

Fall 2015

## **ANTH 4775**

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*University of New Orleans*

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# Urban Anthropology

## Culture, Economics, and Politics in New Orleans, 10 Years after the Floods

**ANTH 4775 Section 1, Fall 2015**

T/Th 2-3:15pm MH 264

Office: MH 334

Office Hours: T/Th 11am-12 and 1pm-2pm, W 10am-2pm,  
or by appointment.

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**In the wake of Katrina, New Orleans seemed doomed to remain a social and ecological disaster zone. Has the city now become a landscape of hope?** New Orleans and the surrounding region were devastated in ways that seemed almost unimaginable. The process of rebuilding and repopulating the city has not been smooth. The BP oil spew added a potentially devastating dimension to the region's difficulties. Many of the institutions and structures that might have played a key role have not lived up to expectations and much remains to be done. At the same time, imaginative use of resources by local groups and determined organization at the grassroots level—along with city, state, and federal help—has resulted in unexpected development in some areas. Is this a result of the city's unique culture? What can we learn about cities and culture from the failures of institutions and the flourishing of "civil society" in the new New Orleans? In this class, we will use urban social theory and ethnographic research to approach this question. We live in an urban age, one in which the majority of people in most countries live in or near cities. Yet we also live in an age in which the very idea of urban life provokes images of alienation and danger. We will look at the social processes and practices that make urban life distinct, as well as the ideologies that shape the way people think about cities.

**Even before the storm, New Orleans was something of a disaster, with high rates of poverty, crime, racism and despair.** These problems are not unique to New Orleans, but the disaster and recovery have made them more evident here than elsewhere. Can we make this a better city than it was? We will examine urban research from around the world, putting New Orleans in a comparative context. We will learn how anthropologists have explored the meaning of community in Tokyo and Barcelona, the lives of the urban poor in Moscow and Paris, or recovery from war and disaster in Berlin and Kobe. We will draw on our readings in urban social theory to develop our own research projects in New Orleans. Students in this class will learn—from both theory and practice—how ethnographic research methods can provide unique insights into urban life. We will draw on those experiences in order to make sense of—and contribute to—the rebuilding of New Orleans.

In this class, you will learn to analyze and evaluate claims about authenticity and culture in urban environments. You will be able to discuss, explain, and debate theories of urban poverty, crime, and policing. You will learn to evaluate claims made about development and arguments surrounding gentrification. You will discuss the role of immigration, ethnicity, and race in shaping urban life. You will learn to use ethnographic research methods. Above all, you will learn to ask critical questions that should enhance your ability to participate in the ongoing development of this city, a decade after the floods.

### Course Requirements

The course is organized in a seminar format with weekly discussions based on the readings, research exercises and projects. Each reading assignment should be completed before the first class meeting of the week it is to be discussed (see below).

You will be graded on:

- Class participation (attendance, participation in discussions), worth 10% of your grade.
- 10 reading briefs (250-300 words), worth 20% of your grade.

- A two part field research project, the first part worth 10% of your grade, the second worth 20%.
- 1 midterm exam, worth 20% of your grade.
- 1 final examination, worth 20% of your grade.

**Attendance is mandatory.** Except for severe emergencies, each absence beyond the first 2 will reduce your grade by one full grade. Because this is a seminar, this class cannot succeed without the full participation of all students. If you cannot commit to regular attendance, please do not take the class.

## Grades

Standards for each assignment will be specified with those assignments. Generally, your participation grade will reflect both regular attendance (but see the policy above) and the extent to which you participate in class discussions. Briefings will be graded on a pass/fail basis. The midterm, and final exam essays will be graded for the extent to which they respond to the specific assignment. Essays that reflect a basic understanding of materials will generally receive a C, while those that show a thorough understanding of the materials—readings, lectures and class discussions—will receive a B, and work that shows some critical insight into the material will receive an A. *The key thing to keep in mind is that your objective in most assignments is to demonstrate your engagement with the course material, including readings, lectures, and discussions.* Work that does not do that at all will receive a D (for work that somewhat attempts to respond to the assignment) or F (for work that fails completely to address the assignment). The two part field research project grading will be explained when the assignment is distributed in class.

## Academic Integrity

Honesty and respect for your work and for the work of others are essential to your success in this course and in university life in general. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Proper social science citation methods will be required on essays. For further details on academic integrity, see the UNO Office of Student Affairs web site, at <http://www.uno.edu/studentaffairs/>.

## Disabilities

I will do my best to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please feel free to contact me about your needs. If you have a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services to register and follow their procedures. They can be reached at 504-280-6222 or through their web site, <http://ods.uno.edu/>.

