

## SocA 370: Cities and Urban Life--CAPSTONE AND WRITING

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CRN #14175  
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110 Oglebay  
MW 3:30-4:45

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**“The art of writing is the art of applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair.”**

**- Mary Heaton Vorse**

### REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Palen, J. John. 2008. *The Urban World* 8<sup>th</sup> ed. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.
2. All students are required to use eReserves to obtain additional readings (<http://ereserves.lib.wvu.edu>). My username is my last name in all lowercase. The class is called SOCA293 (password: 202) or SOCA370 (password: 611)

Students can enhance the content, discussion, and understanding of the course by becoming/ staying aware of current political and social issues through reading newspapers such as *The New York Times* and listening to *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* on National Public Radio (90.9 WVPM-FM or <http://www.wvpubrad.org/>).

Note: SOCA 101 is a prerequisite for this course.

### INTRODUCTION

This course introduces students to the scientific study of urban social life and the major concerns of urban sociology. The primary goals are to present the methods, theories, and key concepts of the sociological perspective on cities. Students should be able to identify the most important issues in urban and community-related sociology, including the main sociological perspectives, research, and theories. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to communicate orally and in writing about the ways in which sociology contributes to an understanding of urban places. They will demonstrate an ability to think critically and show specific knowledge as they investigate urban topics. Note that this capstone course includes an emphasis on writing; hence several research-based writing assignments are required.

### EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course:

1. Students will recognize and understand the ways that urban places are defined and how urban research has evolved across time.
2. Students will recognize and understand the ways that people cope with the dense urban environment.
3. Students will recognize and understand the application of sociology to the study of the homeless, panhandlers, and other people who are found in public-use spaces, like parks and plazas.
4. Students will learn to look critically at dangerous aspects of the urban environment and problems in extremely disadvantaged neighborhoods, a major aspect of U.S. identity.
5. Students will be able to use the social scientific positivist paradigm to analyze urban problems and apply theoretical views of cities in doing so.
6. Students will gain an understanding of the historical developments in U.S. cities and the politics surrounding urban management.
7. Students will gain the ability to recognize and analyze urban diversity of housing patterns.
8. Students will be able to use, find, apply, and compare U.S. Census data to analyze urban and metropolitan demographic patterns.
9. Students will increase their proficiency in written communication, interviewing, and applied research.
10. Students will gain experience in verbal communication through active participation in class discussion and presentations.

### INSTRUCTOR GOALS

Students should develop, understand, and exercise a "sociological imagination," a unique and useful perspective that sociologists use to examine society. Using this perspective critically and systematically helps us to examine the way individuals, institutions, and structures interact to comprise society and influence human behavior. It is challenging to think sociologically; it encourages us to question all that we take for granted.

Students should hone skills in critical thinking and effective communication of thoughts and ideas, especially through writing--an essential accomplishment of college graduates. Thinking, reading, listening, and writing are integrally related, so successful completion of this course rests on the development of these skills over the semester. While the sociological study of person-place relationships is the vehicle through which these skills will be developed, successful completion of the course depends on developing these skills over the semester. All forms of communication should take place in a scholarly and informed manner.

Students should develop an informed perspective based on reason and supported by facts. Students should learn to think about and discuss society *critically* with a broad lens that encompasses multiple points of view. This means that students will NOT simply accept reality as others (family, institutions, media, schools, and friends) describe it to them.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### Attendance:

While attendance is a matter of students' systems of priorities, I expect regular attendance and informed participation. Attendance and participation are 10% of the total grade and provide a great boost to most students' grades. I will take attendance on 11 different days. Each student is granted one day of forgiveness, but after that, I will detract one tenth of the points for each day missed. If students leave class early and do not consult with me, they will not get credit for attendance on that day. Students should take notes to verify their attendance in case of a dispute. Students who are dishonest about their/someone else's attendance will lose all of their attendance points.

**If students choose to miss a class, it will affect their grade as a substantial amount of course material given in class is not available in the texts.** Students are expected to attend class and participate in discussion and exercises. Students should complete the assigned readings *before* class, take notes on them, and be prepared to contribute questions and ideas to the class. If students miss a class, they are responsible for obtaining the notes from another student. I will not lend out lecture notes or outlines under any circumstances. At the beginning of class, students may be required to write and submit a short reflection on a concept from the readings. This exercise serves three purposes:

1. It "jump-starts" the process of thinking sociologically during class, facilitating learning and class discussion.
2. It helps develop students' critical thinking and writing skills, providing ongoing review and practice for examinations.
3. It is a useful way to take attendance.

