

SOCI-209: The City: Approaches to Urban Studies

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Course Meeting: Monday & Wednesday, 9:30 - 10:45
Course Location: Walsh 391

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1 Course Introduction

This course provides an interdisciplinary introduction to the study of cities and urban life. Cities are socially and politically contested spaces, and observers of urban life have sought for more than a century to understand the process of urbanization and the consequences of living in cities. 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.

The course is divided into four sections, each of which loosely corresponds to one of the books assigned for the course. The first section on the rise of the modern city begins with an analysis of the dynamics of capitalist urbanization and examines socio-spatial changes in the urban landscape during the early twentieth century. In the second section, which focuses on the decline of the American city and the growth of the suburbs, the course investigates the process of economic restructuring that led to the transformation of cities. It considers the massive expansion of post-War suburbs and the corresponding concentration of poverty in the city. The third section, which references the city rediscovered, investigates processes of gentrification and contested public spaces in the city. It examines social interactions and conflict in contemporary cities. In the final section, the course investigates the impact of globalization on cities, especially in the Global South. This analysis includes the growth of slums and the emergence of new mega-cities on a scale unprecedented in urban history. The course concludes by asking about the potential for creating more just, equitable and sustainable cities.

2 Learning Goals

The goal of this course is to assist students in developing the tools to critically understand, evaluate and analyze twenty-first century cities. By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Explain the importance of cities to the growth of a capitalist economy, and evaluate the process of urbanization under capitalism;
- Evaluate the promise of cities to strengthen community life or contribute to processes of atomization;
- Consider the city as both a social and a spatial process, and understand the way social processes are manifested in the physical spaces of the city;
- Identify the impact of globalization on twenty-first century cities, including new patterns of inequality and mobility across and within cities;
- Point to key ideas, thinkers and concepts in the interdisciplinary study of cities and urban life.

3 Course Readings

There are four required books for the course. They are available in the Georgetown University Bookstore, and they are also widely available on Amazon, etc.

- Galser, George. *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City*.
- Zukin, Sharon. *Naked Cities: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places*.
- Weinstein, Liza. *The Durable Slum: Dharavi and the Right to Stay Put in Globalizing Mumbai*.
- Hall, Peter. *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880*.

Additional course readings listed on the syllabus are available on Blackboard.

4 Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend every class during the semester. Students will be required to complete a one-page reaction paper most weeks, as listed on the syllabus. Students will write two essays during the semester and complete a final exam for the course.

4.1 Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend every lecture and participate actively during classroom discussions. Students who arrive after attendance has been taken will be marked as absent. After the first absence, one point will be deducted for each additional absence. Students are expected to participate actively, and the instructor will regularly call on students to encourage critical thinking and active participation throughout the semester. Attendance and class participation are worth 20 points.

4.2 Reaction Papers

Students are required to regularly complete a one-page reaction responding to the week's readings. Prompts for the reaction papers are available at the end of the syllabus. These are due *at the beginning of class on the date listed on the syllabus*. Students will not be permitted to submit these assignments late, as they are meant to be completed before class. Each reaction paper is worth two points (for a total of 20 points).

4.3 Analytical Essays

Students will be required to complete two analytical essays during the course of the semester. The papers have three components, each of which will count toward the final paper grade. First, students must complete *an introduction and detailed outline* to be workshopped with their classmates. After the workshop, students will submit *three copies* of their paper. The papers should be *no more than 4-5 pages*. Finally, students are required to submit grades (via the rubric provided by the instructor) for two of their classmates' papers. Late papers will not be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances with the permission of the dean. Each paper, including the outline and evaluation, is worth 20 points.

4.4 Final Exam

The final exam, which covers material from the entire course, will take place on the date assigned by the Registrar. Except with the written permission of the dean, there will be no changes to the date of the final exam. The final exam is worth 20 percent of your final grade.

5 Nuts and Bolts

5.1 Electronic Devices

We will not be using laptops during the semester. Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Students caught using cell phones during class will be penalized a half-grade from their final grade for each infraction.