## Texts

The following books are available for purchase in the UNO bookstore as well as through on-line bookstores. All other listed readings will be available on the course Moodle site or through UNO's library databases. (*The ISBN listed here is for the paper format of each book. Electronic formats may have a different ISBN.*)

### Required Texts

Caldwell, Melissa. 2004. *Not by Bread Alone: Social Support in the New Russia*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520238763

Ferguson, James. 1999. *Expectations of Modernity: Myths and Meanings of Urban Life on the Zambian Copperbelt*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN: 9780520217027

Goffman, Alice. 2014. *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*. New York: Picador. ISBN: 9781250065667

Truitt, Allison J. 2013. *Dreaming of Money in Ho Chi Minh City*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. ISBN: 9780295992747

Zukin, Sharon. 2010. *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780199794461

### ***Recommended Text***

Davila, Arlene. 2012. *Culture Works: Space, Value, and Mobility Across the Neoliberal Americas*. New York: New York University Press. ISBN: 9780814744307

## **The Program**

*Except for the books listed above, all articles will be available on-line, under course documents on the course Moodle site or through UNO's library databases. Readings are subject to change!*

## **Introduction: Imagining the City/Imagining New Orleans**

**8/20, 8/25-8/27**

Toledano, Benjamin. 2007. New Orleans: An Autopsy. *Louisiana Cultural Vistas*. 18(4):82-91.

Cannon, Charles W. 2008. "Rumors of My Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated." *Louisiana Cultural Vistas*. 19(1):88-91.

Davis, Mike. 2006. Fear and Money in Dubai. *New Left Review*. 41:46-68.

Florida, Richard. 2002. The Rise of the Creative Class. *Washington Monthly*. 34(5):15-25.

*Recommended:* Lemann, Nicholas. 2011. Get Out of Town: Has the Celebration of Cities Gone Too Far? *The New Yorker*.

## **Theories and Dilemmas of Urban Research**

**9/1-9/3**

Wirth, Louis. 1938. Urbanism as a Way of Life. *American Journal of Sociology*. 44(1):1-24.

Simmel, Georg. 1950. The Metropolis and Mental Life. Adapted by D. Weinstein from Kurt Wolff (Trans.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York: Free Press, pp. 409-424.

Gupta, Akhil and James Ferguson. 1992. Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference. *Cultural Anthropology*. 7(1):6-23.

Reed, Adam. 2008. 'Blog This': surfing the metropolis and the method of London. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 14:391-406.

Valverde, Mariana. 2009. Laws of the Street. *City & Society*. 21(2):163-181.

*Recommended:* Low, Setha M. 1996. The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City. *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 25: 383-409.

## **Cities, Modern and Postmodern**

**9/8-9/10**

Ferguson, chapters 1-3.

Hoffman, Danny. 2007. The City as Barracks: Freetown, Monrovia, and the Organization of Violence in Postcolonial African Cities. *Cultural Anthropology*. 22(3): 400-428.

**9/15-9/17**

Ferguson, chapter 4 - postscript.

Bielo, James. 2011. Purity, danger, and redemption: Notes on urban missional evangelicals. *American Ethnologist*. 38(2):267-280.

## **The City and the Market**

**9/22 - 9/24**

Truitt, Introduction, chapters 1-3.

Gagné, Nana Okura. 2011. Eating local in a U.S. city: Reconstructing “community”—a third place—in a global neoliberal economy. *American Ethnologist*. 38(2):281-293.

*Recommended:* Warner, Coleman. 2001. Freret's Century: Growth, Identity, and Loss in a New Orleans Neighborhood. *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*. 42(3):323-358.

**9/29-10/1**

***Field Project part 1 due, 10/1.***

Truitt, chapters 4-6, epilogue.

*Recommended:* Scheld, Suzanne. 2003. The City in a Shoe: Redefining Urban Africa Through Sebago Footwear Consumption. *City & Society*. 15(1):109-130.

## **Urban Legends: Culture, Poverty, Fear and Disorder**

**10/6-10/8**

***Mid-Term Exam distributed, 10/6.***

Goffman, prologue, preface, chapters 1-4.

Bourgois, Philippe. 2002. Understanding Inner City Poverty: Resistance and Self-Destruction Under U.S. Apartheid. Jeremy MacClancy, ed. *Exotic No More: Anthropology on the Front Lines*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Pp. 15-32.

Wacquant, Loïc. 1997. Three pernicious premises in the study of the American ghetto. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. 21(2):341-353.

*Recommended:* Newman, Katherine. 2001. Hard Times on 125th Street: Harlem's Poor Confront Welfare Reform. *American Anthropologist*. 103(3):762-778.

