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USP 614: History and Theory of Urban Studies

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"History and Theory of Urban Studies" is intended to provide an intellectual context for advanced courses in the urban studies graduate program by framing the historical process of urbanization, outlining the evolution of urban social analysis, and exploring the underlying ideas and approaches that are shared by the different academic disciplines. Its focus is both on the content of urban analysis and on the underlying assumptions about cities and city living that have shaped that analysis. The course will examine both classic writers on cities and new approaches that have emerged in the last few years.

The core reading will be found in the following books:

Richard LeGates and Frederic Stout, The City Reader
(there is a Kindle version available as well as paperback)
Simon Parker, Urban Theory and Urban Experience
Carl Abbott, Urban America in the Modern Age

Students will be responsible for three short written assignments that will be starting points for class discussion.

Class Schedule and Readings:

Jan. 12: Three Urban Revolutions
(*LGS*: K. Davis, Childe, Webber, Castells, Beaverstock, Zhang)

Jan. 19: Industrialization and Urbanization
(*LGS*: Engels, Warner)

Jan. 26: Urban Crisis and Social Theory
(*Parker*, Chp 2; *LGS*, J.B.Jackson)

Feb. 2: Designing and Criticizing Utopia
(*Parker*, Chp. 4*; LGS*: Mumford, Jacobs, Duany+Plater-Zyberk, Olmsted, Howard, Le Corbusier, Wright, Calthorpe+Fulton, CNU, Perry, Sitte)

First paper due

Feb. 9: Progressive America and the Tradition of Social Research
(*Parker*, Chp. 3; *LGS*: duBois, Wirth, Burgess

Feb. 16 Building Modern Cities: From Chicago to Los Angeles to Las Vegas to . . .
(*Abbott*, Chps. 2-4; *Parker*, Chp 5; *LGS*: K. Jackson, Fishman, Soja, Sassen, Dear, Spain)

Feb. 23: Contested Places
(*Parker*, Chp 6-8; *LGS*: Madanipour, M. Davis, Harvey, Forester, Molotch)

Second paper due

March 1: Urban Studies as an Academic Field

March 8: Imagination and Representation
(*Parker*, Chp 9; *LGS*: Stout, Lynch)

March 13: Mindsets, Metaphors, Models: Pinning Down Some Paradigms

March 20: Discussion of third paper

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First Assignment: Coming to Terms with the Urban-Industrial Revolution

The movement of millions of people into cities during the nineteenth century transformed British society. By the 1890s the lure of plentiful jobs and better schools, housing, and wages had tempted over half the population into settlements bigger than 20,000, and almost three-quarters of the English lived in a town of some sort. England had become an industrial, urban society, the first in the world with a majority of its citizens city dwellers. British cities and the people who inhabited them quickly became objects of concern and controversy. Novelists and journalists, statisticians and social scientists, clergymen and physicians, architects and administrators, and numerous other writers explored, pondered, and debated the issues raised by rapid urban growth. Their books and pamphlets ranged from general studies of cities to works on such urban problems as sanitation, housing, and poverty. Some were written by trained specialists for their colleagues, but many were intended for a broad reading public. Their observations on contemporary problems were accompanied by efforts to devise workable reforms that would lead to future progress. Nineteenth century writings about cities thus embodied a wide range of social outlooks and values.

Choose one of the following books, *or another book dealing with urban life and published in Britain between 1815 and 1914*, as the basis for a short essay (5-7 pages) that focuses on the following sorts of questions.

Is the city generally portrayed in a positive or negative manner? Does the author emphasize the city as a source of opportunities or problems? Of what types?

How does the author portray urban society? What types of social bonds are described?

Is the author a critic or a reformer? What sorts of solutions to urban problems are proposed? Does the author emphasize economic solutions? Political solutions? Physical planning solutions?

