

Course syllabus « The City and the Risk Society»

Approved by
Academic Council “Sociology of Public Sphere and Social Communications”

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Number of credits	5
Contact hours	40
Self-study hours	150
Kypc	2
Educational format	Without use of online course

I. Aim, Results of Mastering the Discipline and Prerequisites

According to the UN Population Fund, since 2007 for the first time in history over half of Earth population lives in cities. But what is a city? And what is the nature of everyday life in it? What, to invert the title of Louis Wirth’s famous paper, does ‘urbanism’ mean as a way of life? In this course we will unfold the nature of urban everyday life from a broadly construed nested ecological/transactional standpoint, that is, looking at multiple levels of organization of life (from a single person going about their routine daily activities; through the interactions between multiple people as they self-organize into various social forms of common living, such as neighborhoods or ‘the public’; through the spatial embeddedness of human patterns of common activities in urban spatial and architectural forms; to the broad processes of urban change in context of globalization). We will examine these levels as they all project upon everyday life—that ‘common denominator,’ as Henri Lefebvre termed it, of the various facets and dimensions of social and economic life.

- The main purpose of this class is to understand urbanism as a complex process, and to examine how the various dimensions and domains of urban living arise out of everyday life and, simultaneously, enable, structure, organize, restrict, and project themselves into everyday life. Thus, our point of reference at all times will be the lived experience of a person inhabiting an urban milieu. We will bring in perspectives from urban sociology, urban psychology, and urban geography to explore these complexities.
- This is a graduate (Ph.D.) level seminar that brings together basic knowledge of how human beings regulate their social relationships through creation of episodic panic phenomena—within themselves, in small groups and in inter-group relations, in crowds, and in society as a whole (disorder). We will be looking at how communication in human social life becomes ordered along the lines that pro-mote anxiety, fear, and eventually panic: "something bad is about to happen" ("swine flu, terrorist attacks, volcano ash, global warming, etc."); and how these are culturally channeled through expert knowledge and state power: "you are incompetent" ("you need to turn to an expert"). Our interest is— how can such messages work? Why would human beings become vulnerable to such social suggestions? In order for this to be possible there has to be some intra-psychological readiness to accept such suggestions (rather than brush them aside). The basic processes of internaliza-

tion/externalization are the arena where such vulnerabilities are being negotiated within our personal-cultural domains. These processes are embedded within purposefully organized redundant textures of the environment— suggestions for the particular direction of feeling (e.g., fear about what might happen paired with non-doubtful acceptance of “the authority” advice) are encoded in multiple forms in parallel within the collective culture. We will look at how the basic principles of human thinking function in an interplay with the fundamental structures and processes of contemporary societies—termed risk societies by Ulrich Beck—to produce the cultures of panic. In other words, we will try to understand how fear as an emotion and panic as a condition of its social expression turn into an increasingly self-solidifying state of affairs in social groups and communities, and how such social consolidation guides the psychological processes of persons towards further fear and panic, as well as to its social regulation by institutions. How is that organized? How can the spiral of escalation of socially constructed and collectively shared panic phenomena be neutralized, and—ideally—reversed in the direction of resiliency?

- We will be reading into selected aspects of sociology (Ulrich Beck's work on "risk societies"), social psychology (crowd behavior in panic situations), clinical psychology (panic attacks), anthropology of mythical thinking, and (of course) cultural psychology (which so far deals rarely with the issues). Much emphasis is on introspective analysis of phenomena of panic and social disorder in different social situations. The “progress reports” and “essays” on the task will be made in our seminars on a regular basis. The task entails weekly reports on selected mass media—newspaper or TV channel—as to the profiles of promoted panics that could be found there. Reports on panic-like phenomena in online social media (e.g. blogs, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter) are also acceptable and encouraged.

As a results, students should:

Know:

- seminal texts in urban-studies
- basic concepts and principles of urban-studies and main areas of research on which this discipline focuses

Be able to:

- construct productive research questions using approaches of urban-studies
- apply the concepts of urban-studies mainstreaming to their research designs in comparative social research
- to distinguish, collect and apply various social data to urban- issues
- to criticize urban-studies

Have:

- the skill to criticize and evaluate the quality of outcome of different forms of urban-studies
- the skill to meaningfully construct urban- research questions
- the skill to model research in the field of urban-studies

Basic knowledge of concepts and theories of social sciences are required for this course.

The basics of this discipline should be used in the following courses and activities:

- Master thesis writing
- Applied social and demographic research
- all other programs related courses

The course is strongly related and complementary to other courses provided in the second year of program and sets a useful prerequisite for later courses and research projects as well as for the master thesis. The course gives students an important foundation to develop and conduct their own research as well as to evaluate research of others.

II. Content of the Course

SESSION ONE: Globalization and the City. Human, City, Community, World: Varieties of Settlement Organization

We will discuss the basic idea of globalization as reflected in urban living and urban everyday life, and what kinds of different systems, processes, domains, and levels of organizations are involved in its organization. We will search for inspiration in the work of Walter Benjamin, Guy Debord, and Georges Perec, who famously recorded their wanderings and perceptions of cities of their time and place.