5.2 Late Coursework

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the dates listed on the syllabus. Late assignments, and assignment submitted via email, will not be accepted.

5.3 Office Hours

Professor McCabe will schedule office hours via Google Calendar. The link to schedule office hours is at the bottom of his email signature. If you are unable to attend *any* of the office hours through Google Calendar, please email for a separate appointment. Office hours take place in Car Barn, #209-09.

5.4 Plagiarism

Students are required to adhere to the Academic Honor Code, and should review the Undergraduate Honor Council statement on plagiarism. Any student caught plagiarizing will automatically receive a failing grade for the course.

5.5 Grading Guidelines

Grading guidelines for the analytical essays will be provided by the course instructor. The quality of your writing matters, so students will be penalized for typos and grammatical errors on each written assignment.

5.6 Course Presentation

Students will have access to the course presentations (e.g., Slates, Prezis, etc.) through links available at the bottom of Professor McCabe's email signature.

6 Course Readings and Assignments

This section includes the readings, schedule and assignments for the course.

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Jan. 13	Introducing the Urban Question		
Jan. 20	Capitalism and Industrial Urbanization	David A. Gordon, <i>Capitalist Development and the History of American Cities</i> . Peter Hall, <i>City of Dreadful Night: Reactions to the Nineteenth-Century Slum City: London, Paris, Berlin, New York, 1880-1900</i> . Fredrich Engels, <i>Great Towns</i> .	Reaction #1
Jan. 25	The Psychology of the Modern City	Georg Simmel, <i>The Metropolis and Mental Life</i> .	
Jan. 27	Social Inquiry and the Chicago School	Louis Wirth, <i>Urbanism as a Way of Life</i> . Ernest Burgess, <i>The Growth of the City</i> .	Reaction #2
Feb. 1	Imagining a Deconcentrated Utopia	Peter Hall, <i>The City in the Garden: The Garden City Solution: London, Paris, Berlin, New York, 1900-1940</i> . Frank Lloyd Wright, <i>Broadacre City: A New Community Plan</i> .	
Feb. 3	Imagining a Reconcentrated Utopia	Peter Hall, <i>The City of Towers: The Corbusian Radiant City: Paris, Chandigarh, Brasilia, London, St. Louis, 1920-1970</i> . Le Corbusier, <i>The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning</i> .	Reaction #3
Feb. 8	Uneven Development and the Growth Machine	John Logan and Harvey Molotch, <i>Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place</i> . David Harvey, <i>The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis</i> .	
Feb. 10	Writing Workshop #1		Essay #1 Outline (4 Copies)
Feb. 17	Economic Restructuring and Deindustrialization	George Glaster, <i>Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City</i> , Ch. 1-5. Peter Eisinger, <i>Is Detroit Dead?</i>	Essay #1 (3 Copies)

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Feb. 22	Urban Renewal and the Urban Ghetto	William Julius Wilson, <i>The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy</i> . Loic Wacquant, <i>The Ghetto, the State and the New Capitalist Economy</i> .	Essay #1 Grades
Feb. 24	Segregation in the Modern City	Doug Massey and Nancy Denton, <i>The Continuing Causes of Segregation</i> . George Galster, <i>Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City</i> , Ch. 6-9.	Reaction #4
Feb. 29	Building the American Suburb	Peter Hall, <i>The City on the Highway: The Automobile Suburb: Long Island, Wisconsin, Los Angeles, Paris, 1920-1987</i> . Kenneth Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States</i> , Ch. 10-11.	
Mar. 2	The Sprawling Morphology of the Exurbs	Joel Garreau, <i>The Search for the Future Inside Ourselves: Life on the New Frontier</i> . Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zberk and Jeff Speck, <i>Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream</i> , Ch. 1-3.	Reaction #5
Mar. 14	Artists and Authenticity	Sharon Zukin, <i>Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places</i> , Introduction and Ch. 1-3.	
Mar. 16	The Political Economy of Gentrification	Neil Smith, <i>Gentrification, the Frontier and the Restructuring of Urban Space</i> . Neil Smith, <i>Class Struggle on Avenue B: The Lower East Side as the Wild Wild West</i> .	Reaction #6
Mar. 21	Negotiating Community on Streets and Public Spaces	Jane Jacobs, <i>The Use of Sidewalks</i> . Iris Marion Young, <i>The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference</i> . Lyn Lofland, <i>The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory</i> .	
Mar. 23	Conflicting Visions of Public Life	Don Mitchell, <i>The End of Public Space? Peoples Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy</i> . Sharon Zukin, <i>Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places</i> , Ch. 4-6 and Conclusion.	Reaction #7

