

# Urban Policy

SOC353H1-S

Department of Sociology

Winter 2022

Meeting Time: Thursdays, 12:15 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: Sidney Smith Hall 1086

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## Instructor

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## Introduction

Urban policies reflect how cities and urban areas are designed, built, and managed. They actively shape the ways in which people live. From transportation to housing, crime prevention to climate change, urban policies cover a number of areas of great concern. While cities are heralded as sites of innovation and economic activity, they are also sites of deep inequality. Cities across the world have produced different responses to address these issues. However, urban policy is not only shaped by policymakers; rather, many different institutions shape public policymaking. Given the range of issues facing urban areas, it is important to understand the policies are designed and implemented, and the multiple actors engaged.

## Course Description

Cities are where many of our most pressing social, economic, cultural and environmental problems are addressed: economic development, infrastructure expansion, and environmental sustainability are all subject to the policies and investment priorities of local and regional governments. In this course, we will examine different theories of public policymaking, their intended and unintended consequences, and their ability to address pressing urban issues. This course focuses primarily on cities in the U.S. and Canada, but will also consider the ways in which cities elsewhere face similar or different conditions.

## Course Objectives

- To understand the public policymaking process across different contexts
- To examine the range of institutional actors engaged in shaping urban policy
- To understand the potential intended and unintended consequences of policymaking
- To apply theoretical concepts of governance to case studies across a range of issues around the world

## **Prerequisites**

This is a program-only course and is restricted to sociology majors and specialists. Completion of SOC201H1, SOC202H1, SOC204H1 plus two of the following (1.0 FCE): SOC251H1, SOC252H1, SOC254H1. Students without this prerequisite will be removed from the course.

## **Required Text(s)**

Alex Schafran, Matthew Noah Smith, and Stephen Hall. 2020. *The Spatial Contract: A New Politics of Provision for an Urbanized Planet*. Manchester University Press.

Students are required to buy, rent or borrow the required book. All other readings will be posted on Quercus for their viewing. It is the student's responsibility to download and review all assigned material PRIOR TO CLASS. Additional readings and course materials may be assigned, but at no cost to the student. All additional material can be downloaded from Quercus as well.

## **Course Grading**

The University of Toronto Grading Scheme will be used to evaluate individual assignments as well as the overall grade for each student in this class. For more information, please review the university's grading practices policy:

<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/grading-practices-policy-university-assessment-and-january-1-2020>.

## **Course Evaluations**

Each student's grade will be based on four areas. The purpose of designing the course in this manner is to allow students to the opportunity to engage in different areas of evaluation including traditional examinations and diverse writing assignments. The following lists depicts the course breakdown:

### ***I. Discussion Questions (15%)***

A good question is both answerable and challenging. It will inspire analysis, synthesis, interpretation, and critical thinking. A discussion question that is truly great is challenging and inspires people to think critically and respond with well thought out answers. These questions are a framework for creating prompts that encourage inquiry, challenge us to think bigger and connect the classroom to real world ideas and events. For this course, you are to provide one discussion question each week (unless otherwise instructed). Discussion questions are due Wednesday by 5 PM. You are also expected to respond to one other discussion question posed by your peers. Responses to your peers' questions are due Thursdays at 12 PM (unless otherwise instructed). Discussion questions are only due on days where new content is required. Discussion questions should not exceed 125 words. Please review the course schedule and Quercus for further clarification.

## ***II. Midterm Exam (30%)***

There will be one online exam covering theories and concepts introduced in the course up to that point in time. You will have one week to complete this exam. The exam will include a series of questions such as fill-in-the-black, multiple choice, true/false, and short answer. The exam will be delivered through Quercus allowing each student to take the exam from any location. While students cannot consult each other regarding the exam, they are allowed to review any of the required readings while taking the exam. The purpose is the exam is not to test memorization but familiarity with theories, concepts, and approaches to understanding urban policy. Additional information will be given by February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

## ***II. Group Project with Community Partner (30%)***

The term, the class will assist a research project with Toronto Community Housing Corporation, the local housing authority overseeing housing assistance across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The class will be divided into teams to cover different aspects of the project. This will include a literature review, organizational history, policy overview, data collection and analysis, and report design. Each student will be named as a research assistance and noted in the report. Each group will present their findings on March 29<sup>th</sup> to the class. Given that most groups will be working on their own, progress meetings will be held with the instructor in order to make sure that each group is contributing to a cohesive deliverable to the organization. Students will offer peer grades that will account for a portion of their overall grade for this section. Additional guidelines will be given and discussed by March 8<sup>th</sup>.

## ***III. Critical Book Review (25%)***

A book review in itself does not only tell you what a book is about, but also whether it achieves what it is trying to do. Therefore, a book review is more than a summary of the content (even though this is an important component), but a critical analysis of the book and your reactions to it. It presents several areas for inquiry.

Here are a series of questions to focus your thinking:

1. What is the thesis—or main argument—of each book? If the author wanted you to get one idea from the book, what would it be? How does it compare or contrast to the world you know? What has the book accomplished?
2. What exactly is the subject or topic of each book? Does the author cover the subject adequately? Does the author cover all aspects of the subject in a balanced fashion? Can you detect any biases? What is the approach to the subject [topical, analytical, chronological, descriptive]?
3. How does the author of each book support his or her argument? What evidence [i.e., sources cited and data collection] does each author use to prove his or her point? Do you find that evidence convincing? Why or why not? Does any of the author's information [or conclusions]

conflict with other books you've read, courses you've taken, or just previous assumptions you had about the research problem under study?

4. How does the author structure his or her argument? What are the parts that make up the whole? Does the argument make sense to you? Does it persuade you? Why or why not? Were there any questions left unanswered? Were limitations to the study effectively addressed?

5. How has each book helped you understand the subject? Would you recommend the books to others? Why or why not?

The format should be Times New Roman, 12 pt. font with 1-inch margins, double – spaced using ASA citation formatting. Papers should not exceed 1,000 words excluding references. Papers should be typed and saved as a word document and then uploaded to Quercus. Late submissions will not be accepted. Additional information and examples regarding the book review will be given by Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>. All papers are due Tuesday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, by 12 PM.

### **Grading Rationale**

For the written assignments, I consider an “A” to denote work of excellence, rising above the merely sufficient and competent to incorporate new insights as well as creative and critical thinking. It will, of course, be well written and demonstrate depth of thought and clarity of conception. A “B” denotes a mastery of the concepts and issues, competent and well-written work. A “C” is given for work with logical inconsistencies, which fails to adequately explore all the arguments related to the topic, which has errors of fact, or which is badly written and poorly organized or conceptualized. A “D” is for work that fails to meet even these minimal standards. An “NC” is for work of exceedingly poor quality, including work that is plagiarized, unintelligible, and/or handed in extremely late. There is no extra credit offered in this course and no replacement assignments will be entertained.

### **Turnitin**

Students agree that, by taking this course, all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of those papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service is described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Assignments not submitted through Turnitin will receive a grade of zero (0 %) unless students instead provide, along with their exams, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own. The alternative (not submitting via Turnitin) is in place because, strictly speaking, using Turnitin is voluntary for students at the University of Toronto.

### **Plagiarism**

Be careful to avoid plagiarism. It is a serious academic offense with serious penalties (see

the “Code of Behavior on Academic Matters”). If you are using someone else’s ideas, do not present them as your own. Give proper references if you are using somebody else’s ideas, and use quotation marks if you are quoting. When in doubt, it is always safer to over-reference --you are not going to be punished for that. Please also be aware that turning in an old paper, or large parts thereof, for credit in a second (or third etc.) course, is considered an academic offense that results in students being referred off to the Office of Academic Integrity.

### **Accessibility Needs**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

### **Policies for Lateness and Absences**

Late submissions will not be accepted. Class lateness without prior notice will not be accepted. If students plan to be absent from any class, they are to report the absence to the professor as soon as possible. Emergency situations will be evaluated by the professors of this course in order to ascertain the necessary next course of action. This includes sickness/illness, family emergencies, etc. Please be advised that absences related to extracurricular activities are not considered emergency situations. Students involved in such activities should communicate their absences to the professor by the first day of the course.

