

Sociology 498: SENIOR SEMINAR
Topic: Public Life and Public Space
Method: Field Research / Participant Observation

Contact Information

Instructor: Professor Melinda Milligan

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Prerequisites: Students must complete Sociology 300 and Sociology 375 with grades of C- or higher, as well as at least 16 additional sociology units, before enrolling in Sociology 498. In addition, students must earn at least a C- in Soci 498 in order to get credit for Senior Seminar toward the major requirements. Students must file for Fall 2016 graduation in order to be eligible to enroll in Soci 498.

Course Description & Objectives

Sociology 498 is the “capstone” to the sociology degree at Sonoma State University. It focuses on student completion of independent research projects with an emphasis on specific course theme selected by the instructor. For this section, the emphasis will be the sociology of public life and public space.

The public-ness of a space is linked to freedom of various types of people to access and use the space. The more accessible a space is and the wider the range of activities that may be done there, the more public is it. Public life is understood to be the activities that take place within

The course will involve the sociological examination of such topics as the privatization of public space, assessment of features that make for successful public spaces (and assessment of what “successful” means), the dynamics of stranger interaction in public spaces, the role of public space in the “decline in community” debate, the role of public space in the creation of public life, the ways in which public spaces are viewed as central to the development of community, the development of online and virtual public spaces, third places, and many others.

Each student will design and complete an original research project, including the collection and analysis of primary data. The first few weeks of the semester will be spent developing student research topics related to the theme of public life/public space; if you have an area in which you are already interested, we will likely be able to find a way to link it to the theme of the course.

Course Requirements

Class Participation 20%

Discussion Questions 20%

Discussion Leader Duties 10%

Original Research Project 50%

Your research project will have a series of assignments related to it. These include the following:

- 5% Research Proposal
- 5% Data Collection Description and Instruments
- 5% Reference List
- 5% Data Samples
- 5% Literature Review
- 5% Research Presentation
- 20% Final Research Paper

Required Texts: TBA (contact instructor) Contact instructor for details.

ALL OF THE ABOVE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE
