

Qualifying Examination
Urban Sociology
Fall 2024

The questions below constitute the qualifying exam for Urban Sociology. To complete the exam, you must answer in essay format one question from each of the three sections below. Each answer should be a self-contained essay approximately 8–10 pages long (i.e., 2,000–2,500 words). Although you must cite referenced work in each essay, one comprehensive bibliography for all three questions is sufficient. You may consult materials from the reading list you've been provided, as well as any other scholarly sources you've read during the exam period.

Section 1

1. Post-colonial scholars such as Ananya Roy argue that Western urban perspectives are unable to account for the complexities of city life in the Global South. Explain how post-colonial urbanists make their argument and discuss what you think of their argument? How would you respond to the claim that the “slumdog cities” of the global south is more or less the same as the ‘ghettos’ of the Global North? Discuss.

2. What does the notion of the ‘right to the city’ mean? And how does it relate to the subaltern struggles to reclaim and reshape cities, as have been discussed in the works of David Harvey, Partha Chatterjee, James Holston, or Asef Bayat? Discuss.

Section 2

1. Inequalities are central to the study of urban sociology, including segregation, marginalization, and navigating exclusionary structures. Pick four readings from the list that focus on inequalities in the formation of urban life to answer the following questions:

- a. How do people resist exclusionary practices in urban life.
- b. Can we think of inequalities in urban life by focusing only on one category of analysis (race, gender, sexuality, class, etc...)? Use examples from the four texts you chose above or from others.

2. Drawing on four readings from the list, how would you define urbanism and urban life? Following that, identify and discuss three prominent debates within urban sociology (at least one of the debates must touch upon global and transnational processes, such as the concept of “global cities.”)

Section 3

1. Urban sociologists have described the contours of urban public “space” vis-a-vis urban public “place”. Drawing on the work of urban sociologists—e.g., Brenner, Lefebvre, Gieryn, etc.,—discuss the ways in which scholars distinguish between public space and public place with an emphasis on identifying at least three ways in which place, and space differ. Conclude with a discussion of the relevance of understanding place and space for contemporary analysis of urban societies.

2. Urban public spaces are often defined as spaces of conflict. Drawing on the work of sociologists focused on the contested nature of urban space examine how conflict manifests among groups of users in urban space. Consider the applicability of concepts like “integrated segregation,” “ordered segmentation,” etc., as ways to describe the conflict manifesting among groups. Finally, identify levels at which conflict exists among groups and suggest ways in which these levels of conflict might impact the broader workings of cities.