### **Policy Regarding Changes to the Syllabus**

As the instructor, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus in order to provide a better learning environment to the students. All changes will be made with advanced notice at no additional costs to the students. Concerns or issues with changes to the syllabus should be addressed to me as soon as possible so a suitable alternative can be determined.

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## **Course Schedule**

### **January 13<sup>th</sup> – Introduction and Course Requirements**

- Introductions
- Review of Course Syllabus
- Video: “[How to Make an Attractive City.](#)” *The School of Life*. 2015, January 26.

### **January 20<sup>th</sup> – Cities and Urban Life**

- Louis Wirth. “Urbanism as a way of life.” *The City Reader*. **Q**
- Borer, Michael Ian. 2013. "Being in the city: The sociology of urban experiences." *Sociology Compass* 7(11): 965-983.
- Molotch, Harvey. “The city as a growth machine: Toward a political economy of place.” *The City Reader*. **Q**
- **Discussion Questions Due**

### **January 27<sup>th</sup> – Power, Politics & Policymaking**

- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2017. *The State of National Urban Policy in Canada*. Q
- Friendly, Abigail. 2016. "National Urban Policy: A Roadmap for Canadian Cities." *IMFG Perspectives* 14. Q
- Harvey, David. "Contested cities: Social process and spatial form." *The City Reader*. Q
- Trounstone, Jessica. 2010. "Representation and accountability in cities." *Annual Review of Political Science* 13: 407-423.
- **Discussion Questions Due**

### **February 3<sup>rd</sup> – Governmental and Non-Governmental Policy Actors**

- McGregor, Michael, and Zachary Spicer. 2016. "The Canadian homevoter: Property values and municipal politics in Canada." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 38(1): 123-139.
- Fraser, James C., and Edward L. Kick. 2014. "Governing urban restructuring with city-building nonprofits." *Environment and Planning A* 46(6): 1445-1461.
- Zeemering, Eric S. 2019. "An agenda for comparing local governance and institutional collective action in Canada and the United States." *Urban Affairs Review* 55(3): 858-886.
- **Discussion Questions Due**

### **February 10<sup>th</sup> – Urban Development Strategies**

- Crane, Randall, and Michael Manville. 2008. "People or place? Revisiting the who versus the where of urban development." *Land Lines* 20(3): 2-7.
- Florida, Richard. "The Creative Class." *The City Reader*. Q
- Brenner, Neil, and Roger Keil. "From Global Cities to Globalized Urbanization" *The City Reader*. Q
- **Discussion Questions Due**
- **Midterm Review**

### **February 17<sup>th</sup> – Midterm Exam**

- **Midterms must be completed by Wednesday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> by 5 PM**

### **February 24<sup>th</sup> – Reading Week (No Class)**

### **March 3<sup>rd</sup> – Housing Insecurity**

- Wetzstein, Steffen. 2017. "The global urban housing affordability crisis." *Urban Studies* 54(14): 3159-3177.
- Desmond, Matthew. 2012. "Eviction and the reproduction of urban poverty." *American Journal of Sociology* 118(1): 88-133.
- Dantzler, Prentiss A., and Aja D. Reynolds. 2020. "Making our way home: Housing policy, racial capitalism, and reparations." *Journal of World-Systems Research* 26(2): 155-167.
- **Discussion Questions Due**

### **March 10<sup>th</sup> – Housing Assistance Across the GTA**

- Chum, Antony. 2015. "The impact of gentrification on residential evictions." *Urban Geography* 36(7): 1083-1098.
- Leon, Scott, and James Iveniuk. 2020, August. "Forced out: Evictions, race, and poverty in Toronto." *Wellesley Institute*. Q
- Leon, Scott. 2021. "Where eviction applications are filed: Ward distribution of eviction applications in Toronto." *Wellesley Institute*. Q
- **Discussion Questions Due**

**March 17<sup>th</sup> – Group Project Progress Meetings**

**March 24<sup>th</sup> – Group Project Presentations**

**March 31<sup>st</sup> – Critical Book Reviews Due**

- Authors Meet Critics and In-Class Discussion

**April 7<sup>th</sup> – Course Wrap-Up**

- In-Class Discussion