

COURSE TITLE:
UNDERSTANDING THE CITY

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Term 1: 2017-2018

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course focuses on the city that we can see when we walk around, the city of buildings and people; and also the city that we *don't* always see – the city of sentiments, conflict, traffic flows, bike messengers, sewage networks, asset prices and municipal taxation, of animals and nature. This course uses key academic readings, case studies, and in-the-news topics, to study the city as a complex space where buildings, people, animals, laws, policies, and international financial flows, intersect to produce our lived experience. The aim is for us to be able to see social science theory as we walk around in the city. A key learning objective is close reading of texts, understanding the key argument of each text, and applying concepts to the real urban world.

The first four weeks explore foundational texts while the rest of the weeks address specific questions related to housing markets, social policy, violence, drugs, environmental change, segregation, urban infrastructure, urban regulations, and so on.

HOW THE CLASS WORKS

The class is focused on discussion of key themes and debates from the readings, and student participation is central. The class comprises of lectures, discussions, and in-class exercises.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To see the city from different angles, sociological, political, economic, spatial, historical, material.
2. Close reading of the texts, understanding the key argument of each text, and application of key concepts to real life cities.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

1. Weekly **notes** [8 weeks total out of the 12 weeks] [grade = 40% of total or 5% each]. Completed in class or the night before [short, informal, <150 words, to engage students in the reading].
2. Three **papers**, two pages each, analysing 1) a map, 2) a document, and 3) a public space [20% each, 60 % of total]. Guidelines for these assignments will be circulated beforehand.

COURSE SCHEDULE

C1: On the Street: studying life on city streets

C2: Location, Location, Location: thinking spatially and using maps

C3: Follow the Money: the city as an engine of economic growth

C4: Power to the City: the relationship of city and state government

C5: To zone or not to zone: American and European perspectives on city planning

C6: Just a Formality: housing in the developing world

C7: Prices and Bubbles: the housing market and its global impacts

C8: Pipes, Tunnels, Sewers: infrastructure and the built environment

C9: A Rising Tide: environmental crises in the city

C10: Living Together, Living Apart: racial and economic segregation

C11: On the Street: drugs and urban violence

C12: Libert , Egalit ... Cit ?

REQUIREMENTS

- Students are expected to read the assigned readings before each class. They are expected to participate actively in the class. The short notes that students will write before 8 of the 12 classes, are meant to prepare students for active engagement and discussion in class.
- For each reading, students are encouraged to outline:
 - (a) the main point of the reading
 - (b) the main concepts, definitions, and factual information
 - (c) how the reading links to real world urban questions and can be used in your papers

GRADES

Grades are scored on 100.

1. Weekly notes [5% each or 40% in total]. [these will either be completed in class or the night before and uploaded – to be confirmed based on logistics]. In some weeks, there will be a question assigned from the reading. In other weeks, you will use the exercise to reflect on how the readings relate to some topic of your choice.
 - a. This is not a big written memo, and you should not think of this as a burdensome writing requirement. The purposes of this assignment are (1) to ensure that you to read thoroughly and engage with the material before class, and (2) to give me information about what people are interested in discussing, so that I can plan our agenda and we can use our time to maximum advantage.
2. Three short papers on urban questions **due in week 4, 8, 12**. Ask a question,

propose an argument and use the readings [60% total or 20% each]. Each paper will be 2-3 pages long, double-spaced, 1 inch margins, size 12 font.

- a. One paper will involve observing an phenomena in real life (e.g. observing how people behave in public transport, in a library, in a shopping mall, in a government office, on the street, in a public space, in a meeting, etc.).
- b. The second paper will involve analysing a land use conflict in a city of your choice.
- c. The third paper will add a comparison to the second paper, for instance, studying another city.

Please, note that the course is designed to prepare students for professional vocations. As in professional life, timely submissions are expected. Strict late penalties will apply to any late submissions.

Rules for cell phones, laptops and recordings : Cell phones should be turned off during class. Laptops are not allowed for note-taking in this class. If you have a reason for needing these devices, please let me know ahead of time via email. No audio and video recordings of the class are allowed.

In case of writer's block, or if you have experienced difficulty with professional writing in the past, please take a look at:

1. Becker, Howard. *Writing for Social Scientists*.
2. Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Williams, Joseph M., (2008) *The Craft of Research*, University of Chicago Press.
3. Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*, Longman.
4. Smith, Catherine F. 2009. *Writing Public Policy: A Practical Guide to Communicating in the Policy-Making Process*, Oxford: OUP.

WEEK 1: ON THE STREET

- Benjamin, Walter. *Flaneur* (pg. 35-44)
- Benjamin, Walter. 1969 [1935]. "Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century." *Perspecta* 12: 165-172.
- Kidder, Jeffrey L. 2009. Appropriating the city: space, theory, and bike messengers. *Theory and Society*, 38: 307–328.
- Jacobs, Jane. The Uses of Sidewalks. Book chapter from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961.

