

**STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**COURSE:**

**NEIGHBORHOOD RESEARCH I AND II SOC593 STJ, AND SOC481 STJ, A CROSS-  
LISTED UNDERGRAD AND GRAD CLASS, FOR FALL 2003 AND SPRING 2004**

**Fall 2003: August 25<sup>th</sup>-- December 8<sup>th</sup> (last day of lectures)**

**Tuesdays 9:30 to 12:10 Park Hall 470**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:**

This is an academic research course within which registered students will also serve as research assistants and key study personnel to gather, clean, and analyze data as part of a research project entitled *The Buffalo Area Neighborhood Study (BANS)*. The main objective of this study is as follows: To gather data that will be used to publish scholarly materials (book(s) and papers) on the relationships between neighborhood *contents* and neighborhood *actions*. The data collection will take place within and across various neighborhoods in the Buffalo Metropolitan Area.

Those neighborhoods will vary considerably in terms of race, class, stability, levels of crime and other social problems. Students will be trained on how to conduct research in these various types of neighborhoods, and their skills will be utilized to generate relevant data gathering, analyses, and reports. Methods of data collection will include archival review, ethnography, interviews, GIS, and systematic social observation, which will require students to conduct hands-on data collection in various neighborhoods (including high crime neighborhoods) in the Buffalo Metropolitan Area.

Conducting research in such neighborhoods means that there are potential risks involved in serving as a research assistant or key study personnel in this study. These risks are discussed in

the IRB Research Protocol which will be handed to each student along with the course syllabus, on the first day of class or soon thereafter. The protocol also explains the efforts that will be made to minimize those associated risks. These issues and procedures are also listed in the final section of this syllabus entitled, **“Potential Risks to Research Assistants and Key Study Personnel and how they will be Minimized.”** We will discuss those issues in great detail on the first day of class.

After reviewing the information, since much of the class grade will be based on conducting hands-on research as a research assistant or key study personnel, students who do not wish to serve in those capacities are asked to withdraw from the class. The consent for participating as research assistants or key study personnel will be verbal.

There is no way to receive a satisfactory grade in this class if you do not agree to serve as a research assistant or key study personnel. This is because a major part’s final grade will be based on hands-on tasks and research.

Thus, there are two main sections to this class: 1) a classroom and academic component that will teach students how to conduct neighborhood research, and 2) hands-on data collection, analyses and report preparation.

Students are, therefore, being asked to volunteer to be research assistants and key study personnel to gather data for this study. If you are already registered for the course and do not wish to serve in these capacities, please drop the class. If you do not wish to participate as a research assistant or key study personnel and have not been registered, please do not register for this course. Therefore, students who remain in this class will be the ones who have volunteered to serve as research assistants or key study personnel in the study.

The academic course portion of this class requires students to receive grades that are based on completion of written and verbal presentations that derive from their readings of assigned academic literature. Students will also be graded on their performances as research assistants: that is to say, on the “hands-on” tasks and research that they will conduct by themselves or as part of an organ of the research team. The expected assignments and grading scheme will be discussed later in this syllabus but may be subject to slight modifications as the research project advances.

### **Skills to be learned by Graduate and Undergraduate Students**

Students will learn the following:

- 1) How to develop original research questions that are based on limitations identified in current scholarly knowledge on neighborhood dynamics;
- 2) How to develop a sound “research design” that serves as a vehicle through which the necessary data can be carefully gathered;
- 3) How to prepare a research budget and time schedule.
- 4) How to function as a part of a research team;
- 5) How to prepare for neighborhood research (special emphasis on research ethics).
- 6) How to gain access to neighborhoods;
- 7) How to gather and store sensitive data;
- 8) How to clean and analyze sensitive data;
- 9) How to prepare reports and papers on sensitive data;

**Graduate students will receive special training on the following responsibilities:**

- 1) How to select, organize, and manage a research team;
- 2) How to develop a system to monitor data gathering;
- 3) How to develop a system to store sensitive data;
- 4) How to manage the cleaning and analysis of sensitive data;
- 5) How to organize a research team to produce sub-reports that will be used (by that graduate student) to prepare a final team report, or a publishable academic paper.