SESSION TWO: *Person-Environment Transactions and the Nested Ecology of Urban Living.*

This class is dedicated to basic concepts and models that we will use in our study of the city. In particular, we will explore what is known as ‘transactional’ approach in person-environment-behavior research, and discuss Urie Bronfenbrenner’s nested ecological model of human development.

SESSION THREE: Perceiving, Remembering, and Going About the City

What does it mean to perceive environment? How do we receive, process, organize, and make sense of environmental information and stimuli? Is our role that of passive receivers or active explorers of environment? How do we plan our actions in, and find our way about, the city? We will discuss the basics of cognitive information processing, storage, and retrieval, the active nature of our perception, and the troubles of remembering where things are and how to get to them.

SESSION FOUR: City Plan: Concentric Circles, Grids, Complex Patterns (and Rivers and Mountains Too)

How is the city organized physically? What are the basic elements that comprise ‘urban environment’? How are they connected between or separated from each other? We will discuss some of the basic ideas and models of urban planning, including the Burgess concentric circles model from the Chicago School, the idea of modernity in urban planning, and the purported collapse of this idea in late twentieth century. We will also discuss the different actors and factors that influence the city plan on various levels, and the ways in which human everyday life ultimately is embedded in this physical structure.

SESSION FIVE: *Orders of Public Interaction.*

What does it mean to be ‘in the public’? How does one interact with others in public space? We will discuss the basic tension between public and private behavior, and attempt to unfold it into a complex dimension with multiple degrees and possible regimes of ‘public-ness’. We will draw on the work of symbolic interactionists and on the focus theory of normative conduct to explore the ways in which complex social behaviors in public settings are ordered, and how individuals navigate these situations.

SESSION SIX: Culture, Community, and Class: Courtyard, Neighborhood, District

What are the larger social units into which humans self-organize in their settlements? Who are the ‘Muscovites’ and how can we know one when we see one? Can we infer the social and spatial structuring of the city just by looking at the physical environment? How do different people culturally mark the city? We will discuss the social and cultural structure of the city, particularly focusing on the culturally and historically specific phenomena of ‘courtyard’ and of ‘creative class’ as potentially discernible in the environment of Moscow. We will explore the notions of identity and belonging, the ways in which they are anchored in urban environment. Our methodological anchor will be Jerry Kruse’s idea of ‘vernacular landscape’ and his visual sociological approach to it.

SESSION SEVEN: Globalization, Mobility, and Splintering Urbanism

What are the consequences of globalization for urban environment and urban living? How does the increased mobility (of humans, of commodities, of signs, of information, of corporations) change the constitution of urbanism? What attracts people to Moscow and what makes them move on (or out)? We will discuss the idea of ‘global city’ and the push and pull factors that influence urban populations. We will also explore the changing practices of consumption, and the ways in which these are reflected in the environment.

SESSION EIGHT: Urban Futures: Concentration or De-Urbanization

What is the future of urban living? Are people going to continue to flock to highly urbanized and highly concentrated urban agglomerations? What are the ecological repercussions of concentration and de-concentration? Does ‘downshifting’ have potential to become a mass social process? We will discuss the potential future of urban everyday life in light of ecological, cultural, economic, and psychological challenges for urbanism as a way of life. We will also try and pull the different strings together, and to gather a general sense of what we can understand through the lens of person-environment-behavior transactions when these are mobilized at different levels of organization.

SESSION NINE: Phenomena of panic and disorder in psychology and sociology — where to look to find out how they are possible?

The social significance of panic in contemporary society: theory and applications. Panic and disorder in the society. How we identify both phenomena in an everyday life experience? The difference between psychological and sociological approach. An observer of the city: how to make and structure your observations of panic and disorder in urban life in habitual settings.

SESSION TEN: *What do we mean by society? What is Risk Society?*

Social structure and culture. Persona and collective life. How is individual related to social structures through culture—personal and collective? The specific of contemporary social life. Globalization and its influence on human communication. Conceptualizing contemporary social life in terms: ‘informational society’/‘postmodern society’/‘globalized society’/‘consumption society’/etc. What social changes relevant to phenomena of panic can we reliably identify? ‘Risk society’ theory and its foundation. U.Beck, A.Giddence, N.Luman about “risk society”.

III. Grading

Four position papers make up 30% of the final grade – 7.5 percentage point per paper.

Class presentation makes up 10% of the final grade and is optional.

Activity and participation in class work constitutes 20% of the grade.

The oral exam makes up 40%.

If the final grade is non-integer, it is rounded according to algebraic rules. If has a half (.5) at the end, we are rounding upward.

IV. Grading Tools

The course attendees are expected to complete the weekly readings ahead of the class sessions. The position papers are based on such readings.

