Incoming YSE students are required to read "The White Space" by Elijah Anderson before MODS begins in August 2021. This article will be explicitly incorporated into Urban MODS programming. Anderson presents three core social science concepts that we ask you to reflect on throughout the Urban Mods. 1) The lived experience of racial identity in urban centers in USA. 2) The influence of public urban spaces on how we navigate cities and racial identities. 3) Participant observation as a research methodology for social science.

Anderson's description of urban race relations in the USA may not resonate with your own experiences in the USA or other countries. However, his broader point about how “difference” is experienced by individuals and the ways in which those feelings of “otherness” influence how we interact with other people and the physical environmental (whether urban or rural) should be a central concern for any reflective practitioner of natural resource management.

We ask you to read “White Space” for three primary reasons.

1. Race relations often are and should be a frequent topic of conversation at YSE, in environmental work, and in life in general. You can think of this article as helping to lay some groundwork for those future conversations.

2. The article can help provide some context for your new life in New Haven, which in many ways serves as a quintessential urban case study for Anderson's theoretical observations about how race relations in USA.

3. The article informs some of the work we will be doing during Urban MODS, especially the parks observation activity, and will allow you to engage more thoughtfully with its various activities.

If you are interested in learning more about the topics presented in "The White Space," Anderson has written a book based on similar ideas called The Cosmopolitan Canopy. Feel free to read this book as well, and/or to reach out to your MODS leaders or TAs for further resources.