbia University Press.
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- Sutherland, Jane-Anne, and Kathryn Feltey. 2013. "Introduction." Pp. 1–23 in *Cinematic Sociology*, edited by J.-A. Sutherland and K. Feltey. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
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- Wright, Erik Olin. 2011. "Real Utopias." *Contexts* 10(2):36–42. doi: [10.1177/1536504211408884](https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504211408884).
- Zuboff, Shoshana. 2015. "Big Other: Surveillance Capitalism and the Prospects of an Information Civilization." *Journal of Information Technology* 30(1):75–89. doi: [10.1057/jit.2015.5](https://doi.org/10.1057/jit.2015.5).