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Mar. 30	Writing Workshop #2		Essay #2 (4 Copies)
Apr. 4	Global Networks and Nodes	Saskia Sassen, <i>Cities in a World Economy</i> , Ch. 1-3.	
Apr. 6	Globalizing Inequalities	Susan Fainstein, <i>Inequalities in Global City-regions</i> . Liza Weinstein, <i>The Durable Slum: Dharavi and the Right to Stay Put</i> , Introduction and Ch. 1-2.	Essay #2 (3 Copies)
Apr. 11	Informal Economies and Slums	Mike Davis, <i>Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat</i> . Liza Weinstein, <i>The Durable Slum: Dharavi and the Right to Stay Put</i> , Ch. 3-4.	Essay #2 Grades
Apr. 13	Mega-Cities, Mega-Regions	Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, <i>From Global Cities to Globalized Urbanization</i> . Peter Hessler, <i>The Wonder Years: Boom Times in a Chinese Village</i> . Matthew Gandy, <i>Learning from Lagos</i> .	Reaction #8
Apr. 18	No Class		
Apr. 20	Preservation and Sustainability	Edward Glaeser, <i>Triumph of the City</i> , Ch. 8. Brundtland Commission, <i>Our Common Future</i> , excerpts.	Reaction #9
Apr. 25	Rethinking the Right to the City	Liza Weinstein, <i>The Durable Slum: Dharavi and the Right to Stay Put</i> , Ch. 5. David Harvey, <i>The Right to the City</i> . Peter Marcuse, <i>From critical urban theory to the right to the city</i> .	
Apr. 27	Social Justice and the City	Next City, <i>The Just City Essays: 26 Visions for Urban Equity, Inclusivity and Opportunity</i> .	Reaction #10
May 2	Conclusion: Revisiting the City as Place and Process		

7 Analytical Essays

This section includes guidelines, prompts and instructions for the analytical essays.

7.1 Essay Guidelines

Both of the essay assignments include three components: an introduction and outline; a final essay; and a graded response to the essays of two of your classmates.

Introduction and Outline: For each essay workshop, you are expected to bring a one-paragraph introduction and a detailed outline. Your introductory paragraph should provide a clear, convincing introduction to your paper, including a strong overview of your thesis and arguments. The paragraph should be clearly written, and it should build directly from the essay prompt. The detailed outline, on the other hand, should provide a clear sense of the structure and flow of your essay. It will methodically lay out your core arguments, provide your evidence, and relate those pieces back to your thesis. The outline should not exceed a single page. For each workshop, you should bring four copies of your introduction and outline (printed on a single, double-sided piece of paper) to class.

Final Essay: Building from the writing workshop, you will have one week to craft a four or five-page paper. Guidelines for the paper are outlined in the following section. Students should focus on writing a concise, well-argued essay that responds to the essay prompt. A strong outline and introduction will make the writing process substantially easier. Students are required to submit three copies of their essays (printed on double-sided paper, stapled and with only their student ID / GoCard number, rather than their name).

Grading Guidelines: Students will be assigned two papers to grade using the rubric provided by the instructor. For each paper, students are required to complete the grading rubric and write one short paragraph (4-6 sentences) identifying strengths and weaknesses of the paper. These grades will be considered in providing a final assessment of the paper.