The reflections are graded as "complete" or "incomplete" and should be considered practice, rather than an evaluation. Since they help me to assess student attendance, no make-up or late exercises will be accepted.

### Participation:

In this course, we deal with a number of controversial topics. Students are encouraged to offer the class their comments or disagreements. Keep in mind that varied points of view must be expressed respectfully and in a manner that is sensitive to differences in ability, class, ethnicity, lifestyle, race, religion, or sex. Do not express views in a way that others may perceive as a personal attack. In short, having respect for others' differences is a prerequisite for enrollment in this course

### Paper:

**The first draft is due on February 25. If it is not completed on time and correctly, students lose 50% of points on the final draft. The final ten-page draft is due on April 8 and is worth 25% of the total grade.** Students will conduct a small-scale community study and play the role of a sociologist. The goal of this assignment is to better understand the sociological nature of neighborhoods. Students will research their hometown neighborhoods at different points in time and compare the neighborhood to the surrounding county. Students are required to conduct interviews. See handouts.

Presentation:

Students must first fulfill the oral component of the capstone by regularly participating in discussions of the course readings and discussing their project’s progress. Second, students must do an oral presentation of their research process and findings at the end of the semester. This is not optional. Students who fail to do a presentation will lose their attendance points for the semester. Each student will have approximately 10 minutes for their presentation. Students must attend class and ask classmates questions about their research during the oral presentations. **Students must attend class on all presentation days. For each presentation day missed, ten points will be detracted from students’ own presentation scores.**

Examinations:

These will consist of multiple choice questions. You are responsible for all readings, films, and exercises, as well as material covered in lectures. Lectures will cover material that is not in the readings, and not all of the readings will be discussed in detail in the lectures. **Optimal performance is the result of attending class and doing the assigned readings before lecture.** The final is not cumulative. Please use Scantron #882-E.

Do not assume that you are entitled to take a make-up. I will give make-ups *only* for students with medical problems, such as a serious illness, or other emergencies in the immediate family. If you cannot take an exam at the scheduled time, you must notify me **before the exam** by speaking to me directly by sending e-mail to me. Make-ups must be completed **within one week** of the original test date. I reserve the right to give make-ups in an alternative format.

Grade Breakdown:

The breakdown for final grades is as follows:

Attendance		10%
Exam 1	20%	
Exam 2	20%	
Exam 3	20%	
Draft 1		** (see above)
Paper	25%	
Presentation	5%	
		100%

Grading Scale:

Final grades will be determined using the standard grading scale:

A	90-100	D	60-69
B	80-89	F	Less than 60
C	70-79		

Extra Credit (10 possible points added to a test):

In addition to the attendance points that are worth 10% of your grade, five points will be awarded for students who complete the typed career services/resume project. An additional five points will be added to the final exam if students **type** and complete the census extra credit. **Both assignments will be provided on the first day.**

Academic Misconduct:

Dr. Woldoff will not tolerate cheating or plagiarism. All cases of academic misconduct will be immediately referred to the dean of Arts and Sciences office, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled, and the Office of Judicial Programs. Attendance, exams, and assignments contribute to actual grades. In addition, they reflect an individual's ability to understand the course material; therefore, providing and/or seeking assistance from fellow students or using other aids during an exam will constitute cheating. Students should be familiar with the WVU statement on Academic Integrity/Dishonesty published in the undergraduate catalog. See it here: <http://www.ia.wvu.edu:8888/Undergraduate/2001thru03/pdf/files/frontpages.pdf>

According to the WVU Undergraduate Catalogue (2001-2003), under "Academic Information," Academic Dishonesty Defined, WVU expects that every member of its academic community share the historic and traditional commitment to honesty, integrity, and the search for truth. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to any of the following:

1. Plagiarism is defined in terms of proscribed acts. Students are expected to understand that such practices constitute academic dishonesty regardless of motive. Those who deny deceitful intent, claim not to have known that the act constituted plagiarism, or maintain that what they did was inadvertent are nevertheless subject to penalties when plagiarism has been confirmed. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: submitting, without appropriate acknowledgment, a report, notebook, speech, outline, theme, thesis, dissertation, or other written, visual, or oral material that has been copied in

whole or in part from the work of others, whether such source is published or not, including (but not limited to) another individual's academic composition, compilation, or other product, or commercially prepared paper.

