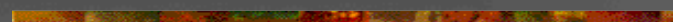


‘Urbanism, Urbanization, and the (Re)presentation of “the Street”’  
SOC604: Lecture I  
Joseph D. Lewandowski





## Core Themes of the Course:

- Urbanism: ways of life shaped by population, density, complexity, heterogeneity
  - Urbanization: processes that create/build the urban milieu
  - Dialectic of urbanization and urbanism: structures/systems (the 'built' urban environment) and human action embedded in such structures/systems
  - Ethnoracial division and enclosure (ghettoization)
  - Policing and state apparatus
  - Reflexive action and status struggles
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‘Social space is always and simultaneously both a *field of action* (offering its extension to the deployment of projects and practical intentions) and a *basis of action* (a set of places where energies derive and whither energies are directed)’.  
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*





# Thesis I

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- Cities are complex sites of socio-cultural and structural porosity. In the urban milieu, actions, norms, and structures interpenetrate in the struggle over the definition and (re)production of urban social space.
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‘The structures constitutive of a particular type of environment produce *habitus*, systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures’ . Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*



## Thesis II

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- The urban environment is a dialectical one. On the one hand, cities are materially ‘objective’ and administratively planned sites. On the other hand, cities are also the locus of structuring ‘subjective’ human actions that reflexively inhabit such sites. In this regard we may speak of a distinctly urban habitus.
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‘Depicted as a lost paradise under a red-hot sun is a primordial Africa with giraffes, lions and panthers...The contrast could not be stronger between the degraded urban settings where these images are displayed and the lofty beginnings the residents claim’. Camilo Vergara, *The New American Ghetto*





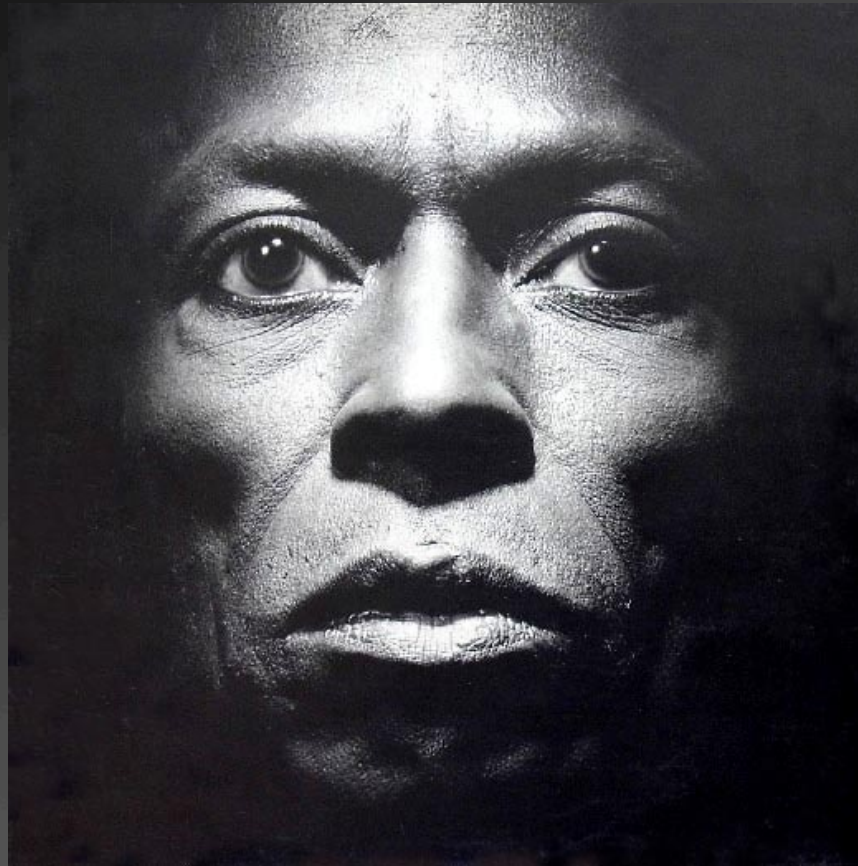
## Thesis III

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- The urban habitus is internally heterogeneous. All modern cities contain multiple, intersecting, and often conflicting fields of norms and action. But the contemporary American ghetto habitus is profoundly informed by the historical experiences of the ethnoracial enclosure, degradation, and struggles of African-Americans.
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‘Others are not so irreducibly other that they do not possess an idea of alterity’ .  
Marc Auge, *The Metro*