*Recommended:* Harvey, David L. and Michael H. Reed. 1996. The Culture of Poverty: An Ideological Analysis. *Sociological Perspectives*. 39(4):465-495.

**10/13**

***Mid-Term Exam Essay due, 10/13.***

Goffman, chapters 5-7, conclusion, epilogue, appendix.

Ran-Rubin, Michal. 2008. Keeping the Peace: A Tale of Murder and Morality in Postapartheid South Africa. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*. 31(2):243-263.

*Recommended:* Ossman, Susan and Susan Terrio. 2006. The French Riots: Questioning Spaces of Surveillance and Sovereignty. *International Migration*. 44(2):5-21.

## **Making Do, Making Community**

**10/20-10/22**

Caldwell, Preface, chapters 1-3.

di Leonardo, Micaela. 2006. There's No Place Like Home: Domestic Domains and Urban Imaginaries in New Haven, Connecticut. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. 13:33-52.

Pérez, Ramona L. 2006. The Misunderstanding of Mexican Community Life in Urban Apartment Space: A Case Study in Applied Anthropology and Community Policing. *City & Society*. 18(2): 232-259.

**10/27-10/29**

Caldwell, chapters 4-7, epilogue.

*Recommended:* Maskovsky, Jeff. 2006. Governing the "New Hometowns": Race, Power, and Neighborhood Participation in the New Inner City. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. 13:73-99.

*Recommended:* Barrios, Roberto E. 2010. You Found Us Doing This, This Is Our Way: Criminalizing Second Lines, Super Sunday, and Habitus in Post-Katrina New Orleans. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. 17:586-612.

## Cultural Politics and Urban Space

11/3-11/5

Boyd, Michelle. 2005. The Downside of Racial Uplift: the meaning of gentrification in an African American neighborhood. *City & Society*. 17(2):265-288.

Low, Setha. 2009. Maintaining Whiteness: The Fear of Others and Niceness. *Transforming Anthropology*. 17(2):79-92.

Versluys, Eline. 2008. Multilingualism and the City: The Construction of Urban Identities in Dakar (Senegal). *City & Society*. 20(2):282-300.

Truitt, Allison. 2012. The Viet Village Urban Farm and the Politics of Neighborhood Viability in Post-Katrina New Orleans. *City and Society*. 24(3):321-338.

*Recommended:* Davila, Introduction, chapters 1-4.

*Recommended:* Drever, Anita. 2008. New Orleans: a re-emerging Latino destination city. *Journal of Cultural Geography*. 25(3):287-303.

11/10-11/12

Williams, Brett. 2006. The Paradox of Parks. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. 13:139-171.

Brumann, Christoph. 2009. Outside the glass case: The social life of urban heritage in Kyoto. *American Ethnologist*. 36(2): 276–299.

James, Jason. 2006. Undoing Trauma: Reconstructing the Church of Our Lady in Dresden. *Ethos*. 34(2):244-272.

Breunlin, Rachel and Helen A. Regis. 2006. Putting the Ninth Ward on the Map: Race, Place, and Transformation in Desire, New Orleans. *American Anthropologist*. 108(4):744-764.

*Recommended:* Davila, chapters 5-7, conclusion.

## The Authentic City?

11/17-11/19

Zukin, preface, introduction, chapters 1-3.

Beriss, David. 2012. Red Beans and Rebuilding: An Iconic Dish, Memory, and Culture in New Orleans. Wilk, Richard and Livia Barbosa, eds. *Rice and Beans: A Unique Dish in a Hundred Places*. London: Berg. pp. 241-263.

*Recommended:* Lipsitz, George. 2006. Learning from New Orleans: The Social Warrant of Hostile Privatism and Competitive Consumer Citizenship. *Cultural Anthropology*. 21(3): 451–468.

*Recommended:* Bruner, Edward M. 1994 Abraham Lincoln as Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism. *American Anthropologist*. 96(2):397-415.

**11/24**

Zukin, chapters 4-6, conclusion.

Nisbett, Nicholas. 2007. Friendship, Consumption, Morality: Practising Identity, Negotiating Hierarchy in Middle-Class Bangalore. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. 13:935-950.

## **Urban Futures/New Orleans Future?**

**12/1 - 12/3**

***Field Analysis part 2, due 12/1.***

Holston, James. 2009. Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries. *City & Society*. 21(2):245-267.

Rao, Ursula. 2010. Making the Global City: Urban Citizenship at the Margins of Delhi. *Ethnos*. 75(4): 402-424.

Gregory, Steven. 2013. The Radiant University: Space, Urban Redevelopment, and the Public Good. *City & Society*. 25(1):47-69.

***Final Exam distributed 12/3.***

***Final Exam due, 12/10.***