2. Cheating and dishonest practices in connection with examinations, papers, and projects, including but not limited to:
  - a. Obtaining help from another student during examinations.
  - b. Knowingly giving help to another student during exam, taking an examination or doing academic work for another student, or providing one's own work for another student to copy and submit as his or her own.
  - c. The unauthorized use of notes, books, or other sources of information during examinations.
  - d. Obtaining without authorization an examination or any part thereof.
3. Forgery, misrepresentation, or fraud:
  - a. Forging or altering, or causing to be altered, the record of any grade in a grade book or other educational record.
  - b. Use of University documents or instruments of identification with intent to defraud.
  - c. Presenting false data or intentionally misrepresenting one's records for admission, registration, or withdrawal from the University or from a University course.
  - d. Knowingly presenting false data or intentionally misrepresenting one's records for personal gain.
  - e. Knowingly furnishing the results of research projects or experiments for the inclusion in another's work without proper citation.
  - f. Knowingly furnishing false statements in any University academic proceeding.

A common rule of thumb: when in doubt, cite! Citations and references are necessary for an acceptable paper. When writing, remember that the professor may be very familiar with the topic, writings on the topic, and she may check sources. Cheating and plagiarism are not the only forms of academic misconduct; therefore, students should go to the above link for a more detailed discussion of student responsibility.

#### Classroom Conduct: The Rules and the Reasons

The following behaviors are unacceptable and are examples of rudeness, distractions, and passivity: lateness, eating, chatting, reading newspapers, sleeping, audible beepers and cell phones, **leaving early**, and missing class. I mention these verbal and physical incivilities because they are not harmless, but interfere with other students' learning and prevent the class from being all that it might be. Cell phones and texting are banned!

#### Student Services:

I encourage students to schedule a time to meet with me. I am willing to discuss student concerns and progress during individual appointments. I make every effort to assist students who are experiencing difficulty in this course. In addition, WVU offers options for students who need extra assistance. Students are encouraged to take advantage of these services:

Carruth Center for Counseling  
& Psychological Services  
3rd Floor of Student Services Building  
304-293-4431  
<http://www.wvu.edu/~cocenter/>

Center for Writing Excellence  
240 Stansbury Hall  
304-293-3107  
<http://www.as.wvu.edu/english/cwe>

WVU Student Support Services/TRIO  
304-293-6629  
[sss\\_trio@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:sss_trio@mail.wvu.edu)  
<http://www.wvu.edu/~trio/>

Career Services Center--  
Student Organization Wing of the Mountainlair Building  
(304) 293-2221  
<http://www.wvu.edu/~CAREERSC/index.html>  
[CareerServices@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:CareerServices@mail.wvu.edu)

#### Social Justice Statement:

**West Virginia University is committed to social justice. I concur with that commitment and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. Our university does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.**

**Students with Disabilities:**

**If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).**

**Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and seeking available assistance in a timely manner.**

**Class Cancellation Policy:**

**Dr. Woldoff will email a class cancellation notice if she is unable to hold class. Students are responsible for getting cancellation information.**

## Course Outline

Note: this is only a guide. There may be points over the semester when we move slightly faster or slower than indicated below. Dr. Woldoff will inform students of large deviations from this outline. By the end of the semester, students should understand and be able to clearly communicate sociological perspectives, patterns, and findings on the following issues:

Date	Topic/Readings
1/12	Course Intro/ Intro to the Study of Sociology
1/14	Palen Ch. 1 :The Urban World
1/21-1/26	Palen Ch. 3: The Rise of Urban America and Twin Oaks article <b>**Resume and census extra credit exercises due 1/26**</b>
1/28-2/2	Palen Ch. 4: Ecology and Political Economy Perspectives
2/4-2/9	Film: <i>New York: A Documentary Film/discussion</i>
2/11	<b>Exam 1</b>
2/16	Palen Ch. 7: Urban Lifestyles
2/18-2/23	Palen Ch. 7 cont'd and Palen Ch.8: Social Environment of Metro Areas
2/25-3/30	<b>***Draft 1: Due 2/25***</b> Chapter 8 Continued Writing Discussion/Sample Presentation
3/4-3/9	Film: <i>Streetwise</i> /Discussion
3/11	<b>Exam 2</b>
3/23	Vergara Preface and Ch. 1, 2
3/25-3/31	Vergara Ch. 3, 4
4/1-4/6	Vergara Ch. 5, 6
4/8-4/13	Duneier readings <b>***Final Draft: Due 4/8 ***</b>
4/15-4/20	Film: <i>The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces</i> and discussion
4/22	<b>Exam 3</b>
4/27	<b>***5 Presentations***</b>
4/29	<b>*** 5 Presentations***</b>

**Final 10 Presentations:** Friday 5/8 from 11-1 in our classroom.

### Extra Credit Census Exercise #1: Due 1/23/08

At the end of this exercise, students will print a Census map and turn it in with a Census 2000 table, Census 1990 tables, a Census county table, a homemade typed table, typed answers, and a NIMBY article. To receive credit, you must have all components. Label the answers, maps, and tables, so Dr. Woldoff can identify whether the data is for students' neighborhoods in 1990, 2000, or their home county in 2000. Label the name of the neighborhood and the city in which it is embedded. Make a copy of the packet for your records. Remember to calculate percentages by using the total population as the denominator (see attached example).

