

Syllabus

International Urban Sociology

Tamara Espiñeira

Background

GOALS

- Understand major theoretical approaches in urban sociology (classical and critical).
- Identify key trends in international dimensions of urban governance.
- Apply sociological theory to international urban interactions.
- Develop comparative insights through global case study analysis.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces key concepts and debates in international urban sociology. Beginning with classical and critical theories, it explores how cities function as spaces of inequality, governance, identity, and global interaction. A growing interest in cities, and more particularly in their international role, has developed over the past decades, as shown by the approval of the United Nations Urban Agenda in 2016. At the same time, cities are today confronted with the contrast between their ambitions and the vague impact of transnational actions. For instance, how can they take care of global warming while lacking skills and funding for their own environment policy? Despite the worldwide impact of the motto “Think global, act local”, cities strive today to combine their international strategies with a local context calling for isolationism. Is it possible to find a balance between both? Can cities also “Think local and act global”? To achieve their goals as framed by their local agenda, local authorities must seek the best strategy. It would therefore seem necessary to go beyond classic diplomacy to find a lever that allows a more effective internationalization of local democracy. Such is the aim of this course: to reverse the classic paradigm of international relations by offering students the means to think the transnational action of cities from cities themselves

Cours development and assessment

LANGUAGE

English

FORMAT

- **Weeks 1, 2 and 8:** Synchronous sessions (Zoom/Teams) of 2h
- **Weeks 3–7:** Asynchronous sessions of 2h (readings, videos, forum-based tasks, quizzes)
- **Week 9:** Final submission

Assessment

- 35% Timed theoretical test (Week 6) covering Sessions 1–5.
- 35% Final essay (Week 9): Students will select a thematic question proposed by the lecturer and develop an argumentative essay using case studies and theory.
 - *Essay requirements include personal urban reflection, use of recent data (2022+), and theory application. Any kind of plagiarism will entail serious consequences.*
- 30% Active participation in synchronous sessions (Weeks 1, 2, and 8).

Programme and references

- **Week 1:** Synchronous – **Introduction to the course. Foundations of Urban Sociology:** Classical Approaches (Chicago School, Wirth, Lefebvre)
- **Week 2:** Synchronous – **Critical & Contemporary Urban Theory** (Harvey, Wacquant, Robinson, Sassen)
Essential Readings for Sessions 1 & 2
 - Lefebvre, Henri (1996). The Right to the City.
 - Harvey, David (2012). Rebel Cities. Verso.
 - Sassen, Saskia (2001). The Global City. Princeton University Press.
 - Wacquant, Loïc (2008). Urban Outcasts. Polity Press.
 - Robinson, Jennifer (2006). Ordinary Cities. Progress in Human Geography, 30(3), 307–320.
- **Week 3:** Asynchronous – **Local agendas: managing cities' priorities**
Reading
 - Owen, A. L., & Videras, J. (2008). Trust, cooperation, and implementation of sustainability programs: The case of Local Agenda 21. Ecological Economics, 68(1-2), 259-272.
 - Lin, J. (2017) Governing Climate Change: Global Cities and Transnational Lawmaking. PhD Thesis. Erasmus University Rotterdam. Pages 44-55 Available at: <https://repub.eur.nl/pub/100848/>
- **Week 4:** Asynchronous – **History of international urban policy**
Readings
 - UCLG Centenary of the international municipal movement: A look back, a step forward
https://issuu.com/uclgcglu/docs/the_int_municipal_movement_complete

- Parkinson, M. (2005) *Urban Policy in Europe: Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going*. In Antalowsky, E., Dangschat, JS y Parkinson, M.(ed.). European Metropolitan Governance: Cities in Europe-Europe in Cities, NODE project (Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture): 7–32

- **Week 5:** Asynchronous – Theories about the international role of cities
 Readings
 - Nye Jr, J. S. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 616(1), 94-109.
 - Paquin, S. (2020). Paradiplomacy. *Global Diplomacy: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*, 49-61.
 - Acuto, M., Morissette, M., Chan, D., & Leffel, B. (2016) *City Diplomacy and Twinning: Lessons from the UK, China and globally*. City Leadership Initiative, Department of Science, Technology, Engineering and Public Policy, University College London (UK Government Office for Science.)
 - Herget, J. et alia (2015) *City Branding and Its Economic Impacts on Tourism*. *Economics & Sociology* 8(1): 119–26.

- **Week 6:** Asynchronous – Architecture and tools for new urban diplomacy
 Readings
 - Dossi, S. (2012) *Cities and the European union Mechanisms and Modes of Europeanization in the City of Turin (Pages 70 to 79)*. European Studies. PhD Thesis University of Exeter.
<https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/repository/bitstream/handle/10036/4021/DossiS.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y>
 - De Gregorio Hurtado, S. (2018) *The EU urban policy in the period 2007–13: lessons from the Spanish experience*, *Regional Studies, Regional Science*, 5:1, 212-230, DOI: 10.1080/21681376.2018.1480903
 - La Porte, T. (2013) *City Public Diplomacy in the European Union*. In: *European Public Diplomacy*, Palgrave Macmillan Series in Global Public Diplomacy., New York 85–111.
https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137315144_5.

- **Week 7:** Asynchronous – Cooperation, competition and coopetition : Networks and platforms
 Readings
 - Fernández de Losada, F. and Abdullah, H. (coords.) (2019), *Rethinking the ecosystem of international city networks. Challenges and opportunities*, Monografias 72. CIDOB.
 - Kern, K. and Bulkeley, H. (2009) *Cities, Europeanization and Multi-Level Governance: Governing Climate Change through Transnational Municipal Networks*. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies* 47(2): 309–32.

- **Week 8:** Synchronous – Designing a New Urban Diplomacy strategy
 Readings
 - Espiñeira-Guirao, T. (2022). Measuring the impact of international tools in local governance: The new urban diplomacy. *Rozwój Regionalny I Polityka Regionalna*, (60), 101–118.
<https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/rrpr/article/download/36277/31029/78130>

- **Week 9:** Submission of Final Essay

Contacts

Lecturer

Tamara Espiñeira

tamara.espineira@sciencespo-rennes.fr

Twitter/ X : @TamaraEspineira