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## Thesis IV

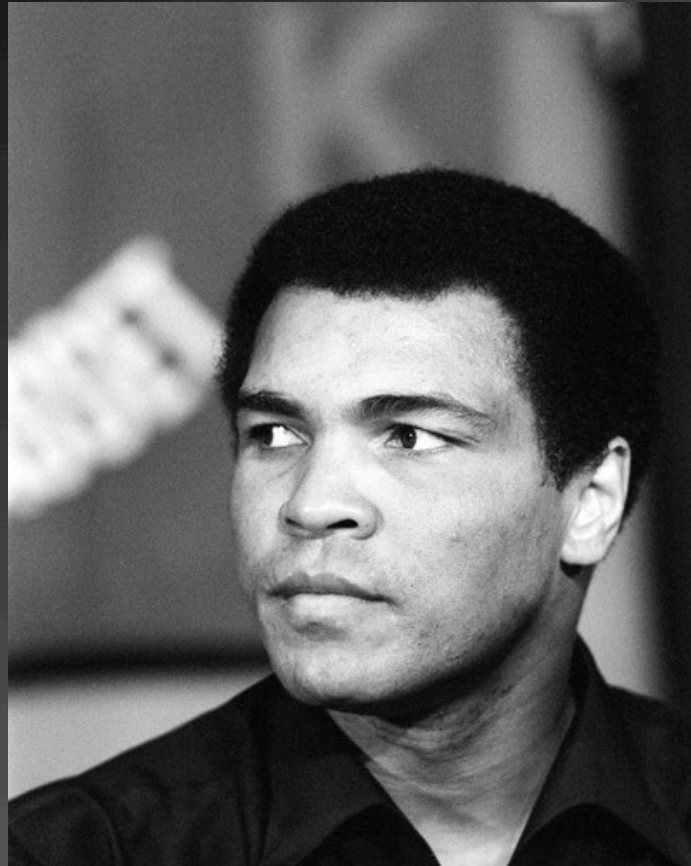
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- Embedded in the ghetto habitus are individuals who are keenly aware of their alterity, and strive to construct and present that otherness in ways that assert not only their self-esteem, control, and individuality, but also their rage and indignation.
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‘You ache with the need to convince yourself that you do exist in the real world, that you’ re part of all the sound and anguish, and you strike out with your fists, you curse and you swear to make them recognize you’ . Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

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## Thesis V

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- In the ghetto milieu, ‘identity’ is not merely a matter of aesthetic performativity. Instead, it has highly complex socio-symbolic, moral and epistemic functions. Agency in such locations is a way of knowing and being-known—a social demand to be ‘recognized’.
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‘One neck, two chains, one waist, two gats/ One wall, twenty plaques, dues paid,  
“Gimme that”/ I am limelight, Blueprint, 5 Mics...’ . Kanye West, “Two Words”

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## Thesis VI

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- Urban identity entails a highly reflexive stance toward self, others, and world. In its complexly embedded and embodied displays of self-possession and stored aggression, *homo urbanus* both threatens and sublimates violence.
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‘Objects play an important and complicated role in establishing self-image. Jackets, sneakers, gold jewelry, even expensive firearms, reflect not just taste, but also a willingness to possess things that may require defending’. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street*

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## Thesis VII

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- The symbolic economy of status struggles in the ghetto milieu designed to make visible an individual's mental, physical, and social power over others. In this way urban status struggles function as media of symbolic construction and domination.
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‘In the inner-city environment respect on the street may be viewed as a form of social capital that is very valuable, especially when other forms of capital have been denied or are unavailable. Not only is it protective; it often forms the core of the person’s self-esteem’. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street*



## Thesis VIII

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- In the struggle for status and respect in the ghetto habitus, what is sought is both the social currency of strategic protection (the instillation of fear in others) *and* moral estimation (the demand for recognition by others).
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‘I dreamed in a dream, I saw a city invincible to the attacks/ of the whole of the rest of the earth...’ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*



## Thesis IX

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- Urban wall images and murals are not merely menacing expressions of besieged urban contexts; they are also a humanization of those contexts. Indeed, implicit in such public memorial art is a demand for respect and remembrance articulated from within an environment of physical and symbolic disrespect and forgetting.
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‘They continue their dancing and sparring for about twenty minutes and then stop. They have fought...and settled their differences. But something much more profound has occurred as well. Through this fight they have bonded socially...each giving the other his “props” ...They informally agree to watch each other’s back...Essentially, this is what it means to “get cool” with someone’. Elijah Anderson, *Code of the Street*



## Thesis X

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- The ghetto milieu contains contains within it a kind of curriculum. Mastering that curriculum through controlled violence is a core element in earning ‘props’, becoming ‘streetwise’, and getting on in the ghetto habitus.
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‘I’ m so self conscious/ That’ s why you always see me with at least one of my watches/ Rollies and Pashas done drove me crazy/ I can’ t even pronounce nothing yo pass that versace’ . Kanye West, “All Falls Down”



## Thesis XI

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- In mastering the curriculum of the urban milieu one is also mastered by it.



‘We shine because they hate us, floss cause they degrade us/ We tryin to buy back our 40 acres/ And for that paper look how low we a’ stoop/ Even if you in a benz you still a nigga in a coop...’ . Kanye West, “All Falls Down”



## Thesis : XII

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- '99 Problems': <https://vimeo.com/110496766>

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