

GEOG*4200: Social Life of Cities
PROVISIONAL Fall 2023

Prerequisites: GEOG*2260 (GEOG*3050 recommended)

Course Overview

This course examines the “socio-spatial” dynamics of city life. Focusing primarily on Toronto and cities in the Global North we consider ways in which social relations and processes configure city space and how the geography of the city, in turn, shapes social life. Using examples of homelessness, missing and murdered women, police surveillance of racialized groups, as well as processes like gentrification and renewal to understand the geography of urban spaces we ask a series of questions about: (1) how power relations are expressed in and through the built environment; and (2) how the built environment influences social relations. A number of themes run through the course material and will be central to our discussions, including:

- The connections between urban form and social functions (the “socio-spatial dialectic”);
- The expression and repression of social differences in urban environments;
- The shifting boundaries of public/private and insider/outsider;
- “Rights to the City:” investigating who can make decisions about the functions of the city, and who is able to access the resources it provides.

Course Objectives:

- To develop students’ knowledge of themes and topics in urban social geography;
- To encourage a critical intellectual engagement with the physical forms and social functions that are found in modern urban environments in the Global North and Toronto;
- To investigate the causes and consequences of urban change
- To develop research, reading, and writing skills, as well as critical thinking.

Course Format:

This course is conceived of as a forum for facilitating critical enquiry into the dynamics of contemporary urban social geography in Toronto and the Global North. The course will be conducted as a seminar: we meet twice a week for three hours in total and will spend a significant amount of our time in seminar-style discussion of course materials. The purpose of our meetings will be to discuss, share, and develop our understandings of the readings, as well as to distil, and together build an understanding of course themes and concepts. Each meeting you will be expected to **attend class prepared** to discuss readings and other seminar materials with your peers. This format requires close reading and significant preparation of texts before coming to class; work for which you will be evaluated and rewarded.

A significant part of our class time will be dedicated to student led discussion. Students will be assigned to small seminar groups for in-depth discussion of course readings. All students are expected to have completed the assigned readings/media before the class meetings, and to come prepared with observations, reflections, and questions from the readings. Student participation will be assessed through multiple means, including written reflections, real time discussion, and field trip participation. In general I will preface seminar discussion by providing a contextual overview of the weekly topics at the beginning of each class and overview of the main themes. At a few points in the semester we may have lectures or guest presentations in lieu of seminar discussions. These may be pre-recorded (asynchronous), or live (synchronous) as befits the circumstance. Please see each week of the syllabus for details. Written assignments will assume knowledge gained from both the texts, lectures and seminars, so class attendance is highly recommended. We will be using **Course link** as an electronic resource for announcements, accessing course materials, and submitting assignments.

Field Trip to Toronto & Course Fee:

Hands-on experiential and engaged learning is an important pedagogic and political element of this course. **On Friday November 10th** we will be visiting the city of Toronto for a full day in order to extend our learning about Gentrification, Settler colonialism and Indigenous resurgence in the city of Toronto. Our visit includes a half day tour by Indigenous practitioners about settler colonialism and Indigeneity in a specific part of Toronto. To support the cost of the tour and bus fee, the **department may ask the students to contribute to the cost of the trip (normally in the range of 20-30\$)**. I will communicate any fee to you ASAP, and in the meantime am committed to looking for ways to minimize or eliminate any cost to students. Should a fee be required and you are unable to contribute, please see me in confidence. No one will be prevented from attending the virtual tour. As the COVID pandemic evolves, changes to public health guidelines and/or health of practitioners/faculty may cause the cancellation of the field trip.

The field trip is mandatory. Only students with valid, approved considerations (family emergency, illness etc) will be provided an opportunity to make up the field trip reflection assignment associated with this field trip. You are expected to communicate this course requirement to ASAP to your other Friday instructors (and/or employers/ others to whom you have obligations to) and to pro-actively request any necessary accommodations. Let me know if there is anything I can do to help!

Evaluation:

Class participation & seminar engagement (Weeks 2-12): 40%

- active participation & in class discussions and activities: (10%)
- written submissions & seminar preparation: (30%)

Toronto Field Trip reflection assignment (due Friday Nov 17):5%

Virtual field Trip: 30%

- Group Virtual Field Trip, video (due Friday Nov 24): 10%
- Individual Analytical Essay (due Dec 1): 20%

Take-home final exam (due: Friday Dec 8,): 25%

Readings:

The readings for this course consist of peer-reviewed academic articles that are available in the University of Guelph library system, as well as relevant readings from the media and civil society. Access to these readings is available through Course link.

Course, Department, and University Policies

E-mail Communication:

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students. I check my e-mail once every weekday. Please expect that I will respond to your e-mails within 48-72 hours; if I do not, please resend your e-mail. If your question or concern is complicated, I may ask that we meet virtually during office hours or at another scheduled time to address the issue more comprehensively. In general, please do not ask complicated, course related questions over email. To ensure that your e-mail reaches my inbox, be sure to use a University of Guelph e-mail address. **Include the course code** and the nature of your question/comment in the subject line of the e-mail.

Copies of out-of-class assignments:

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Accessibility:

The University of Guelph is committed to creating a barrier-free environment. Providing services for students is a shared responsibility among students, faculty and administrators. This relationship is based on respect of individual rights, the dignity of the individual and the University community's shared commitment to an open and supportive learning environment. Students requiring service or accommodation, whether due to an identified, ongoing disability or a short-term disability should contact the Centre for Students with Disabilities as soon as possible. For more information, contact CSD at 519-824-4120 ext. 56208 or email csd@uoguelph.ca or see the website: <http://www.csd.uoguelph.ca/csd/>

When you cannot meet a course requirement: In cases of emergency or unforeseeable extenuating circumstances extensions will be granted. In all other circumstances extensions will only be granted for extenuating circumstances **prior** to the due date. Documentation will be required, however, During the W21 semester medical notes will not be required due to the COVID pandemic. Late work is penalized 5% per day.

Academic Misconduct:

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Plagiarism includes improper acknowledgement or citation of the work of others, the inclusion of false or misleading references, and the resubmission of work that has already been evaluated at the University. Prevent inadvertent academic dishonesty by carefully referencing and citing the sources you use in your work. For advice on proper referencing, please see the following:

<http://www.academicintegrity.uoguelph.ca/>

Recording of Materials:

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including virtual lectures and seminars—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate, or a guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources:

The Academic Calendars are the source of information about the University of Guelph's

procedures, policies, and regulations that apply to undergraduate, graduate, and diploma programs:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/index.cfm?index>