7.2 Analytical Essay Prompts

Students are required to submit two analytical essays during the semester. For the first essay, which is due on Wednesday, February 17th, they are required to choose from one of the following prompts:

Prompt 1: In *The Metropolis and Mental Life*, Simmel argued that urban life is overstimulating and alienating, forcing citizens to adopt a blasé attitude to endure the everyday realities of living in cities. Yet, others argue that city life helps citizens to foster a stronger sense of community. What is your position on this debate? Does urban life alienate people

from one another, or does it encourage people to form stronger communities?

Prompt 2: In *Urban Fortunes*, Logan and Molotch refer to the city as a growth machine. They argue that institutions and actors throughout the city — from universities to developers to the city government itself — line up behind the shared goal of urban growth. They believe that growth helps cities to flourish. Critics of this perspective, though, argue that growth is not inherently good for cities, as the rewards of urban growth are unevenly shared. In other words, some groups benefit from urban growth while others lose. What do you think? Is growth unquestionably beneficial for cities, or do you agree with critics who claim that, since the benefits are unevenly distributed, the goal of growth is not inherently good?

For the second essay, which is due on Wednesday, April 6th, students are required to chose from one of the following prompts:

Prompt 1: The study of contemporary cities often investigates the process of gentrification. Critics contend that the term is so over-used that it no longer constitutes a useful analytical tool. If so many places are gentrifying, they ask, what does it actually mean for a neighborhood to gentrify? Others maintain that gentrification refers to a very specific process — one that is racialized, involves rent-seeking and leads to displacement. In this essay, craft an argument to describe your understanding of gentrification. What does it mean to say that a neighborhood is gentrifying? Does this terminology constitute a useful analytical tool for describing a distinctive urban process?

Prompt 2: Observers of public space in American cities have recently noted the increased privatization of these spaces. Physical barriers, surveillance mechanisms and design decisions are intended to keep certain people from using public spaces, they contend. Increasingly, public spaces — like Zuccotti Park, home to the Occupy Wall Street movement, or the High Line, hailed as one of the premier urban parks — are maintained, patrolled and funded by private groups, rather than the city government. These changes raise questions about what constitutes a public space. In this essay, craft an argument explaining the conditions under which an urban space can rightfully be understood to be public. You can consider the ownership structure, the types of permissible activities or other factors that go into making a space public in American cities.

7.3 Writing Guidelines

Overview: The analytical essay is an opportunity for you to take a position, develop a series of arguments, and offer evidence in support of your claims. Strong essays have a clear and convincing thesis backed by 2-3 well-crafted arguments. Essays should be no

more than five double-spaced pages with standard 1-inch margins and 11- or 12-point font. (Your works cited page can be an additional page.)

Format: There are typically three components to the analytical essay - an introduction, a body of evidence/arguments, and a conclusion. In a short essay of this length, the sections do not need to be separated by section headings. The goal of the introduction is to develop a clear, convincing thesis statement. You can also provide a brief roadmap of the essay, introducing readers to the main arguments that you will develop. In the body of the essay, you should work to craft a series of arguments in support of your thesis. These arguments should draw on evidence and ideas, either from course material or readings outside of the course. The arguments should logically flow from one another, and they should clearly support the thesis of the essay. Finally, the conclusion should concisely restate the main points of the essay, address counter-arguments, and offer closure for the reader.

References: You are invited to reference up to five sources outside of the course syllabus, although you are not required to do so. References, including material cited from the course syllabus, should be cited in the standard format by sociologists, as noted below. Within text citations typically take two forms.

As McCabe (2013) argues, homeowners are more likely to engage in particular types of civic activities, including voting and attending town meetings.

Or

Homeowners are more likely to engage in particular types of civic activities, including voting and attending town meetings (McCabe 2013).

References in your works cited page should take the following format.

