The City: Approaches to Urban Studies
Tuesday and Thursday
2:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.
Healy 104

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Course Description: This course provides an interdisciplinary introduction to the study of cities and urban life. Cities are socially and politically contested spaces, and researchers have sought for more than a century to understand the process of urban development and the consequence of urban life. Some argue that cities represent the crowning achievement of modernity; others suggest that cities are isolating and alienating, fostering anomie, rather than social cohesion. The course integrates work by urban planners, architects, political scientists, geographers and sociologists to provide a comprehensive set of tools to understand and analyze modern urban life. It begins with an analysis of the dynamics of capitalist urbanization and examines socio-spatial changes in the urban landscape in the early twentieth century. The course investigates the rise of urban ghettos in the post-War city, the growth of suburbia, and utopian schemes to reimage the American urban landscape. Although the course focuses primarily on the United States, we will also discuss the rise of global cities, mega-cities and slums in the Global South.
**Course Readings:** The following four texts are available from the Georgetown University Bookstore.


Additional readings will be posted on the course Blackboard page [BB].

**Course Requirements:** Students are required to attend the bi-weekly lectures. These lectures are intended to introduce major concepts and provide a space for students to discuss ideas central to the course. The readings compliment the lectures, but should not be considered a substitute for them. Material from both the readings and the lectures will be part of the midterm and final exams.

- **Attendance and Participation:** Students are required to attend every meeting of the class and participate actively during in-class discussions. Attendance and participation are worth 10 percent of your final grade.

- **Reaction Papers:** Over the course of the fourteen-week semester, students will be required to submit ten one-page (single-spaced) reaction papers. Further guidelines for the reflection papers are at the end of the syllabus. These assignments are due at the beginning of class on Thursdays and will be returned at the beginning of class on Tuesdays. They can cover any of the readings assigned for that week. If students submit more than ten papers, the top ten grades will be counted toward your final mark. They are worth 20 percent of your final grade.

- **Midterm:** A midterm exam on March 1st will be worth 30 percent of your final grade.

- **Final Exam:** The final exam will be worth 40 percent of your grade. The exam is cumulative, but will focus on course material from the second half of the course.

- **Final Exam Alternative:** Students are invited to write an original research paper on a topic of their choice instead of taking the final exam. If you wish to write a research paper, you must have your topic approved before Easter Break. The research paper will be due on the same day as the final exam. It should be between 6,000 and 7,000 words (~20-25 pages).

- **Extra Credit Options:** Several times throughout the semester, I will offer short extra-credit assignments, the details of which will be discussed in class.
Additional Course Information

- **Plagiarism:** Please review the Undergraduate Honor Council statement on Plagiarism available here: [http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html](http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html). Students caught plagiarizing will automatically fail the course.

- **Attendance and Participation:** I expect students to attend every lecture during the semester. Students will be penalized for unexcused absences. Students are expected to participate regularly.

- **Arriving Late to Class:** Please arrive promptly to class. Arriving late disrupts the flow of class.

- **Late Assignments:** Late assignments will not be accepted. This includes weekly reaction papers and extra credit assignments, all of which are due at the beginning of class.

- **Office Hours:** I will hold office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:30 – 1:30. Students wishing to meet with me outside of those hours are invited to email me to schedule an appointment.

- **Assigned Readings:** You are expected to carefully, thoroughly read each of the assigned readings before class. Skimming readings twenty minutes before class is not the same as reading carefully. Please come prepared to discuss the readings in class.

- **G-Chat, Twitter and other Online Distractions:** You are welcome to use your computer to take notes during class, but I will insist that you resist online distractions.

- **Additional Materials:** Throughout the semester, I will draw your attention to relevant articles, exhibits, news stories, etc. While not required reading, these materials will link concepts from the course to contemporary urban life. As you come across relevant information, I would encourage you to share it with your classmates, as well.

- **Facebook:** I will use Facebook to communicate assignments, remind you of deadlines, and post extra-credit assignments. I will also alert you to relevant articles, and encourage you to do the same. You may even find a hint or two before your midterm and final on your Facebook feed. You can “like” my Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/professormccabe](http://www.facebook.com/professormccabe).
Course Schedule

**Introducing the Urban Question**

January 12\(^{th}\) – **Course Introduction and Overview**

**The Capitalist City**

January 17\(^{th}\) – **Industrial Urbanization**


[Note: If you want an overview to Sugrue’s book, I would encourage you to read the Introduction, as well.]

January 19\(^{th}\) – **Life in the Industrial City**


**Urbanism as a Way of Life? Social Life in the Modern City**

January 24\(^{th}\) – **The Psychology of the Modern City**

Simmel, Georg. 1903. “The Metropolis and Mental Life.” [PK]

January 26\(^{th}\) – **Social Inquiry and the Chicago School**

Wirth, Louis. 1938. “Urbanism as a Way of Life.” [PK]


**Imagining the Utopian City**

January 31\(^{st}\) – **Deconcentrating the City**


February 2nd – **Reconcentrating the City**


Le Corbusier. 1929. Excerpts from *The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning* (pp. xxi-xxvii, 1-26, 84-103, 163-178). [BB]

**The City of Exchange and Renewal**

February 7th – **The Political Economy of Place**


February 9th – **Renewal in the Capitalist City**


[Note: There are two versions of Harvey’s article on Blackboard. One is the original article from the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* and the other is a condensed version from an urban reader. You are invited to read either version, the first being a more complete (albeit denser) accounting of his ideas.]