**Undergraduate students will receive special training on the following responsibilities:**

- 1) How to function as an organ of a research team;
- 2) How to carefully gather and store sensitive research data;
- 3) How to clean and analyze sensitive data;
- 4) How to prepare summary reports on data gathered.

This course will also train students on how to use cutting-edge techniques to gather neighborhood data. Special emphasis is being placed on multi-methods research. Therefore, students will be trained to use the following modules for data gathering:

- 1) Systematic Social Observation (the use of high tech digital video cameras with wide-angle lens to record neighborhood facades);
- 2) Photography (the generation of still photos that quickly and clearly depict particular neighborhood phenomena);
- 3) Ethnography (The in-person observation of neighborhood life as it unfolds in real time);
- 4) Survey research (the use of aggregated demographic and other data);
- 5) Archival review (examples are official crime statistics, and historical data);
- 6) Focus groups and interviews with neighborhood experts (persons who are very knowledgeable about historical and contemporary neighborhood dynamics).

**Overall Research Ambition of this Course:**

The over all research ambition of this course is to understand and explain the following: If anything, what do neighborhoods actually do -- why, and how? More specifically, answers to the following core questions are being sought:

- 1) What drew persons in various neighborhoods to live there?
- 2) What has caused persons to remain in certain neighborhoods?
- 3) How do various neighborhood actors define and identify themselves?
- 4) How do neighborhood actors construct notions of “neighborhood problems?”
- 5) How do various neighborhood actors “rank” neighborhood problems?
- 6) How do various neighborhood actors construct causations of neighborhood problems (including ecological issues)?
- 7) How do various neighborhood actors construct notions of what problems are **not** worthy of attention?
- 8) How do various neighborhood actors construct notions of what problems are worthy of attention?
- 9) How do various neighborhood actors construct notions of who are responsible to address neighborhood problems perceived as worthy of attention?
- 10) How do neighborhood actors organize themselves (on local and extra-local levels) to address those perceived problems worthy of attention, and in what order?
- 11) How do neighborhood actors respond to challenges faced in the process of addressing neighborhood problems?

12) How do these reactions to challenges relate to tangible evidence of neighborhood change (as demographic compositions, changes in health related outcomes such as crime, and neighborhood facades such as physical and social disorders)?

