

**OVERVIEW OF SYLLABUS TO BE REVISED FOR FALL 2014
ALL READING WILL REMIND AS IT
DATES AND OTHER SPECIFIC INFORMATION WILL BE FILLED IN
SEE CLASS PHOTOS ON SOCIOLOGY FACEBOOK**

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VISUAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE URBAN CITY AND ITS RESIDENTS

***"Of Course in this you see more than I can see. You see me."
Marlowe in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness***

***"We must measure our explanations against the power of
scientific imagination to bring us into touch with lives of strangers"
Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Culture***

***"Photological Proof is not stringent, merely Overpowering"
T. Adorno***

This seminar is intended for upper-division students who will meet one a week.

Most images of the urban city pitches it as either "fabulous" or "dangerous." One can attend museums, theater, concerts, movies, and buy the latest fashions all within the city. It is also one in the residents walk the streets late at night, dance the night away, run into drug dealers, hear gun shots or find their cars burglarized. All this happens in small town America as well. But the urban city images are writ large. In other words, the urban city is a perfect place in which to capture images that speak to the experiences of living in and with these contradictions. In this course, we will attempt to capture these images and others as well as the social structures and social relations including race/ethnic dealings that may influence some images.

Visual sociology is an area of sociology concerned with the visual dimensions of social life. In this context, the camera is analogous to a tape recorder. According to John Grady, the classroom provides a very useful site for developing the skill and sensibilities of visual sociology. . Film and video cameras are particularly well suited as data gathering technologies for experiments and for small group interactions, classroom studies, ethnography, participant observations, oral history, and the use of urban space.

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PhotoVoice blends a grassroots approach to photography and social action. It provides cameras not to health specialists, policy makers, or professionals, but to people with least access to those who make decisions affecting their lives. Photovoice has three main goals: 1. To enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns; 2. to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through large and small group discussions of photographs; and 3. to reach policy makers. (<http://www.comminit.com/en/node/201294>). Also for discussion of the benefits of using photographs, see Sarah Pink. *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*, 2nd. Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007.

Images are unique forms of data. It is a physical record of something that has happened at some time or another. Images can represent complex subjective processes in an extraordinarily objective form. Learning how to manage and interpret images is an ideal way to learn about data in general and to introduce students to the craft of sociology. Thinking, writing and talking about and with, images not only can make arguments more vivid, but also more lucid.

Visual sociology integrates the analysis and production of visual representation into the disciplined study of social relations. What makes images as valuable as a mode of human communications is that they encode an enormous amount of information in a single display or representation. One way of helping students develop a sociological imagination about everyday things that they might otherwise take for granted is to show them how photographs and video clips of these everyday things are rich repositories of information that can be used in theory and analysis. Just imagine what students can discover about their own surroundings.

Being visual means learning a craft that allows you to bring your world alive with the use of the camera.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is a small semester and as such, each person will make a contribution to the intellectual life of the course. To do so, each person will do all of the reading, become familiar with the terms and concepts used in the course and take responsibility for helping us develop them. At the conclusion of the course, all participants (including the instructor!) should know more about some aspects of social life than they did before the course, should have better skills for learning about the social world, and should have refined their observational skills, so that with or without the camera, they will be more knowledgeable observers of their surroundings. The final project will represent photos from all of the groups that have been critiqued and supported with written material that contribute to our understanding of the urban city and its residents. Students will read the required material, examine magazines to understand the power of images and their meaning to us and take photographs (\$5.00 disposable camera will work) of the urban environment. Students will form groups of 2-3 in which they will determine the focus of their photos, why that focus is meaningful to understanding the urban city, and what kind of

images will best tell the story of that environment. The group will learn how to code the images, evaluate the shots, and present their work to the class. They will learn to evaluate the photos of others. Each group will write a visual paper.* See visual paper guidelines.

Required Reading:

1. Howard S. Becker. Telling About Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2007.
2. Mitchell Duneier. Sidewalk: With Photographs by **Ovie Carter**. **New York:** Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999.
3. Elaine Bell Kaplan. “We Live in the Shadow.” Phila, PA: Temple University, 2013.
4. Thomas Ward, Gangsters without Borders, Oxford University Press, USA, 2012
5. Xerox Handouts

Grades:

Mid-term	25%
Group Projects	20
Final Exam	25
Final Project	20
Attendance/Participation	10
	100%

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

Week 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE: ETHNOGRAPHIC METHODS

Philosophy, reading requirements, main themes
 Handouts: Syllabus
 Read and discuss syllabus
 Discuss projects and common
 Images of the urban city and its residents
 Read for next class, Becker, chaps. 1-4.

