INTRODUCTION:

There is a large scholarship (although not devoid of critics and controversies) documenting the importance of neighborhoods for numerous indicators of health and well-being (e.g., socioeconomic status, physical/mental health, risk behaviors [crime, substance use], resources [schools, health care facilities], etc.) at all stages of the life course. However, key questions remain, including the fundamental question “What is a neighborhood?” In this course, we will explore how neighborhoods are defined, shaped and structured, as well as how/why they matter, for whom, when, and for what kinds of outcomes. Because the “neighborhood effects” literature is broad in its scope, this course will cover a number of topics addressing how neighborhoods facilitate the emergence, transmission, and maintenance of inequality.

COURSE FORMAT:

The course will follow a discussion-based graduate seminar format. I may start sessions with some very brief comments that aim to place the current day’s readings in a larger context but the majority of our meeting time be devoted to student-led discussions of the readings and related issues. The purpose of student-lead discussions is to facilitate the development of effective communication skills—that is, to get you comfortable talking about ideas in front of others. Since so much of the course will be based on discussion, it is essential that you complete and reflect on each week’s readings prior to class.

REQUIRED READINGS:

This is a doctoral seminar and requires in depth analysis of empirical research articles. It is a reading-intensive course.

Students are required to read six to eight (6 - 8) scientific articles and/or book chapters each week as specified in the Course Outline and Schedule (below). Students are responsible for acquiring the articles—all journal articles can be found on-line through the library’s full-text journal article access system (or through Google Scholar if on campus). Requiring students to locate articles will enhance basic literature searching skills but can also expose students to additional research of interest (e.g., by following “explore similar articles” or “cited by” links). Any readings not available online will be

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1 Information in this document is subject to change throughout the course of the semester; please consult Blackboard for the most current version of the course syllabus.
posted in the Readings area of the Course Blackboard Site. Please notify me as soon as possible if you have any difficulty obtaining an assigned reading.

**COURSE COMPONENTS:**

(1) *Discussion Questions and Class Participation (10% of final grade)—*

Students are required to submit discussion questions on Blackboard (via the “Discussion” tab on the course page) for each set of readings. You should submit at least two (2) questions per meeting time on any of the readings assigned for that day (they can be two questions on a single reading, or distributed across readings). You are welcomed and encouraged to submit more than 2 questions, but at a minimum must submit 2 question each Tuesday and Thursday. In the BB Discussion page, Discussion Forums will be created for each week, with separate threads for each reading—please post your questions in the applicable thread for that reading. **The deadline for question posts is 10:00am the day of class.**

Discussion leaders (described below) will consolidate submitted questions for the day and print and distribute copies to the class (n=7) to facilitate discussion. Discussion leaders are exempt from submitting questions online (instead, leaders’ will integrate their questions into their presentation of the material).

Submission of questions if only half of this grade; you must also participate in discussion each week. Students can volunteer their questions as we discuss each reading in class, or I may call on you at random if feel that you have not been actively participating.

Questions should be based on critical reflection of the readings and can address any of the following: strengths/weaknesses of the reading; data or variables; research methods or analytical design; hypothesis testing; theoretical conceptualization; policy implications; or directions for future research.

(You may miss two days of class discussion questions during the semester with no penalty; if you miss more than two days, it will adversely affect your course grade.)

(2) *Discussion Leadership (30% of final grade)—*

Each student is required, along with one other student (I will randomly assign pairs) to help lead discussion on 4 separate weekly topics. Each week is a reading topic, and it is up to the student pair to decide how to divide presentation duties (e.g., both present Tuesday and Thursday, or each present on one day).

These presentations should **briefly** summarize each of the readings for the day, diagram the theoretical arguments or conceptual models, and **critically evaluate the readings for issues that include (but are not limited to): major themes, limitations (conceptual and/or methodological), policy implications, and directions for future research.** Discussion Leaders should (a) identify common themes across the readings and (b) spend time engaging the class with your critical assessment and questions (rather than simply summarizing each reading, which we all have already read).

To facilitate discussion, in addition to consolidating and distributing the submitted discussion questions, Discussion Leaders may wish to prepare and distribute a brief (approx. ½ page per reading) summary of day’s readings—**this is optional.** These summaries would identify the critical need addressed by the paper and its key finding(s)—basically “who cares?” and “what did we learn?”
These summaries can be on the same page as the submitted discussion questions. Discussion Leaders may wish to add their own questions to these handouts (or the consolidated questions from classmates), but are not required to upload questions on BB during the week they are leading discussion.

(3) Assignment: Profiling Neighborhood Data (10% of final grade)—

For this assignment, students will find two “neighborhood effects” articles published in the last 5 years that address similar topics using two different datasets. The topics may be ones covered in class, or of students’ choosing. Students will compare and contrast the two datasets, identifying their strengths and weaknesses for the given topic. Additional detail will be provided on Blackboard.

(4) Research Project (Paper or Proposal) and Presentation (50% of final grade)—

Students will be required to write a research paper which they will present to the class at the end of the semester (during the last two weeks). The presentation itself will be a conference-style presentation of roughly 12-15 minutes; the written paper will be approximately 15-20 pages, addressing a core research question (or set of questions) related to “neighborhood effects” (broadly defined). Depending on students’ stage in the graduate program, interests, and access to appropriate data, this paper may take one of the following forms:

1. An empirical research paper in which you use ethnography, in-depth interviews, content analysis, or statistical analysis of survey data. This paper would address a substantive issue and use appropriate data to examine it. The paper would follow the general structure (and length) of a journal article (Introduction, Literature Review, Methods, Findings, Discussion/Conclusions).

2. A literature review in which you fully address the extant literature on a topic. You would pick a topic, thoroughly review the scholarly literature on it, and then address the strengths and weaknesses of the literature. It would NOT be a simple summary/regurgitation of what others have found and written. Rather, it would be a synthesis of the literature and an informed evaluation of it.

3. A research proposal in which you provide a literature review appropriate to a proposal, and then outline a research project that would be appropriate to address some ‘hole’ in the research that you have identified.

Grading:

Here are the percentage totals used to assign final grades in this course:

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<th>To earn a(n):</th>
<th>students need ≥: of the total points</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
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<td>93%</td>
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Please note, the Department of Sociology policy is that the minimum acceptable grade in a course at the 800- or 900-level is a “B” and thus students must earn an average weighted performance of at least 83% on the course requirements.
These percentage cut-offs are absolute; I will not “round-up” final grades. Please put in sufficient effort to earn your desired grade, and please see me at any point during the semester for assistance with course content. Additionally, in the interest of fairness to all students, there are only two opportunities for earning extra credit: completion of the online mid-semester and end-of-semester course evaluations (details will be announced in class and on Blackboard).

**Students with Disabilities:**

In accordance with the University policy, if a student has a documented disability and requires accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, he/she should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester and make this need known. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, you must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY. Please contact the Service for Students Disabilities (SSD) office as soon as possible to have them advance the paperwork to the instructor in a timely manner.

**Academic Misconduct:**

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated in this class. It includes, but is not limited to, any form of cheating or unapproved help on an exam or academic exercise/assignment, copying someone else’s written work without citation, presenting fabricated information as legitimate, or any unauthorized collaboration among students. A student who is uncertain about whether or not something constitutes academic dishonesty has the obligation to see the instructor, an academic advisor, and/or refer to their UNL Student Handbook for clarification (for more information see: http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml)

In this class, academic dishonesty will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The minimum penalty for academic dishonesty in any form is determined by the instructor, and may consist of a reduced grade (including F or zero) for the assignment; a reduced grade (including F) for the entire course, or other options as stipulated in the UNL Student Code of Conduct. Also, the incident will be reported in writing to UNL’s Judicial Affairs.
Course Outline and Schedule:

The following is a tentative reading list and schedule for the course. It is subject to change as the course progresses based on our movement through the material. All changes will be announced in class and a revised syllabus posted on Blackboard.

The reading list contains an extensive list of readings—it is intended to be a resource for students. You are only required to read those cites marked with an * * * * . You are expected to complete the assigned reading prior to the class for which it is assigned.

Students are advised to manage their time, reading, and assignments accordingly. Failure to complete the assigned readings on time will quickly lead you to fall behind.

(NOTE 1/11/14: reading assignments finalized through week 2 only; please check back [on BB] for subsequent weeks’ assignments)

Part I. Foundations of Neighborhood Effects Scholarship

Week 1. Studying Neighborhoods and Contextual Effects

T 1/13


R 1/15

skim the rest.


**Park, Robert E. and Ernest W. Burgess. 1925. *The City*. Chapters 1 & 2.**


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**Week 2. Origins: Human Ecology and the Chicago School**

**T 1/20**


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**R 1/23**


**Dear, Michael. 2002. “Los Angeles and the Chicago School: Invitation to a Debate.” *City and Community* 1: 5-32.**


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**Week 3. What is a Neighborhood? Measurement and Methodology**

**T 1/27**


**Week 4. Where are the Neighborhoods? The Urban-Rural Divide**


**Part II. Neighborhood Structure and Processes**

**Week 5. How Neighborhoods “Work”: Theories and Mechanisms**


R 2/12

**Week 6. Residential Segregation Part I.**

T 2/17
Krysan, Maria and Michael Bader. 2007. “Perceiving the Metropolis: Seeing the City through a Prism of Race.” *Social Forces* 86(2): 699-733.

R 2/19

**Week 7. Residential Segregation Part II.**

T 2/24
Week 8. Residential Mobility and Locational Attainment

T  3/3

R  3/5

Week 9. The Black Middle Class and Black Suburbia

T  3/10

R  3/12
Freeman, Lance. 2008. "Is class becoming a more important determinant of neighborhood

**Part III. Applications: Neighborhood Effects on .....**

**Week 10. ....Crime**

T 3/17

R 3/19


Week 11. …Substance Use

T 3/31


R 4/2


Week 12. …Sex and Partnering

T 4/7


**Week 13. ….Physical Health**

**T 4/14**


**R 4/16**


**Week 14. ….Mental Health**

**T 4/21**


through Adulthood." *Advances in Life Course Research* 9:269-301

R 4/23

**Week 15. Paper Presentations**
T 4/28 presentations
R 4/30 presentations

**Weekly Discussion Leaders**

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<tr>
<th>Week 2:</th>
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