**The American Urban Experience:**

**Anthropological Perspectives**

ANTH 3135, Spring 2016

**Professor**: Meghan Ference, PhD **Meeting Time**: MW 12:50-2:05p

**Email:** [MFerence@brooklyn.cuny.edu](mailto:MFerence@brooklyn.cuny.edu) **Location**: 3304B James Hall

**Office**: 3301 James Hall, Suite H **Final Exam Due:**M 5/23,1pm,3304B JH

**Office Hours:** M 4-5pm, or by appointment

**Overview and Objectives**

This course provides an anthropological perspective on the every day lived experience of several American cities. We will be using a variety of mediums to understand and analyze everyday life in these cities and in American culture and society more broadly. The foundation of our understanding will come from looking at the social constructions of categories and how that maps on to the physical structures and infrastructures of urban America. Through a variety of scholarly readings, ethnography and documentary films we will explore the changing urban realities in our world today using basic anthropological concepts and perspectives. Students will also complete a semester-long project that brings their own unique and personal urban experiences to bear on the theoretical and abstract concepts covered in class. This course engages students in the diversity and history of American urban life and introduces various modes of analyzing and critically assessing material culture, current events and social and cultural institutions.

**Assessment and Grades**

**Attendance and Participation: 20%**

**Exams: 50%**

**Scrapbook Presentation: 30%**

**Attendance and Participation** **(20%)**

You are expected to come to class having read and prepared to engage in thoughtful discussion. Your participation grade will be supplemented by intermittent pop quizzes and small homework assignments.

**Exams (50%)**

We will have **two** in class exams where you will have an opportunity to exhibit your knowledge and critical thinking skills through a variety of means including multiple choice, fill in the blank, short and long essay questions.

**City Scrapbook Assignment (30%):**

This project will allow each student to engage with their own personal experience of urban life through a specifically ethnographic perspective. Students will develop a research question and then answer that research question using various forms of media they will gather from their everyday lives. The media can be as conventional as articles from newspapers or magazines or as unique as a piece of artwork or detritus. These can include maps, voice or visual recordings (with necessary permission), public flyers, advertisements, works of art, internet articles and media or even found objects. Students must use at least three different types of media scraps for their final projects. Students will then use these six scraps in addition to at least one interview in order to answer their own research question in a class presentation.

***The city scrapbook project will be broken down into three assignments:*** *Each student must have me sign off on the first two assignments in person -- 1)formulating a research question and 2) the collection of at least three scraps -- in order to schedule their scrapbook presentation.*

1. **Formulate research question (5%) (25 points)**
2. **Collect Three Scraps (10%) (50 points)**
3. **Class Presentation of Scrapbook (15%) (75 points)**

**Grading Points Possible**

**Attendance and Participation 100 points**

**Exams (125 points each) 250 points**

**Scrapbook Project 150 points**

**Total Points Available 500 Points**

**Grading Scale Percentages:**

**100-98 A+ 89 – 88 B+ 79 – 78 C+ 69 – 68 D+ 59 and below F**

**97 – 94 A 87 – 84 B 77 – 74 C 67 – 64 D**

**93 – 90 A- 83 – 80 B- 73 – 70 C- 63 – 60 D**

**Class Requirements and Policies**

1. **Attendance is mandatory**. After 3 absences your grade will negatively affected. Perfect attendance will be rewarded.

2. **Please come to class on time**. If you are more than **10 minutes late** on 3 occasions it will count as a class absence.

3. The will be absolutely **no incompletes given in this class** except in the case of documented medical emergencies.

4. **Exams must be taken in at the appointed time.** Please do not ask me to reschedule an exam except in the vent of a documented medical emergency.

5. **I will not accept any late papers!** Papers must be presented **in hard copy**, at the beginning of class and on the date that it is due.

6. Please **turn your cell phone off** in class. Neither silencing them nor putting them on vibrate is sufficient.

7. **No side conversations in class**. It is disruptive to me and your fellow classmates.

**University's policy on Academic Integrity:** The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.

**Center for Student Disability Services**: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services. Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the Center for Student Disability Services please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her.