Week 2 THEORIES OF VISUAL SOCIOLOGY

1) We will discuss the theoretical explanation for visual sociology
 In this context, the camera is analogous to a tape recorder. Film and video cameras are particularly well suited as data gathering technologies for experiments and small group interactions, classroom studies, ethnography, participant observation, oral history, the use of urban space, etc.

2) Reading: Becker, Reading for Week 2: Howard S. Becker. Telling About Society Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2007. Chaps. 1-4
 Becker’s book, Telling About Society explores the unconventional ways we communicate what we know about society to others. The book explores the many way knowledge about society can be shared and interpreted through different forms of telling fiction, films, photographs, maps, even mathematical models—many of which remain outside the

boundaries of conventional social science. Eight case studies, including the photographs of Walker Evans, the plays of George Bernard Shaw, the novels of Jane Austen and Italo Calvino, and the sociology of Erving Goffman, provide convincing support for Becker's argument: that every way of telling about society is perfect—for some purpose.

Week 3

THEORIES OF VISUAL SOCIOLOGY CONTINUES

This lecture will examine and practice ways to combine the two disciplines of sociology and photography. In other words, we will explore how to use the camera as sociologists and how to sociologically examine photographs. Reading Becker, chaps. 6-11

Week 4

DOING VISUAL SOCIOLOGY

For two weeks, the lecture will focus on how to read and analyze images of the urban city and its residents in magazine

Ward, *Gangs without Borders*, chaps. 1-3

Each person will decide on a project involving the urban area and residents.

For example, take pictures of area surrounding USC, or the urban neighborhoods where you reside, shop, or attend movies. What is it you want to tell us about that area and/or its residents? What story do your photos reveal that helps us understand urban life?

Week 5

DOING VISUAL SOCIOLOGY CONTINUES

Finish *Gangs without Borders*

The Lecture will focus on how to read and analyze

City Space. We will examine the social context within which photographs are taken, are made available to various audiences, and are viewed and interpreted by those audiences. Here our concerns are with issues of representation and interpretation. We will rely on the writings of sociologists. We will also assess our own responses to images and sets of images presented in various contexts (online, in book and article reproductions, in exhibitions).

We will meet to discuss ideas for your projects

Week 6

OBSERVING, APPROACHING AND BUILDING RAPPORT

We will learn how social scientists combine qualitative methods of sociological research (ethnographic methods) with the use of the camera as an observational and documentary tool. Doing visual sociology is not just a matter of knowing how to make photographs or recognizing what is going on; it also relies upon the capacity to approach people, build rapport, come back to approach the same people, and become part of a situation without changing it appreciably.

Dunier, *SideWalk*, A statement on methods, p 333, begin Part. 1

This book investigates the complex social ecology of a three-block span
New York's Greenwich Village.
Midterm review and Take Home exam handout. Exam will consist of short
answers and essays based on reading/lecture material covered weeks 1-6.
Due in class,

Week 7

Group reports on projects

Dunier, finish Part. 1

Week 8

ANALYZING AND CODING PROCESS

Mid-Term exams due

For two weeks we will focus on analyzing group projects
Dunier, Part 2

Week 9

ANALYZING AND CODING PROCESS CONTINUES

Continue with analysis. Dunier, Part 3

Week 10

THE VISUAL PAPER PROJECTS

For two weeks we will focus on how to write a visual paper
Duneier, Part. 4

Week 11

VISUAL PAPER PROJECTS CONTINUES

Kaplan, "We Live"

Duneier, chap. 5 and Appendix, review statement on method, p.333.

Week 12

VISUAL PAPER PROJECT PROJECTS CONTINUES

For the next three weeks, we will have group presentations
A case study report

Xerox Handout

Week 13

VISUAL PAPER PROJECTS CONTINUES

Finish handout reading

Week 14

VISUAL PAPER PROJECTS CONTINUES

Xerox reading handout

Week 15

THE FINAL PROJECT

The Urban City Collage

The final project will consist of bringing together the photos that tell stories of the urban city and its residents. You and your partner will copy all selected photos onto a flashdrive to be placed on Soc. Department's Facebook.

FINAL EXAM-Take Home