The presentations in the class can be done on various gender and development topics (agreed with the lecturer).

Each paper relates to the readings of the given week and should be between one and two pages long (single-spaced, font size 12). It can be submitted in writing or via email at the end of the class. It will be assessed according to the quality of the summary of the text(s), the depth of the ideas it develops, the comprehension of the readings, and the clarity of the exposition.

Belated “position papers” will not be excepted (save for truly extraordinary circumstances), make-up assignments will NOT be arranged.

The presentations in the class can be on various topics agreed with the lecturer, should be 5-7 long and initiate class discussion. The student is meant to lead that discussion and give further input during this session.

Topics for the class discussions and self-control

1. What is the social significance of problem of disorder and panic in contemporary society?
2. What is panic and disorder in the society? How we can conceptualize it?
3. How we identify both phenomena in an everyday life experience?
4. What is the difference between psychological and sociological approach to panic and disorder.
5. How to make and structure your observations of panic and disorder in urban life in habitual settings?
6. How is individual related to social structures through culture—personal and collective?
7. How can we characterize the contemporary social life? How does it change with time?
8. What is globalization and what has it to do with human communication?
9. What do labels ‘informational society’/‘postmodern society’/‘globalized society’/‘consumption society’/etc. mean?
10. What social changes relevant to phenomena of panic can we reliably identify?
11. What does ‘risk society’ mean?
12. What are the causes of society-wide panics that engulfed cultures in history? How did they change and why?

13. What did humans do to counter real and imaginary threats?
14. How do contemporary sociology and cognitive psychology make a business out of looking at people's decision making under conditions of uncertainty?
15. What are the typical ways by which sociologists and psychologists like to separate their worlds from the social contexts and purposeful suggestions of social institutions as related to the phenomenon of panic and social disorder?
16. What are the fears and panics specific to urban environment?
17. How threat perception relates to objective measures of danger?
18. What role does panic play in crime spread and prevention?
19. Did terrorism displace crime as the fundamental urban fear?
20. What are the types of space that emit, facilitate, accommodate, prevent, control fear?
21. What spaces are created as a result of societal panics?
22. What is the spatial result of fear management?

V. Sources

5.1. Mandatory Literature

Beck, U. Risk society: towards a new modernity / [U. Beck](#); Translated by [M. Ritter](#). – Los Angeles [etc.]: SAGE Publications, 2013.

Sorensen, M. P. Ulrich Beck: an introduction to the theory of second modernity and the risk society / [M. P. Sorensen](#), [A. Christiansen](#). – London; New York: Routledge, 2013.

Carmona, M. Capital spaces: the multiple complex public spaces of a global city / [M. Carmona](#), [F. M. Wunderlich](#). – London; New York: Routledge, 2012.

Building inclusive cities: women's safety and the right to the city / Ed. by [C. Whitzman](#) [et al.]. – London; New York: Routledge, 2013. – 216 c.

Brook, D. A history of future cities / [D. Brook](#). – New York; London: W.W.Norton & Company, 2014. – 959 c. – На англ. яз. - ISBN 978-0-393-34886-6.

A research agenda for cities / Ed. by [J. R. Short](#). – Cheltenham; Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2017. – 292 c. – (Elgar research agendas) . – На англ. яз. - ISBN 9781785363412.

Optional Literature

1. The Urban Sociology Reader, edited by Jan Lin, et al., Routledge, 2012.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1075388>

2. The Wiley Handbook of Social Studies Research, edited by Meghan McGlinn Manfra, and Cheryl Mason Bolick, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2017. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4825480>
3. May, Tim. Social Research, McGraw-Hill Education, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=729519>
4. Dillon, M. Introduction to Sociological Theory: Theorists, Concepts, and Their Applicability to the Twenty-First Century. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009) first edition. <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1566387>
5. Segre, Sandro. Contemporary Sociological Thinkers and Theories, Routledge, 2014. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/hselibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1808762>

5.2 Software

№ п/п	Name	Access conditions
1.	MicrosoftWindows 7 Professional RUS MicrosoftWindows 10 MicrosoftWindows 8.1 Professional RUS	<i>From the university's internal network (contract)</i>
2.	MicrosoftOfficeProfessionalPlus 2010	<i>From the university's internal network (contract)</i>

5.3 Professional databases, information reference systems, Internet resources (electronic educational resources)

№ п/п	Name	Access conditions
<i>Professional databases, information and reference systems</i>		
1.	Консультант Плюс	<i>Из внутренней сети университета (договор)</i>
2.	Электронно-библиотечная система Юрайт	URL: https://biblio-online.ru/
<i>Internet resources (e-learning resources)</i>		
1.	Открытое образование	URL: https://openedu.ru/

5.4 Material and technical support

Classrooms for lectures on the discipline provide for the use and demonstration of thematic illustrations corresponding to the program of the discipline, consisting of:

- PC with Internet access (operating system, office software, antivirus software);
- multimedia projector with remote control.