Syllabi

RENEWABLE ENVIRONMENTS: TRANSFORMING URBAN NEIGHBORHOOD

Office Hours M, Tu, Th Drop by or make an Appointment, if needed for another time.
Garaventa 307; pmartine@stmarys-ca.edu 631-4419

An/Soc 114 Urban Sociology Tu/Th 9:40-11:10 Professor Phylis Cancilla Martinelli.
LINKED TO **Nat Sci** 60 11:20-12:50 Professor Steven Bachofer

Course credit: 1 upper division (Sociology or Area C for general requirements)

Course prerequisites: English 5 and anyone of the following courses: Introduction to Communications (Comm 2); Introduction to Sociology (An/So 2); Introduction to Anthropology (An/So 1), Social Problems (An/So 4), History of the United States (Hist 18) Geology and the Environment (Nat Sc. 40 and 41). Or permission of instructors.

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Our contemporary world is increasingly urban, with complex and powerful urban images. City lights represent excitement, new ideas, and fascinating life styles. City lights also cast shadows where we see hunger, segregation, pollution, and crime. Many seek to escape the latter by moving to suburbs further and even further out, creating urban sprawl. Yet, is escape really possible or desirable since cities and societies reflect one another, as major strains emerge in both over elementary human associations? Tradition versus change, the individual versus the community, diversity versus homogeneity, and privilege versus poverty are among these tensions. This course explores how these and other stresses have developed in cities.

We will examine cities sociologically, so that we can better place our case study of Alameda Point into the bigger pattern of urban life. The class examines a specific aspect of the urban revolution and the future of cities, the reclaiming of older, unsightly, and possibly toxic areas called Brownfields and those deemed highly polluted, designated Super Fund sites. Using several facets of sociology that include urban sociology, medical sociology, environmental sociology and the sociology of emotion we will zero in Alameda Point as an urban setting beset with current and potential problems as well as promise for a better future. The area is examined with a view toward reducing difficulties. Relevant concepts include social class, race and ethnicity, community, empowerment, social justice.
Together with Natural Science 60 we will explore, through discussions, exercises, films, guest speakers, and field trips the critical questions that the Bay Area is facing, which are enhancing the quality of life, keeping housing affordable, minimizing congestion, retaining sufficient

recreational and open spaces and remaining a viable economic center. In examining issues of the reuse of urban industrial sites, our class will engage students broader concerns of the future of cities and the role of active citizenship in a modern society.

GRADING: Regular and prompt attendance is considered essential for this class.

Your grade is based on the following.

Midterm	***200 Points***
Final	200 Points
Observation	100 Points
Research Paper	400 Points
Discussion	100 Points (contributions to class discussions)

EXAMS Midterm and Final. Examinations are take home essay. The exam material will cover both classes and your reading. A study guide will help you prepare for the tests.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS Each person will turn in their own paper based on the area the team observes. Since you can't study cities without seeing them, you will be doing a field observation. Based on the work of William F. Whyte, teams will observe and videotape how people use or don't use public spaces. There will be an informal team presentation of your videos in class.

RESEARCH PAPER Each student will turn in their own paper based in part on the team research. As part of this project your team will do research on contemporary issues on the area we target in Alameda. [e.g. finances, city image, poverty, transportation]. You and team members of the learning community will delve into multiple aspects of the area you decide to focus on. The final paper will incorporate both your observations, interviews, and focus groups. **This research will be the basis for your final project in Natural Science 60, the video. However each will be graded separately. Format, sources, and topic must follow the class handout.**

TEXTS

Kevin Fitzpatrick and Mark La Gory. The Ecology of Risk in the Urban Landscape: Unhealthy Places. 2000. New York: Rutledge.

Gregory Squires (ed.). Urban Sprawl, Causes, Consequences & Policy Responses. 2002. Washington, D.C. The Urban Institute Press.

NAS Alameda Community Reuse Plan, January 1996 (provided in class, @ $15)

WEEKLY READING/DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

READINGS

Week 1 9/2: An Urban Sociology Perspective on Modern Cities
Tuesday Overview of Course.
Thursday How life in cities is unique. Unhealthy Places, Ch 1 The Importance of Place

Week 2 9/9 The Urban Ecological Approach
Tuesday Brownfields as a "natural" urban area. Alameda Point as a case study.
Thursday, Unhealthy Places Ch 2 Humans as Spatial Animals,
Chapter 3 The Ecology of Everyday Urban Life.
Your own ability to observe space: Cognitive Map Assignment, Due Tuesday 9/16

Week 3 9/16 Research Approaches to the Study of Urban Culture and Life
Tuesday William F. Whyte and Sociology of Space.
Handout. Observation Project Covered. Video clip. William White.

Dr. Phylis Cancilla Martinelli, Ph.D. Urban Research Assignment
. Have a cover sheet with your name, the class, my name, and the title of your assignment.

PART I Observation

Sociology of Small Spaces. You will be doing unobtrusive observation with your team. In this case, you will be directly observing patterns and behavior, but not participating or interviewing people. This generally eliminates the need for ethical concerns about permission from respondents.

The observation you'll be doing stems from work done by William F. Whyte. He spent time with the "Street Life Project" observing how people use social space in crowded areas. He was fascinated by groups of people and seeing how, with our growing populations in big cities plus the growth of high rise buildings, limited space is best used. He saw many plazas would be left empty at a time when people complained they wanted more space. So, he began to observe the factors involved in the use of small spaces. City planners and architects are now using his research results.

What we have been discussing in class, your own informal observations, and William H. Whyte's research that you will see in the video should make you more aware of how people use social space. However, you will need to get out and see the qualities yourself for them to be meaningful. You will be observing the patterns of people in outdoor plazas and parks in city settings. THIS MEANS NO SHOPPING MALLS or BART STATIONS, etc. Plan to take time to allow yourself time to do this. It will take a couple of hours, but will be a lot more fun than sitting in a library reading what someone else has written.

First, observe and describe patterns of sitting and street conversations as discussed in the article. Does what you are observing seem like what Whyte describes? He claims that the patterns are found in big cities around the world.

Second, observe and describe the factors that make the area you are observing a well used place or one where people don't linger or seem uncomfortable. Whyte suggests several factors are relevant in this aspect of use of small spaces:

1] the weather (sun, or lack of it, and wind),
2] what physical features make a place inviting or forbidding (shape, size, sitting space, trees or other plants, fountains) relation to the street (is the place easy to see and get to).
3] activity level since as social animals people are attracted to others in a pleasant setting (food available, music, shops nearby, etc VERSUS many socially stigmatized people others feel uncomfortable with (homeless, substance abusers, perceived youth gangs).
4] gender patterns of use and any other variables (e.g. age groups) you notice.

You'll need to find a place with high pedestrian volume and a concentration and mixture of activities. The paper will need to be 4-5 typed pages of text in which you describe your research, place it in a context. Your team will be responsible for the video, which will be shown in class.

Thursday Urban Sprawl Ch 1, Urban Sprawl.

Week 4 9/23 Involving Community
Tuesday What is Community? Alameda as community. Team community exercise: Create an "ideal type model" (a heuristic device used by Max Weber for research)
Thursday Unhealthy Places Ch 4
The Sociology of Health, Urban Sprawl Ch 2 The Environmental Impacts of Sprawl.

Week 5 9/30 Developing Strategies for Understanding Complex Urban Issues
Tuesday **OBSERVATION PAPER DUE.** Team video reports.
Thursday How to study Alameda? Ethical Issues. Observation, Focus Groups, In-depth interviews, key informants.