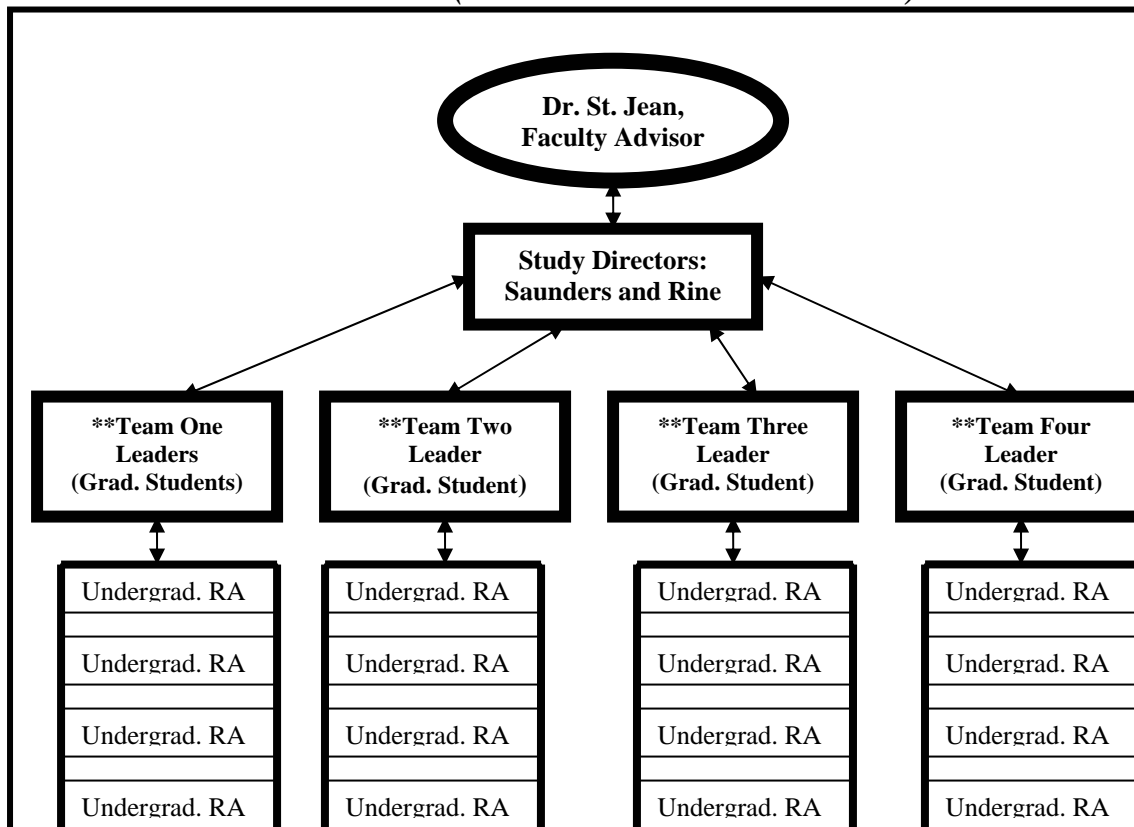
**Neighborhood Selection**

In order to answer these key questions in ways that respond to some of the major limitations in the current literature, comparisons will be made across various neighborhoods, some of which are imbedded in the Amherst, and Buffalo, two neighboring, but economically and racially diverse cities. Research will be conducted across eight (8) neighborhoods to be selected along the criteria of following six (6) ideal-types:

**Table One:  
Ideal-type Neighborhoods for the Research**

NEIGHBORHOOD TYPE	AMHERST	BUFFALO	RESEARCH TEAM
2 Affluent Neighborhoods	YES	YES	Team One
2 Poor neighborhoods	YES	YES	Team Two
1 Ethnically Heterogeneous	NO	YES	Team Three
1 Ethnically Homogeneous	NO	YES	Team Three
1 Transient	NO	YES	Team Four
1 Stable	NO	YES	Team Four

**Figure One:  
Research Team Hierarchy  
NOTE: (SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION)**



\*\*Ph.D. students will function as Primary Research Team Leaders, and MA students as Research Team co-leaders.

## Requirements for Grading

During the first 6-7 weeks of the course, considerable attention will be paid to preparing ourselves for conducting field research. In this regard, we will read and discuss scholarly works on methodological, theoretical, policy, ethical issues associated with field work. After Week 9, we should be ready for the field – psychologically, academically, and tactically. All research teams should be formulated, briefed, and coordinated by that time. From that period onwards, all research teams will be assembled once a week, and in some cases, once every two weeks for research briefings. These briefings will be an opportunity to update each other on challenges and successes, preliminary findings, research strategies that may require re-evaluations, and other relevant issues. Each briefing will most likely be recorded on video as data for our future use.

Students' grades will be determined by their academic performances on tests administered during the pre-fieldwork phase (first 6-7 weeks of the course), and by their performances in the actually conducting field research. That is, their abilities to complete data collection and analysis tasks as designated by their research team.

Graduate students will be graded on their verbal presentations in class, undergraduate students will be tested on their knowledge of the books used during the presentations – by turning in brief critical reports on each book, due at the beginning of class on the week following the presentation(s). Both graduate and undergrad students will write a “field Preparedness test” at the end of the classroom presentations and lectures.

### Summary Table for Grade Schedule

Dates	Assignment	Graduate Requirements	Undergraduate Requirements	Portion of Total Grade
Weeks 2-7	Discussion of Assigned Readings	In-person class presentations	Critical reports due at beginning of class on the following week of presentation(s)	Graduate; 25% Undergraduate: 25%
Week 9	Field Preparedness Test (FPT) Fieldwork Related Group Assignments (FRGA)	In-class written test Fieldwork related assignments	In-class written test Fieldwork related assignments	25%: FPT=15%, FRGA=10%
Varies	Periodic field progress reports and task completions	**Functions as research team leaders in the field	Functions as research team assistants in the field	25%
Week 16 Due 12/8/03	Final Project	**Lead role in preparation of Final Group Project	Support role in preparation of Final Group Project	25%

\*\*Ph.D. students will function as Primary Research Team Leaders, and MA students as Research Team co-leaders.