McCabe, B. J. (2013). Are Homeowners Better Citizens? Homeownership and Civic Engagement in the United States. *Social Forces* 95(3): 54-72.

McCabe, B. J. (2016). *No Place Like Home: Wealth, Community and the Politics of Homeownership*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Grading Rubric: The grading rubric for your essays will be provided by the instructor. It covers four components that will be considered in marking the essays — thesis; argument and evidence; organization and structure; and originality.

Final Reminders: While these essays are an opportunity for you to develop your style as a writer, I want you to adhere to a set of guidelines in crafting your essays. Doing so

will help you to become a stronger writer. Consider these guidelines as you work to craft your essays for the course.

- Follow your outline: Creating an outline helps to structure your essay, allowing you to shift around ideas before committing them to paper. Often, you will find the process of writing a paper to be easier (or less frustrating) when you start with a detailed outline. Spending the time to craft a thorough outline will make the writing process much easier (and less painful).
- No pull-quotes: Please do not use pull quotes from books and articles you're reading. You should summarize and reference the ideas, but you should not quote directly from other secondary sources.
- Focus on the quality of your writing: Deciding what to say is critical as you develop an outline, but deciding how to say it is important for writing your paper. These analytical essays are opportunities to improve your skills as a writer — the most important skill you will develop at Georgetown. Strong writing helps to convey smart ideas, and thinking carefully about the craft of writing will help you write a better essay.
- Read your essay aloud: Before you submit your paper, read it aloud to yourself. Listen to your own voice as a writer. If your friends and roommates are willing to listen, read it to them, too.
- Do not confuse the vague for the profound: Be as specific as possible in your argument. Make your case clearly. Use concise examples. Vague claims and abstract ideas do not make for strong essays.
- Do not use the thesaurus: It is surprisingly easy to identify words that students wrote using the built-in thesaurus. Think about what you want to say, and spend time coming up with the right word(s) on your own. This is part of developing your voice as a writer.
- Do not plagiarize: Before you start writing, review the Georgetown Honor Code and guidelines for plagiarism. It is always helpful to refresh your memory — even if you think you know what plagiarism is.
- Keep reading: If you get stuck in the writing process, or you're having trouble organizing your ideas, try reading. The world is full of good writing, and it's often helpful to read this writing — for content, argument, organization, etc.
- Highlight and underline: Your paper should have a thesis statement and clearly-stated arguments. Double-check yourself by highlighting or underlining these statements where

they appear in your essay. Often, these will be taken directly from your outline.

- Make this the best paper of your college career. When you apply to internships, graduate school or jobs after college, prospective employers and schools will ask for a writing sample. Use this opportunity to write a clear and convincing essay that you can easily use as a writing sample. You will save yourself time in the future by making this the best paper you've written at Georgetown.

8 Reaction Papers

Students are required to submit ten reaction papers over the course of the semester, as listed on the syllabus. These assignments should be no longer than a single, double-spaced page. You should complete them after finishing the reading for the week. Below are the prompts for these assignments.

- Jan. 20: What are the key features of capitalism as an economic system?
- Jan. 27: Do you think that the *dartboard* model of urbanism described by Chicago School theorists still explains the growth and development of modern cities?
- Feb. 3: Describe a couple of the key differences between the Garden City, the Radiant City and Broadacre City.
- Feb. 24: Why do you think segregation persists (and is so difficult to overcome) in the United States?
- Mar. 2: How does suburbanization shape the way citizens interact, participate in the political process, or form meaningful social communities?
- Mar. 16: In your opinion, why do some neighborhood gentrify, but others do not?
- Mar. 23: Social scientists are increasingly interested in urban diversity. Do you think urban planners and policymakers can play a role in generating diversity? Why or why not?
- Apr. 13: What do you think are the primary causes of the growth of slums and informal settlements in the Global South?
- Apr. 20: How can we make cities more sustainable to address concerns about climate

change or environmental challenges?

- Apr. 27: In your opinion, what are the most important considerations and conditions for the creation of a just city?