How do we define “urban politics”? What constitutes politics and where does it take place? What is political about the naming of politics, and about theorizing urban life more broadly? How do different ways of studying urban life – different epistemologies – transform urban life and urban space itself? We will tackle these questions and others in this weekly graduate seminar. An introductory survey of key approaches to understanding the everyday politics and social relations of the city, this course incorporates theoretical and empirical literature from a variety of disciplinary traditions contributing to urban studies. In addition to providing students with an overview of “canonical” debates, the course draws on recent and new urban scholarship examining the myriad ways that urban society, politics, and space are co-constitutive. Our discussion will not be limited to either formal politics (i.e., what takes place in city council chambers and the voting booth) or the grassroots political mobilization of urban social movements; it also extends to the politics of everyday life, to how urban space produces difference and difference produces urban space, to the flows of people, capital, and resources comprising urban space, and the ways in which these are diverted or immobilized—by policy, by force, and by consent. Critically engaging with the various theoretical constructs used to describe the Neoliberal City, the Sustainable City, the Gendered City, the Settler Colonial City, the Postcolonial City, among others, we will also engage with the politics of scholarship, asking what it means to “decolonize” or “queer” urban theory itself. Part of the required Urban Studies core, this seminar complements History and Theory of Urban Studies (USP 614) and Urban Economic and Spatial Structure (USP 613), but master’s and doctoral students in geography, sociology, and anthropology focusing on urban issues are sure to find the material covered in this course relevant to their programs, as well.
Course Texts

Plan to read about 85 to 100 pages of dense academic prose each week. Most readings will be available as PDFs on D2L, but the following books are also required:


Some readings also come from these recommended (but not required) books:


In general, the H&B chapters provide a good review of the historical development of key theories and debates in urban studies (some of which you covered in the previous two courses). Other weeks, we will read similar “review” chapters from other sources to help orient the week’s readings. In addition to these overviews, we will dig into three or four additional readings (usually journal articles). While a handful of these are “canonical” to some extent, most are more recent contributions to the literature (often from the past year or two) that exemplify, build upon, or challenge the ideas raised in the review chapters.

In addition to the assigned readings, I encourage you to also explore some of the canonical literature discussed in the review chapters. The following Routledge readers include some of this literature, and also provide useful introductory overviews:

- The Urban & Regional Planning Reader, Birch, ed.
- The Global Cities Reader, Brenner & Keil, eds.
- The City Cultures Reader, Borden & Hall, eds.
- The Urban Geography Reader, Fyfe & Kenny, eds.
- The Cybercities Reader, Graham, ed.
- The Urban Sociology Reader, Jan & Mele, eds

- The City Reader, LeGates & Stout, eds.
- Cities of the Global South Reader, Miraftab & Kudma, eds.
- The Urban Politics Reader, Strom & Mollenkopf, eds.

Also see:


More importantly, you should dig into the various journals focusing on urban society and politics. Some key journals include: City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action; City & Community; Cities; Environment and Planning A; Environment & Planning C: Politics and

You should also dig into the excellent urban-related content relevant to this course found in journals without a specific urban focus (e.g. Antipode; DuBois Review; Environmental Justice; Ethnic and Racial Studies; Gender, Place & Culture; Social & Cultural Geography; Territory, Politics, Governance) and the flagship disciplinary journals (e.g., American Sociological Review; Annals of the American Association of Geography; Cultural Anthropology; Gender & Society; Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, etc.). Sociology Compass, Geography Compass, and Progress in Human Geography all provide excellent literature reviews on specific topics (some urban). But don’t forget that nearly all journal articles begin with a lit review, so this is often the best place to start when trying to wrap your head around a particular debate.