**The City in Decline**

February 14th – **Economic Restructuring and Deindustrialization**

Sugrue, Thomas. 2005. “‘The Damning Mark of False Prosperities’: The Deindustrialization of Detroit” and “Forget about Your Inalienable Right to Work: Responses to Industrial Decline and Discrimination.” [TS]

February 16th – **Urban Renewal and the Creation of the Urban Ghetto**

Sugrue, Thomas. 2005. “Class, Status, and Residence: The Changing Geography of Black Detroit” and the subsection entitled “Urban Renewal” (pp. 47-51) [TS]


**The Segregated City**

February 21st – **The Consequences of Segregation**


February 23rd – **Beyond Black and White**


Davis, Mike. 1999. “Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the Big City.” [BB]

**Midcourse Review, Exam and Spring Break**

February 28th – Review

March 1st – Midterm

March 6th – Spring Break

March 8th – Spring Break

**The City Explodes**

March 13th – **Building the American Suburb**


March 15th – **Sprawl and the Postwar Metropolis**


**The City Rediscovered**

March 20th – **The Political Economy of Gentrification**

Smith, Neil. 1986. “Gentrification, the Frontier and the Restructuring of Urban Space.” [BB]


Watch Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing*  
[Note: We will have an optional class viewing of *Do the Right Thing* on Sunday, March 18th.]
March 22\textsuperscript{nd} – **Artists and Authenticity**


**Cities, Communities and Social Life**

March 27\textsuperscript{th} – **Streets and Social Life**


March 29\textsuperscript{th} – **Redesigning Urban Life**

Perry, Clarence. 1929. “The Neighborhood Unit.” [BB]

[Also, poke around the [website](#) for the Congress for the New Urbanism.]


[Note: If this chapter intrigues you, I’ve also included his chapter called, “The City Image and Its Elements” in your pdf.]

**Cities in Global Context**

April 3\textsuperscript{rd} – **Agglomeration and Rise of Global Cities**

Sassen, Saskia. 2011. *Cities in a World Economy.* (Read: Ch. 1-3) [SS]

April 5\textsuperscript{th} – Easter Break

April 10\textsuperscript{th} – **Transnational Flows of Capital and Labor**

Sassen, Saskia. 2011. *Cities in a World Economy.* (Read: Ch. 4-6) [SS]

April 12\textsuperscript{th} – **Megacities and Slums in the Global South**


Publics and Public Spaces

April 17th – Normative Visions of Public Life

Young, Iris Marion. 1990. “City Life and Difference.” [PK]


April 19th – Contesting Public Space


Social Justice and the City

April 24th – Navigating the Right to the City


April 26th – Course Review
Guidelines for Reaction Papers

- Weekly reaction papers are intended to guide students in thinking critically about the readings. They are not intended as summaries of the reading. Although you can take a sentence or two to recount the main point(s) of the readings, these short papers are intended for you to wrestle with the ideas in the text.

- Each paper should be one, single-spaced page. Don’t play with the margins. Don’t worry if your reaction is only three-quarters of a page (but please don’t go over one page).

- Although you are encouraged to weave together ideas from several of the week’s readings, you are not required to address each article in the reaction papers. If one of the articles really struck you, or raised several questions, focus on that article. If you see synergies between several of the readings – or between the readings and concepts discussed previously in the course – weave them together. The best papers often integrate ideas from across the course.

- The goal of these papers is to invite you to critically engage with the readings. A critical essay might challenge some of the claims made by the author. It might raise key questions seemingly overlooked by the author. It might evaluate how the theories in the readings square with your experiences of cities and urban life. It might raise questions about the readings that you would like to discuss in class.

- The quality of your writing counts! It always counts. While I don’t expect these reaction papers to be polished accounts of brilliant revelations gleaned over countless hours of deep reflection, I do expect that your papers will be thoughtful, well-written and proofread.

- There are no right or wrong answers here. If ideas are confusing, try to wrap your head around them. Don’t shy away from readings just because you don’t understand them! If you disagree with an argument, tell me why. If something puzzles you, explain why. If the readings challenge your understanding of cities and urban life, search for an explanation. These papers are your chance to tell me what excites you and what doesn’t, what confuses you and what you understand, what peaks your curiosity and what makes you want to go back to sleep.

- Papers are due at the beginning of class on Thursday. Once I start the lecture, I will not accept papers. I will not accept papers that are more than one-page, single-spaced. I will not accept hand-written papers. There will be no exceptions to these rules.

- Reaction papers will be returned at the beginning of class on Tuesdays. The grading system will be a check minus, check or check plus (corresponding with 0, 1 and 2 points). Students are required to hand in ten reaction papers over the course of the fourteen-week semester, but can opt to hand in more than ten. Only the top ten grades will be counted.