WEEK 2: LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION

- READ VERY CAREFULLY: Logan, John R. 2012. Making a Place for Space: Spatial Thinking in Social Science. *Annual Review of Sociology* 38: 507-24.
- SKIM THIS PIECE: Bertrand, K. Z., et al. (2013). Sentiment in New York City: A High Resolution Spatial and Temporal View. Available at: <http://necsi.edu/research/social/newyork/newyorksentsiment.pdf>
- EXPLORE the following websites:
 - a. NYC spatial analysis of sentiments
<http://www.necsi.edu/research/social/newyork//>
 - b. NYC racial segregation maps:
http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/08/us/census-race-map.html?_r=0

WEEK 3: FOLLOW THE MONEY

- Molotch, Harvey. 1976. The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82 (2): 309-332.
- Read the following news articles:
 - a. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/11/23/business/china-factor-real-estate.html?_r=1
 - b. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/jun/13/foreign-investors-snapping-up-london-homes-suitable-for-first-time-buyers>

WEEK 4: POWER TO THE CITY

- Frug, Gerald E. 1980. The City as Legal Concept. *Harvard Law Review*, 93 (6): 1059-1154 [read the abstract on pg. 1059; read the section starting on pg. 1062-1070].
- Brown, Dorothy A. 1995. Fiscal Distress and Politics: The Bankruptcy Filing of Bridgeport as a Case Study in Reclaiming Local Sovereignty. *Bankruptcy Developments Journal*, Vol. 11: 625-656 [read the first 10-15 pages]
- <https://mobile.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/upshot/blue-cities-want-to-make-their-own-rules-red-states-wont-let-them.html>

WEEK 5: TO ZONE OR NOT TO ZONE

- Fischel, William A. 2004. An Economic History of Zoning and a Cure for its Exclusionary Effects. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 41 (2): 317-340.
- Hirt , Sonia. 2012. Mixed Use by Default: How the Europeans (Don't) Zone. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 27: 375.

WEEK 6: JUST A FORMALITY

- Holland, Alisha. 2015. The Distributive Politics of Enforcement. *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 59 (2): 357-371.
- Nijman, Jan. 2008. Against the odds: Slum Rehabilitation in neoliberal Mumbai. *Cities*, 25 (2): 73-85.

WEEK 7: PRICES AND BUBBLES

- Aalbers, Manuel B. 2009. The Sociology and Geography of Mortgage Markets: Reflections on the Financial Crisis. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Volume 33 (2): 281–90.
- Ansell, Ben. 2014. The Political Economy of Ownership: Housing Markets and the Welfare State. *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 108 (2): 383-402. [read the first half]

WEEK 8: PIPES, TUNNELS, SEWERS

- Flyvbjerg, Bent, Mette Skamris Holm, and Søren Buhl. 2002. Underestimating Costs in Public Works Projects: Error or Lie? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 68, No. 3.
- Cesafsky, Laura. 2017. How to mend a fragmented city: A critique of ‘infrastructural solidarity’. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*.
- <http://www.france24.com/en/20161008-notre-dame-des-landes-airport-nantes-protest-environment-ayrault>

WEEK 9: A RISING TIDE

- Fussell, Elizabeth . 2015. The Long-Term Recovery of New Orleans’ Population After Hurricane Katrina. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 1-15.
- Auyero, Javier and Debora Swistun. 2007. Confused because exposed: Towards an ethnography of environmental suffering. *Ethnography*, Vol. 8(2): 123–144.
- <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/09/new-york-future-flooding-climate-change.html>

WEEK 10: LIVING TOGETHER, LIVING APART

- Iceland, John. 2014. Residential Segregation: A transatlantic Analysis. Working paper of the *Migration Policy Institute*.
- Oberti, Marco and Amy Jacobs. 2007. Social and School Differentiation in Urban Space: Inequalities and Local Configurations. *Environment and Planning, A*, Vol. 39 (1): 208-227

WEEK 11: ON THE STREET

- Durán-Martínez, Angélica. 2015. Drugs Around the Corner: Domestic Drug Markets and Violence in Colombia and Mexico. *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 57(3): 122–146.
- Levitt, Steven D. and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh. 2000. An Economic Analysis of a Drug-Selling Gang's Finances. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Vol. 115, No. 3 (Aug., 2000), pp. 755-789

WEEK 12: LIBERTÉ, EGALITÉ... CITÉ?

- Harvey, David. 2008. The Right to the City. *New Left Review*, 53, 23-40.
- Edésio Fernandes. 2007. Implementing the urban reform agenda in Brazil. *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 19 (1): 177-189.
- Collier, P., & Venables, A. J. (2014). *Housing and Urbanization in Africa Unleashing a Formal Market Process*.