

## Ottawology II: A Study of Ottawa's Third Places

This series draws on sociology, cultural geography, and social history to offer a critical, interdisciplinary perspective on Ottawa, with a particular spotlight on Ottawa's third places. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg defines third places as places that are neither home, nor work; third places include cafes, bars, malls, libraries, and community centres. In these places people can interact with strangers, develop a sense of community, and be exposed to new and surprising things. Third places are crucial to processes of socialization and social solidarity. Throughout this series we will focus on many of the cherished third places in Ottawa: libraries, arenas, malls, markets, festivals, and hotels. Finally, lectures on trees and transit offer analysis of Ottawa's past and present uses and engagement with the natural environment.

NOTE: This series is a good companion to, but is distinct from, the initial *Ottawology* lecture series. It has no pre-requisites. It takes place fully online (Spring 2021).

### Series Outline:

#### Week 1: Fiddles and festivals

The series begins with a lecture on a history of immigration into the Ottawa valley, from the British, Scots, Irish and French in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, to the settlement of Syrian refugees in Ottawa in 2015. In the first half of the lecture, I detail how external forces in Europe and various assisted emigration schemes led to the settlement and the development of a specific type of vernacular multiculturalism in the Ottawa valley. In the second half of the lecture, I offer an introduction to history of Canadian immigration, and detail how that history is expressed through the history of various ethnic enclaves in Ottawa and the current demographics of Ottawa neighbourhoods.

#### Week 2: Libraries and arenas

This lecture focuses on two key third places: libraries and arenas. I offer a sociology of libraries—beginning with the city's earliest public libraries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to its latest new city library main branch and National Library and archives—demonstrating that libraries continue to become more democratic, open spaces that offer crucial, albeit contested sites of socialization. In the second half of this lecture, I offer a history and sociology of Ottawa's arenas. Like libraries, arenas are important sites of socialization. And, like the newly created architecturally spectacular libraries being built in Canadian cities, arenas are imagined to be possible economic engines for cities. I analyze how public-public-private arena-building partnerships impact communities, and access to these leisure spaces.

#### Week 3: From Markets to Malls

In this lecture, I describe the shifting landscape of Ottawa's commercial spaces, including the Byward market, commercial streets, department stores, malls, and big box stores. This lecture furthers two arguments. First, following trends in other cities shaped by advanced capitalism, markets in Ottawa have shifted from being inextricably tied to place to becoming tied to an

abstract market and acting as *non-places*. Second, (and relatedly), markets and malls continue to offer important third places to Ottawans. However, access to and experiences within these spaces are influenced by one's class, gender, race, and age.

#### Week 4: Hotels

Hotels are exemplary liminal spaces: they are not home, but they can be somehow intimate. Hotels bridge the extraordinary: the foreign exciting city outside their doors, with the mundane: a bed, a washroom. Hotels are both an attraction and crucial amenity for tourists, and, as such are central to the "tourist gaze" focused on Ottawa. This lecture will offer a history and analysis of Ottawa's spectacular hotels including the Chateau Laurier, the Lord Elgin, and historic and long-gone Russell House Hotel. While oriented towards tourists, hotels are also workplaces for their employees, and third places for Ottawans who enjoy hotel pools, bars and restaurants. I will also offer a sociological analysis of why and how some, including the many unhoused families and individuals who are housed in hotels by the city, do make homes out of hotels.

#### Week 5: Transit

This lecture focuses on making sociological sense of all types of transit to and through Ottawa. I will introduce the history of Ottawa transit systems: roads, Colonization Road, the Rideau Canal, the various rail lines, the long-departed streetcar system, the bus rapid transit system, and the light-rail transit system. I then discuss how various transit systems encourage or discourage certain types of sociality, living arrangements, and neighbourhood vitality.

#### Week 6: Trees

In this lecture, I detail different forms of human-tree relationships and show how these relationships show up in Ottawa's past and present. Trees feature in our human imaginings and have been, in different times, hero, villain, and victim. Trees are treated as sacred: mythological, profound, and profane: a commodity to be harvested as efficiently and crudely as possible. The tall, old-growth Eastern Pines were the heroes in the 19<sup>th</sup> century story of colonial expansion, while some trees, like the Manitoba Maple, derisively seen as a 'weed tree' are imagined as villains to both humans and other less robust flora and fauna. Finally, many trees, notably elm and ash trees, have been victim to vicious fungi, beetles, and Parliament Hill renovations.

**Tonya Davidson** is an Instructor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University. Her research interests have focused on questions of memory, national belonging, the built environment, and Ottawa. She most recently published *Seasonal Sociology* (co-edited with Ondine Park), which won an American Association of Publishers award for "best textbook in the social sciences" in 2021.