Thomas Archer, The Pauper, the Thief, and the Convict
James Cantlie, Degeneration amongst Londoners
Hector Gavin, Unhealthiness of London
George Godwin, London Shadows
James Hole, The Homes of the Working Classes
John Hollingshead, Ragged London in 1861
Walter Besant, London in the Nineteenth Century
Frederick Driman, Municipalities at Work
John Shaw, Travels In England
Hugh Shimmin, Liverpool Life; the Courts and Alleys of Liverpool
Robert Slaney, Reports of the House of Commons
Edwin Holder, Cities of the World
Helen Bosanquet, Social Conditions in Provincial Towns

Robert Williams, London Rookeries and Colliers Slums
J. R. Vine, English Municipal Institutions
John Garwood, The Million Peopled City
Walter Besant, East London
George Sims, How the Poor Live
Charles Bosanquet, London: Some Account of its Growth, Charitable Agencies, and Wants
Robert Vaughan, The Age of Great Cities
Thomas Beames, The Rookeries of London
James Greenwood, The Seven Curses of London
Arnold White, The Problems of a Great City
Charles Booth, Life and Labor in London (multi-volume work, pick one)
Thomas Mayhew, London Labor and the London Poor (ditto)

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Second Assignment: Journal Review

Scholarly disciplines and fields of study define themselves through communities of practice. Among these aspects of practice is the development of a set of scholarly journals in which scholars discuss a shared set of issues and theoretical approaches. The following journals constitute a possible core for the field of Urban Studies. Read (and skim) through at least one recent year of issues and sample issues in other years. Evaluate your journal as to:

(a) academic rigor and intended audience
(b) range of subject matter, theoretical concerns, and methodologies
(d) breadth and/or depth of coverage
(e) connections to other disciplines

Then consider the relationship between the journal and the hypothesized field of "Urban Studies." Relying on the journal as evidence, how would you (or could you) define this field or discipline? The essays will run between 1200 and 1800 words (that's 5-7 pages).

Cities
City
City and Community
City and Society
Cityscape
Economic Development Quarterly
Environment and Behavior
Environment and Planning A
Environment and Planning B: Planning & Design
Environment and Planning D: Society and Space
Housing Policy Debate
International J. of Urban and Regional Research
Journal of the American Planning Association
Journal of Architectural and Planning Research
J. of Contemporary Ethnography [Urban Life]
Journal of Planning Education and Research
Journal of Urban Affairs
Journal of Urban Design
Journal of Urban Economics
Journal of Urban Health
Journal of Urban History
Journal of Urban Planning and Development
Journal of Urban Technology
Journal of Urbanism
Landscape and Urban Planning
Urban Affairs Review
Urban Ecosystems
Urban Education
Urban Geography
Urban History
Urban History Review
Urban Policy and Research
Urban Research and Practice
Urban Studies

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Third Assignment
Cities on Screen

Analyze a feature-length (non-documentary) movie or a television series as an imaginative representation of urban life. Ask the same sorts of questions as you might ask of a novel. Is the urban setting depicted positively or negatively? Is there implicit social science buried beneath the surface of the movie or show? Does it illustrate or reflect general principles of urban growth and urban life? How would specialists in different urban disciplines critique the depiction of the city and urban life? Does the story depend on the specific nature and attributes of a particular city? That is, would Blade Runner be so compelling if it were set in future Minneapolis? Would anyone have paid to see Falling Down if Michael Douglas had gotten stuck in traffic in Akron? Would it have been as interesting if Lola had run through Indianapolis rather than Berlin? Would we believe Tony Soprano in Beaverton?

Indeed, in what ways do depictions of cities on film (or on television) supplant the historic role of novels as the site for detailed representation of qualities of place and place-based social systems. For example, Seattle seems to most observers to be a "fast-track" city compared to Portland. Who makes such comments? How are they disseminated? In what media (what's the social and professional niche of the Tom Hanks character in Sleepless in Seattle? of Frasier and Niles Crane?)? [You might contrast this cinematic city with the dark Seattle of Sherman Alexie's novel Indian Killer].

You are welcome to pick films made in countries other than the United States, and television shows from other countries as long as they're in English. Please check with me before you decide; I'm open minded but I have limits (The Truman Show is fine, but Ace Ventura is pushing it). With television the challenge is to find shows for which the setting is more than perfunctory.

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