***Required Text***

Mitchell Duneier and Ovie Carter, *Sidewalk,* 2000

***All other readings/materials are posted to the course Black Board page***

***Class and Reading Schedule***

***Week 1 Introduction: What is Anthropology? How is the anthropological approach unique?***

M 2/1: Introductions and Syllabus Review ***(No Reading)***

W 2/3: *What is the anthropological perspective? How can we apply it to our urban experience?*

Read: Spradley, Ethnography and Culture, ***Blackboard***

***Week 2 Foundations: How do anthropologists study cities? Why do we need urban plans?***

M 2/8: *What kind of problems impact cities? What solutions have we put in place thus far?*

Read: Jacobs, Life and Death of Great American Cities (excerpts), ***Blackboard***

W 2/10: *What does and doesn't work in urban settings?**How do we solve urban problems?*

FILM: URBANIZED ***(In-Class Film)(No reading)***

***Week 3 Inequality: What are the causes of urban poverty?***

**M 2/15: NO CLASS *(No Reading)***

W 2/17: *How does power shape our cities?*

Read: Lewis, Culture of Poverty, ***Blackboard***

Read: Lamont, et. al, Reconsidering Culture and Poverty, ***Blackboard***

***Week 4 Spatial Politics: How do built environments reflect and maintain inequality?***

M 2/22: *What is the built environment? What is structural violence?*

Read: Rodgers and O’Neil, Infrastructural Violence, ***Blackboard***

W 2/24: FILM: THE PRUITT-IGOE MYTH ***(In-Class Film)(No reading)***

***Week 5 Urban Segregation: Who has access to the city? Is it equal for everyone?***

M 2/29: *How is urban segregation accomplished?*

Read: Coates, The Case for Reparations, ***Blackboard***

W 3/2: *What are the implications of these practices?*

Read: Harvey, Rights to the City, ***Blackboard***

***Week 6 Urban Fear: How does urban fear shape our experience in cities?***

M 3/7: *What is the difference between fear and danger?*

Read: Merry, Urban Fear, ***Blackboard***

W 3/9: *How do urban residents respond to fear?*

Read: Low, Urban Fear and Building the Fortress City, ***Blackboard***

***Week 7 Unregulated Landscapes: What is so informal about the informal economy?***

M 3/14: *What is the informal economy?*

Read: Bourgois*,* Office Work and the Crack Alternative*,* ***Blackboard***

W 3/16: FILM: RUBBLE KINGS ***(in-class) (No Reading)***

***Week 8 New Economies: What is the sharing economy and who is it helping?***

M 3/21*: What are the implications of the “sharing” economy?*

**SHARING ECONOMY DEBATE *(in-class)***

**MID-TERM EXAM DISTRIBUTED**

**W 3/23: NO CLASS *(No Reading)***

***Week 9 Gentrification: What is gentrification? How is gentrification a process?***

M 3/28: *What are the causes and effects of gentrification in urban areas?*

Read: Douglas, Neighborhood Identity at the Gentrification Frontier, ***Blackboard***

W 3/30: *Is gentrification a positive or negative factor impacting urban environments?*

Read: Boyd, The Downside of Racial Uplift, ***Blackboard***

**MID-TERM EXAM DUE**

***Week 10 Ethnography: How does ethnography help us understand people?***

M 4/4: What is an ethnography? What is ethnographic authority?

Read: Duneier, pp. 1-42, ***Sidewalk***

W 4/6: Why is ethnography good for studying people like the urban poor?

Read: Duneier, pp. 43-111, ***Sidewalk***

***Week 11 Why do people work in the informal economy of the street?***

M 4/11: *Who are workers in the informal economy of 6th Ave? Why are they there?*

Read: Duneier, pp. 114-154, ***Sidewalk***

W 4/13: *How do those in power regulate spaces? What are the effects on urban residents?*

Read: Duneier, pp. 156 – 228, ***Sidewalk***

***Week 12 Regulation: What is the responsibility of the police to urban residents?***

M 4/18: *What is the relationship between the vendors and law and order?*

Read: Duneier, pp. 231 – 289, ***Sidewalk***

W 4/20: *How do we construct decency in society? What do we do to those who violate it?*

Read: Duneier, pp. 293 – 330, ***Sidewalk***

***Week 13: Spring Break***

**M 4/25: NO CLASS *(No Reading)***

**W 4/27: NO CLASS *(No Reading)***

***Week 14 Student Presentations***

M 5/2: Student Presentations ***(No Reading)***

W 5/4: Student Presentations ***(No Reading)***

***Week 15 Student Presentations***

M 5/9: Student Presentations ***(No Reading)***

W 5/11: Student Presentations ***(No Reading)***

***Week 16: Wrap-Up: How do we use anthropology to solve real-world problems?***

M 5/16: *Where do anthropologists fit in a globalized world? What skills can they use?*

Read: McCurdy, Using Anthropology, ***Blackboard***

W 5/18: Course Wrap-Up/ **FINAL EXAMINATION DISTRIBUTED**

**FINAL EXAMINATION DUE: MONDAY 5/23 1PM, ROOM 3304B JAMES HALL**