If you need help, you should go to the library and ask for the librarian in government documents. This exercise is worth **five extra credit points** on the first exam. I will not give partial credit for this assignment; nor will I accept late assignments.

A) Get an article from the Internet about the neighborhood that you are studying. This should be submitted with the assignment. The article should be about a NIMBY issue. NIMBY is an acronym for "Not in My Backyard."

B) Get a map and the Census tables by following steps below:

1. Access the web and go to the home page of the U.S. Census Bureau <http://www.census.gov/>
2. Click American FactFinder. This is on the left side of the page.
3. On the left side of the page, there is a grey search window. Click the link that says "street address."
4. Enter your hometown street address and city, state, and zip code and click "Go."
5. In the list of "Geographies," note the county in which your neighborhood is located (you will need this later). Highlight "Census Tract" in the box and click "Map It." Remember this tract number.
6. Print this map and click the "Close" on the bottom of this screen to return to the page that lists the geographies.
7. Highlight "Census Tract" again and now click "Go" instead of "Map It."
8. Scroll down look under the subheading "Quick Tables and Demographic Profiles." Under the subheading that says: "Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data" click the link that reads "DP-1. Profile of General Demographic Characteristics: 2000."
9. Print this table and close this page.
10. Return to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) to begin gathering county data for 2000.
11. On the right side of the page is a feature that reads "State and County Quick Facts." Under this feature, select the state in which your neighborhood is located and click "Go."
12. This will take you to a page about the state. There you may select the county in which your tract is located. Click "Go." Print this page to get statistics about the county and state in which your neighborhood is located.
13. Now, you will retrieve data about your neighborhood in 1990.
14. Return to [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) to begin gathering neighborhood data for 1990.
15. Click on "American FactFinder on the left side of the page.
16. Click on "Tools and References" on the left side of the page.
17. Click on "Tools."
18. Click on the first link that says "American Fact Finder Data Sets Page"
19. At the top there are two tabs. Click on the one that says "1990 Census."
20. Go down to the bottom and click the button "1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3) - Sample data."
21. Click "detailed tables."
22. Under select geographic type, select "Census Tract" from the menu.
23. Under "State," select the state you want.
24. Under "County," select your county.
25. Under "Tract," scroll to your tract number (note this from above) and highlight it and click the "Add" button below it.
26. Click "Next" and hold the "Ctrl" button and choose P1, P7, P8, P10, P13, P57, P78, P90, and H8.
27. Click "Add" and "Show Result."
28. The 1990 search may not work for you if you live in a new tract—see me if you have a problem.

C) Create a table like the one below. Note that 1990 age category is missing (N/A).

### Trouble shooting:

1) To get the county's median age:

- a) Go to American FactFinder on the census page (on the left) and then choose "search" at the top.
- b) Choose the "geography" tab at the top and then choose "Census 2000" as the year and program.
- c) Restrict your search to the state you want under name, type in the county (e.g., "Reese County").
- d) It will come up in results, so then select OK.
- e) Under SF4, choose DP1 and median age is there.

2) To get tract homeownership rate, take the number of owner-occupied housing units as the numerator and use the total number of occupied units as the denominator.

3) You cannot get the 1990 median age--just write in N/A.

4) Try to get county data for 2000. You should be able to get it the same way that you got age. If not possible, label the year for which the data are available.

Good luck!!!

