

# METHODS IN URBAN PRACTICE

**SCHOL-GG 2802/NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study  
Spring 2020**

**Wednesday, 12:30-1:45pm  
Location: 1 Washington Place, Rm. 620**

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**Course Web Site: <https://wp.nyu.edu/urbanpracticemethods/>**

## DESCRIPTION

What does it mean to advocate for social justice in the city? Ultimately, what does a just city look like? In this course we will explore these questions as they reveal themselves both in scholarship and in practice. Focusing on some of the methods of inquiry that constitute the academic researcher's toolkit -- participant observation, ethnography, archival research, survey design, interviewing, mapping -- you will develop a set of concrete skills to take with you as you prepare to work with urban social justice organizations in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. At the same time, we will reflect as a group on broader, animating concepts such as the "right to the city," urbanization, democracy, gentrification, urban planning, resilience, and preservation. The course will culminate in a scholarly, actionable, and flexible research plan that will help ground you for your summer research. Readings for this course may include David Harvey's "The Right to the City", Ananya Roy's "The 21st Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory", Pierre Bourdieu's "Understanding", Amy Starecheski's *Ours to Lose*, and Eve Tuck's "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities."

## Our goals for this course are to:

- ❖ Gain some grounding in foundational texts in urban studies and *critical* urban studies to help us frame the guiding questions for our summer research.
- ❖ Gain some grounding in the concept of engaged research to help insure that we bring an ethical compass into the research we conduct.
- ❖ Practice and discuss some of the research methods that will inform our work over the summer.

## REQUIRED TEXTS:

Readings are downloadable in PDF form or via web links from the course web site.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND GRADING

- 1) **Class Participation:** Attendance, thoughtful reading, and active participation in class discussions are essential components of the seminar format. Please come to class prepared to contribute fully to discussions. You may find it especially helpful to take notes as you read and come to class with a few points and/or questions you would like to address. **(25%)**
- 2) **Blog Posts (5x):** At your own pace and discretion, you are required to submit at least five blog posts during the semester. You may choose which of the 10 eligible weeks of the semester you will submit a post. Each post will respond to the readings for that week and cover such elements as argument, assessment of argument, relevance to the present, and relevance to other assigned readings. More information on this assignment will be shared separately. All blog posts will be made to the class web site and should be between 500 and 750 words. The posts will be graded per submission, i.e. 10% each for 5 posts **(50%)**
- 3) **Research Plan:** While no research plan can anticipate perfectly what happens once you are on-site—and while engaged research requires substantive direction and discussion with your community partner—you will complete this semester with a research plan that makes reference to relevant scholarship, expected methods of research, and a timeline for completion of research “deliverables” based on what you believe your work for the summer will entail. This research plan is likely to be quite speculative, but is best practice nevertheless. **(25%)**

Generally, I will be grading you on how well you are able to articulate and synthesize the ideas shared in class, in your readings, and in our projects. I will also be watching for your ability to meet the goals I have outlined above. You may want to keep a few other pointers in mind to ensure that you meet the expectations of this course:

- **Do not turn in work late.** If you anticipate needing extra time for an assignment, you must contact me in advance with a good reason. If you do turn in late work without contacting me first, it not only must be accompanied by an appropriate, documented explanation, but you should expect your grade to reflect the tardiness of the assignment.
- **Be organized.** While it will be tempting to slack on some of the assignments during slow weeks, you will surely suffer during weeks when we have heavier reading and assignments due. Try to keep to the syllabus and work ahead if you are able.
- **Don't be late for class.** It's distracting and it will have a negative impact on your grade. (Tardiness will result in a ½ absence.)
- **Don't miss class.** More than 2 unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade for the course. Excused absences must be accompanied by a doctor's note,

email *to me* from your adviser or class adviser, or face-to-face meeting with me in my office.

- **Respect the time, energy, and space of our fellow classmates and our community collaborators.** This course is partly intended to be a cohort building project that allows you all to learn alongside and from one another. Please give everyone the respect they deserve by **being on-time** for class meetings and potential off-site visits, listening with compassion, and being a responsible participant in this process

#### **A NOTE ON INCOMPLETES**

Incompletes will not be granted unless you approach me with a serious, well-documented excuse (i.e. doctor's note and the like.) If I do agree to a grade of incomplete, you will be expected to complete all of the necessary work by the date that I set. That said, the likelihood if you participating in the summer portion of the fellowship may be severely compromised if you find yourself in need of a grade of incomplete.

#### **A NOTE ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

As a Fellow in Urban Practice you belong to an interdisciplinary community of scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School in particular include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website for a full description of the academic integrity policy, which will be followed in this course.

[<https://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policies1/academic-integrity.html>]

#### **A NOTE ON PERSONAL INTEGRITY**

Courses built on a model of community-engaged pedagogy and research, like this one, involve more stakeholders than just the professor (me) and students (you.) We will be working with real people whose real lives are shaped by a variety of pressures. While I, of course, expect you to present yourselves respectfully and with integrity, and honor the experiences and integrity of our collaborators, I hope that you will have high standards for yourselves in this context as well.

#### **A NOTE ON RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

Students who anticipate being absent because of any religious observance should notify me in advance so we can make arrangements for any work that may be missed. This is in accordance with University Policy. Please let me know if you have any questions.

#### **A NOTE ON SYLLABUS CHANGES**

You should consider the schedule below a work in progress. While I expect to keep to the assignments as listed, I may make changes from time to time to reflect the workload. However, I will notify you well in advance of any changes.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### **January 29: Introduction**

### **February 5: Urban Ecology**

Robert Park, "The City: Suggestions for an Investigation of Human Behavior in the City Environment"

Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life"

### **February 12: Right to the City**

David Harvey. "The Right to the City"

Mark Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre: The Right to the City and its Urban Politics of the Inhabitant"

### **February 19: The Global City**

Saskia Sassen, "The Global City: Introducing a Concept"

Ananya Roy "The 21st-Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory"

### **February 26: New Urban Agenda**

*UN Habitat III: New Urban Agenda*

### **March 4: Community Engaged Research**

Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor, "Chapter One: Can't We All Just Get Along?" and "Struggle and the City: Conflict Informed Collaboration" in *From Equity, Growth, and Community: What the Nation Can Learn from America's Metro Areas*

### **March 11: Institutionalized Ethics**

IRB training

### **March 18: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK**

## **March 25: Who is Your Community Partner?**

Readings to contextualize individual community partnerships (TBD)

## **April 1: Positionality and Methodology**

Eve Ewing, "Appendix: Methodological and Theoretical Notes", *Ghosts in the Schoolyard: Racism and School Closings on Chicago's South Side*,

Eve Tuck, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities"

## **April 8: Social Science Practice**

Kristin Luker, "Chapter One: Salsa Dancing? In the Social Sciences?" and "Field (and Other) Methods" in *Salsa Dancing into the Social Sciences: Research in an Age of Info-Glut*

Pierre Bourdieu, "Understanding"

## **April 15: Humanistic Social Sciences Practice**

Amy Starecheski, Chapter 2, "Who Deserves Housing? The Battle for East Thirteenth Street," *Ours to Lose: When Squatters Became Homeowners in New York City* (2016)

## **April 22: Arts and Humanities Practice**

Allison Caruth, "Urban Ecologies and Social Practice Art"

Sonya Childress, "Beyond Empathy"

<https://medium.com/@firelightmedia/beyond-empathy-ad6b5ad8a1d8>

Nyssa Chow, "Still.Life: The Story of Her Skin"

<https://still-life-project.com/>

**April 29:** Preparation for Travel

**May 6: Papers Due and Last Questions**