## COURSE WEEKLY SCHEDULE

### Books and Presentations

#### Week One

**Book (1): I will discuss this book on August 25<sup>th</sup>, and intermittently thereafter.**

Author: [Park, Robert Ezra, 1864-1944](#)

Title: The city / Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, Roderick D. McKenzie ; with an introduction by Morris Janowitz.

Imprint: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1984, c1925

ISBN: 0226646114

#### Week One:

**I will discuss this book on August 25<sup>th</sup>, and intermittently thereafter.**

**Book (2)** Sampson, Robert J., Gregory D. Squires, and Min Zhou. 2002. *How Neighborhoods Matter: The Value of Investing on the Local Level.*

To be ordered from the American Sociological Association:

<http://www.asanet.org/pubs/pubs.html> ISBN: 0-912764-39-2 contact [publications@asanet.org](mailto:publications@asanet.org).

Telephone#: 202-383-9005

1307 New York Ave NW

Suite 700 Washington DC 20005-4701.

#### Week Two

**Book (3) to be presented by Carolyn Storms on September 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

Author: [Goldman, Mark, 1943-](#)

Title: High hopes : the rise and decline of Buffalo, New York / Mark Goldman.

Imprint: Albany : State University of New York Press, c1983.

ISBN: 0873957342

0873957350 (pbk.)

#### Week Two

**Book (4) to be presented by Christine Rine on September 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Author: [Goldman, Mark, 1943-](#)

Title: *City on the Lake: The Challenges of Change in Buffalo, New York*

Imprint: Prometheus Books, 59 John Glenn Drive, Amherst NY 14228-2197 tele: 716-691-0133\*207 [www.prometheusbooks.com](http://www.prometheusbooks.com) 1990

ISBN: 0-87975-579-2

#### Week Three:

**Book (5) to be presented by Jacquelin Elinski on September 9<sup>th</sup> (my birthday – an anniversary of my 25<sup>th</sup> ...)**

Author: [Burgess, Ernest Watson, 1886-1966 ed.](#)

Title: The urban community; selected papers from the proceedings of the American Sociological Society, 1925.

Imprint: New York, Greenwood Press [1968, c1926]

### **Week Three:**

#### **Book (6) To be presented by Joan Cabral and Nancy Maroun on September 9<sup>th</sup> (my birthday – an anniversary of my 25<sup>th</sup> ...)**

Author: [Jacobs, Jane, 1916-](#)

Title: The death and life of great American cities / Jane Jacobs ; with a new foreword by the author.

Edition: Modern Library ed.

Imprint: New York : Modern Library, 1993.

### **Week Four: Organizing Week – no presentations this week**

### **Week Five:**

#### **Book (7) To be presented by Robin Saunders on September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Author: [Wilson, William J., 1935-](#)

Title: The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy.

Edition: 1st ed.

University of Chicago Press, 1987

ISBN: 0394579356

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### **Week Five**

#### **Book (8) To be presented by Vicki Sapp on September 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Author: [Pattillo-McCoy, Mary.](#)

Title: Black picket fences : privilege and peril among the Black middle class / Mary Pattillo-McCoy.

Imprint: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1999.

ISBN: 0226649288 (cloth : alk. paper)

### **Week Six**

#### **Book (9) To be presented by Gemmae Fix on September 30<sup>th</sup>**

Author: [Logan, John R., 1946-](#)

Title: Urban Fortunes : the political economy of place / John R. Logan, Harvey L. Molotch.

Imprint: Berkeley, CA : University of California Press, c1987.

ISBN: 0520055772 (alk. paper)

### **Week Seven**

#### **Book (10) To be presented by Seth Triggs and Elizabeth Priebe on September 30<sup>th</sup>**

Author: [McRoberts, Omar Maurice](#).

Title: Streets of glory : church and community in a Black urban neighborhood / Omar M. McRoberts.

Imprint: Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2003.

ISBN: 0226562166 (cloth : alk. paper)

\*\*The course may also include additional recommended readings which will be provided separately.