**Table 1: Tract and County Statistics for Neighborhood X (Tract xx in X County, X State)**

	<b>Tract in 1990</b>	<b>Tract in 2000</b>	<b>County in 2000</b>
<b>Total population</b>	7,271	7,768	1,517,550
<b>% White</b>	92.35%	33.2%	46.4%
<b>% African American</b>	2.15%	55.8%	44.3%
<b>% Asian/PI</b>	5.17%	3.7%	4.9%
<b>% Latino</b>	1.73%	2.0%	8.5%
<b>Median Age</b>	NA	34	34.3
<b>% Female</b>	46.97%	54.9%	53.5%
<b>% Homeowners</b>	73.46%	73.6%	59.3%

D) Answer the following questions (in detail) for your neighborhood in 2000:

1. What were the percentages of homeowners versus renters? How does this compare to the county and 1990? What does this mean?
2. Search the web for the median age group. How does this compare to 1990 and the county? What does this mean? On average, is the 2000 tract population older or younger than the county population?
3. What was the largest racial or ethnic group? How does this compare to 1990 and the county? What does this mean? What were some other interesting findings about race?
4. Interpret these data. What do these numbers reveal about the probable well-being of the population in this neighborhood? How does the neighborhood compare to the county? What does this mean?
5. What pattern is most interesting to you? Why?

## **Extra Credit #2: Preparation for Visit to WVU Career Services Center**

**Due: 1/26/09**

You must type this exercise and have your resume signed by a staff member there to receive credit.

You must visit the WVU Career Services Center. Upon graduation, you will have to put forth effort to find a career in your chosen field. Take advantage of resources that can assist you in this process such as the Career Services Center.

The Career Services Center exists to help you with the process of job hunting. There are resources and experts available to assist you with resumes, interviewing, and job searching. This visit will help familiarize you with those resources.

### **The Assignment:**

As part of the visit, you will be introduced to the many resources the Career Services Center offers. To prepare for this meeting (and to begin gathering information for your final resume), you must come prepared with a draft of a resume that includes the following:

1. A list of all colleges and universities you have attended, along with the dates, your anticipated graduation date and degree(s).
2. A list of overall GPA, junior/senior GPA, and major GPA.
3. A list of the five most relevant courses you have taken.
4. A list of the last three jobs you have held, along with dates, job title, and job responsibilities.
5. Any campus activities in which you were involved, along with a description of duties for any officer positions held.
6. A list of three people to serve as professional references, along with their contact information.
7. Any relevant honors or awards you have received, including scholarships.
8. Any volunteer or community experiences, along with the dates and locations.

Please type your responses to these questions and bring these to the Career Services Center and get the resume signed. The counselor may suggest revisions, but save a copy of your original draft.

This is a good link about resumes and format:

<http://www.swarthmore.edu/Documents/administration/careerservices/resume.pdf>

Living' for the City - Stevie Wonder

A boy is born in hard time Mississippi  
Surrounded by four walls that ain't so pretty  
His parents give him love and affection  
To keep him strong moving in the right direction  
Living just enough, just enough for the city  
His father works some days for fourteen hours  
And you can bet he barely makes a dollar  
His mother goes to scrub the floors for many  
And you'd best believe she hardly gets a penny  
Living just enough, just enough for the city  
His sister's black but she is sure 'nuff pretty  
Her skirt is short but Lord her legs are sturdy  
To walk to school she's got to get up early  
Her clothes are old but never are they dirty  
Living just enough, just enough for the city . . .  
Her brother's smart he's got more sense than many  
His patience's long but soon he won't have any  
To find a job is like a haystack needle  
Cause where he lives they don't use colored people  
Living just enough, just enough for the city . . .  
Living just enough . . .  
For the city . . .  
His hair is long, his feet are hard and gritty  
He spends his life walking the streets of New York City  
He's almost dead from breathing in air pollution  
He tried to vote but to him there's no solution  
Living just enough, just enough for the city . . .  
I hope you hear inside my voice of sorrow  
And that it motivates you to make a better tomorrow  
This place is cruel. No where could be much colder  
If we don't change the world will soon be over  
Living just enough, stop giving just enough for the city!

Open Letter (to a Landlord)- Living Colour

Now you can tear a building down  
But you can't erase a memory  
These houses may look all run down  
But they have a value you can't see...  
This is my neighborhood  
This is where I come from  
I call this place my home  
You call this place a slum  
You wanna run all the people out  
This is what you're all about  
Treat poor people just like trash  
Turn around and make big cash  
CHORUS:  
Now you can tear a building down  
But you can't erase a memory  
These houses may look all run down  
But they have a value you can't see  
Last month there was a fire  
I saw seven children die  
You sent flowers to their family  
But your sympathy's a lie  
Cause every building you burn  
Is more blood money that you earn  
We are forced to relocate  
From the pain that you create  
CHORUS  
We lived here for so many years  
Now this house is full of fear  
For a profit you will take control  
Where will all the older people go?  
There used to be when kids could play  
Without the scourge of drug's decay  
Now our kids are living dead  
They crack and blow their minds away  
CHORUS  
You've got to fight  
You've got a right  
To fight for your neighborhood!