Course Overview: This course examines the trends and issues in contemporary American communities. Although we focus primarily on urban or metropolitan areas, many of the conceptual issues are relevant to rural areas as well. A central conceptual issue throughout this course is the significant role of place in shaping economic and social opportunities for individuals. We examine classical and contemporary theories in community and urban sociology, especially the voluminous literature on neighborhood effects. We will discuss several important substantive issues in urban settings, such as economic restructuring, spatial mismatch, urban sprawl, residential segregation, gentrification, neighborhood redevelopment, environmental justice, and urban policy.

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this course, I expect students to:

1. understand the major concepts and theories in community and urban sociology.
2. acquire basic analytical skills for examining social and economic change in American communities.
3. develop an ability to analyze policies and apply strategies for urban development.

Required Reading:


Plus additional readings are available on Learn@UW.
Course Requirements:

Grades will be based on bi-weekly response papers and a term paper. The response papers will be worth 40% of your grade and the term paper constitutes 60%. Final grades will be based on the following scale: A=93+; AB=88-92; B=83-87; BC=78-82; C=70-77; D=60-69.

Every other week students will summarize and critically analyze the readings for those two weeks and draw connections with the lectures. These response papers should be approximately 2-3 pages (double-spaced) in length. There will be a total of six papers, but students are only required to submit five papers. You can either drop the lowest grade or not complete one. The term paper will examine the interaction of income inequality, residential segregation, and economic restructuring in a small (less than one million residents) metropolitan area in the Midwest (see list of possible case studies at the end of the syllabus). The term paper will be divided into three parts (problem statement & literature review, empirical analysis, and policy conclusions) that will be due at different times during the semester. Each part will be worth 20% of your final grade. In addition to using census data and other online sources, it will be helpful to access newspaper articles, books and reports on your city. The entire paper should be approximately 25-30 double-spaced pages in length (including figures, tables, and references). I will deduct a letter grade for each day that each part of the paper is late. All students are expected to make a short (10 minute) presentation on their paper at the end of the semester.

Graduate students in this class will meet with me separately every three weeks to discuss extra readings. I will ask each of the graduate students to lead a class discussion on one of the topics during the semester. Finally, graduate students will be asked to write an additional response paper on their extra readings.

Attendance and Participation. Class attendance is extremely important for this course. Coming to class prepared and participating in the discussion will enhance your ability to learn the material presented in class. I will include material from each class on the exams (in many cases this material is not available in the readings or on Learn@UW). An official note is required if students miss more than three classes. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from classmates and any other information missed during class. All students will be expected to give a short presentation of their term paper at the end of the semester.

Academic Honesty. Given the amount of writing required in the class you should familiarize yourself with rules at the University regarding plagiarism (http://www.wisc.edu/students/conduct/uws14.htm#special).

Lecture Notes. Lecture notes will be posted on Learn@UW before class. These notes are intended to provide you with a broad outline of the discussion, not specific details. It would help if you print out the notes in advance and bring them to class. The notes will not provide a lot of detail, so you will still need to take notes in class. If you miss a class, you should contact another student to obtain these notes from the class.

Readings. You are expected to read the assignments before class each week. I normally do not lecture from the readings, but try to make linkages with the discussions in class.
1. Introduction

Reading: *Place Matters* (Pp. 1-63)

2. Conceptualizing community/urban

Reading: *Place Matters* (Pp. 64-151)
American Community Survey: http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml

3. Place & neighborhood effects

Reading: *Place Matters* (Pp. 247-309)
Social Explorer http://www.socialexplorer.com

Response Paper #1 (2/5)

4. Concentrated poverty & inequality

Reading: *Place Matters* (Pp. 152-246)
Reading: PEWS Research Center. 2015. *The American Middle Class is Losing Ground*. Washington, DC.

Response Paper #2 (2/19)
6. Spatial & skills mismatch

Reading: *Boom, Bust, Exodus* (Ch. 5-9)

Paper #1 Due (February 25)

7. Sprawl

Reading: *Boom, Bust, Exodus* (Ch. 10-14)

Response Paper #3 (3/4)

8. Residential segregation

Reading: *Boom, Bust, Exodus* (Ch. 15-18)
Data sources on residential segregation, see: http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/Data/data.htm

9. Immigration and urbanization


Response Paper #4 (3/18)

SPRING BREAK (3/20-3/25)

10. Gentrification


Paper #2 Due (March 31)
11. Urban Development


Response Paper #5 (4/8)

12. Environmental Justice


13. Urban Policy


Response Paper #6 (4/22)

14. Class Presentations
15. Class Presentations

Paper #3 Due (May 5)

CASE STUDIES POSSIBILITIES

St. Louis  Grand Rapids  Flint  South Bend  Omaha
Kansas City  Dayton  Cleveland  Cedar Rapids  Fort Wayne
Indianapolis  Des Moines  Davenport  Sioux Falls  Kalamazoo
Cincinnati  Toledo  Peoria  Springfield (MO)  Green Bay
Columbus  Lansing  Rockford  Milwaukee  Madison