### **Week Eight**

**Preparing for the field: Overview. Most of the material will already have been discussed during Weeks 1-7. Advancing the Multi-methods approach**

### **Week Nine**

**Field Preparedness Test.**

### **Weeks Ten- Fifteen**

**Fieldwork, de-brief meetings, progress reports, task completions.**

### **Week Sixteen (December 8<sup>th</sup>)**

**Final Report due in Park Hall 468 by 1pm.**

### **NOTE:**

**Syllabus for Spring 2004 will be made available before the beginning of that semester.**

### **ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance is strongly expected. The first few weeks of class will entail classroom discussions, presentations, and organization. The remainder of the semester will include *de-briefings* where organs of the research teams will update each other on their progress. Obviously, attendance will affect your grade.

### **MAKE-UP TESTS**

Make-up tests and assignments will only be administered if the student makes appropriate arrangements with the instructor or TA at least two days before the test date (or assignment due date). An appropriate arrangement is either a signed written note, or e-mail exchange clearly explaining the agreement. Otherwise, for a make-up test or assignment to be authorized, the student must provide supporting evidence that explains the emergency which prohibited her or him from writing the test, or adhering to the said deadline. This supporting evidence must be produced within **48 hours** after the said test date, or deadline.

### **SPECIAL NEEDS**

Any student with difficulties in vision, hearing, or mobility, should inform the instructor or TA if special needs are desired.

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

UB has explicit guidelines against academic dishonesty. It is the responsibility of each student to become familiar with these guidelines. Students suspected of cheating will be sanctioned. Such sanctions may range from a warning, failure of the class, or as the University may otherwise deem necessary. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis, with acknowledgement of due process. Although students are encouraged to collaborate efforts aimed at mastery of class material, unless explicitly told otherwise, each assignment **MUST** reflect the student's individualized analyses and conclusions, unless clearly requested as a group project. In some instances, modern technology will be used to assess suspicious responses.

### **ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

In accordance with University policies, each student should have access to computer services. Therefore, all assignments that require use of computer technology are expected to be completed on time.

### **“Potential Risks to Research Assistants and Key Study Personnel and how they will be Minimized.”**

See Separate Document.

## **Guideline for Graduate Students' Class Presentations**

For each class presentation, graduate students are expected to do the following:

- 1) Explain what you understand as the main idea of the book.
- 2) Explain other important ideas of the book.
- 3) What do you consider the methodological **strengths and weaknesses** of the book?
- 4) What do you consider the theoretical **strengths and weaknesses** of the book?
- 5) What do you consider the **strengths and weaknesses** of the book in terms of policy and/or programmatic implications?
- 6) Explain what aspects of the book you believe are most relevant and instructive to this course on neighborhood research, and explain why.
- 7) Discuss how this book relates to other books discussed previously in this class.
- 8) Based on issues addressed in the book, please provide three (3) important comments or questions you believe should guide discussions of the book.

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### **NOTE:**

**Your presentation should be no longer than 30 minutes. The presentation of Book One is expected to be from 9:35 – 10:05 am. Fifteen (15) minutes are allotted for discussion of Book One. That discussion will end at 10:20. There will then be a brief break of 10 minutes thereafter. The second presentation is expected to begin at 10:30am and end at 11:00am. Fifteen (15) minutes are allotted for discussion of Book Two. That discussion will end at 11:15. There will be another break of 10 minutes thereafter. Beginning at 11:25am, I will conclude the class by providing final comments, and discuss other related matters for about 45 minutes. Class ends no later than 12:10pm.**

- 9:35-10:05am: Presentation of Book One
- 10:20-10:30am: Brief and Prompt Break
- 10:30-11:00am: Presentation of Book Two
- 11:00-11:15am: Discussion of Book Two
- 11:15-11:25am: Brief and Prompt Break
- 11:25am:12:10pm: Concluding comments, activities and/or lecture

## **Guideline for Undergraduate Students' Critical Reports (Weeks 3-8)**

Beginning on Week Three, each undergraduate student will turn in a critical report that is based on the two (2) books presented in class during the previous week. That report should discuss the following:

- 1) Outline what you consider the major arguments of each book.
- 2) Discuss what you consider the major similarities, and differences between the two books.
- 3) Explain what aspect of each book has been most instructive to you, and why.
- 4) Discuss how you believe each book relates to our purposes in this neighborhood research course.

**This critical report is expected to be between 2-5 pages, typed in font 12, and double-spaced.**