And now an important note on reading. For this class – and throughout your academic careers! – it’s really important to read strategically. Remember that not all text is created equal. Some passages are worth skimming, while others you will want to read more than once. So unless you’re trying to learn about the particular empirical content area of the paper (e.g., post-war housing policy in Saskatoon or informal water provisioning in Paramaribo), don’t waste your time taking notes on the empirics. Instead, your goal should be to identify the authors’ key claims, the arc of their argument, and how they develop and support it. Most authors flag these things throughout, because they want their argument to be clear and concise and to remind the reader where they’ve been and where they’re going with the paper. And most articles follow a relatively formulaic organization, so you’ll quickly learn where to find the lit review, the gaps in the lit / justification for the study, the theoretical framework (what I call the “theory drop”), the methods, the empirics, and finally the analysis of empirics using the theoretical framework. Remember that while the empirics themselves may not be useful for your own work, understanding how an author uses a particular theoretical framework to interpret their empirics – and/or conversely uses these empirics to make a broader theoretical claim – may be incredibly useful to you. This is what you’re looking for—take notes on these things! And be sure to highlight, star, underline, annotate key passages, whatever, but do so sparingly, so you can go back and quickly pick out the most important bits.

In addition to identifying the central arguments/claims/hypotheses and how they support them, you should also focus on how the author is situating their work. What are the scholarly debates they’re engaging in? What gaps in the literature are they trying to fill? Whose work are they building on? Disagreeing with? It’s also important to think about the research design and methodology. What are the key theoretical constructs or frameworks they’re employing? What kind of data are they using to support their claims and how did they collect it? What are the strengths and weaknesses of their argument and/or methodology?
Expectations, Assignments & Grading

At the graduate level, my job as a professor isn’t to lecture, but rather, to structure the course, to ask questions, and to keep us on track. Our goals each week are to critically engage with the readings, to situate them conceptually in relation to the other readings, and to think about their theoretical and methodological implications for your own research. In order for this to work, it’s essential that you come to class having read all assigned readings and prepared to discuss them thoughtfully and critically. It will be obvious if you come unprepared. Grades are based on the following:

**Participation** (10%)  
This is a discussion-driven seminar. You are responsible for reading the assigned materials before class and coming ready to discuss. Everyone must join in the discussion. Remember to “share air”, i.e., if you’re shy, push yourself to talk and if you’re a talker, be conscientious not to dominate the discussion. To help move the discussion forward, you should come to class each week with one or two discussion questions. You will need to post these to the week’s Discussion Questions forum on D2L by 8pm each Wednesday so others have a chance to read over them before we meet the next morning. NB: Everyone should post a minimum of 8 times over the course of the term.

**Presentation** (15%)  
Everyone will be required to give a 10 to 15-minute presentation on the readings at least once. You should be prepared to walk us through the key concepts/arguments/theories from the week’s readings. You should also be prepared to get our discussion started (and keep it going, if necessary!) with a few questions/topics/themes of import. Look over the discussion questions posted to D2L by your peers as you organize your questions and discussion topics. Please prepare an outline/diagram/visual aid to steward us through this process. This can be a one-page handout, or you can use the blackboard.

**Reading Responses** (40%)  
You are responsible for writing a short response paper or précis (~250 to 500 words) for any 7 of our class meetings. Your response should not simply summarize the key arguments from the reading; rather, it should identify and synthesize the key themes, leitmotifs, or arguments running through the ensemble of readings. You can raise new questions, or can respond to some of the questions raised by others on D2L. Furthermore, you should incorporate some reflection of your own, ie, discuss what the readings bring up for you personally (e.g., do the readings challenge your thinking? Do they reinforce it? What impact might they have on your work as a planner or academic?). *Please upload a copy to D2L Dropbox by class time each week.* Please use 1” margins, 12pt font, and single-spacing! NB: You must turn in a response
for any week you are absent, barring extenuating circumstances. I grade these with either a ✓+, ✓, or ✓-, which equate to a grade of 96, 88, and 80, respectively.

**Final Paper (35%)**

In addition to your weekly reading responses, you are required to write a short final paper (3,000 to 4,000 words). This should be a well-structured essay that applies some (but clearly not all!) of what we’ve covered in class to your research area of interest. Your paper must therefore address some intersection of social structures or relations, politics, and urban space. In addition to whatever readings may be relevant from class, I want you to select and read at least 5 additional articles relevant to your paper topic. This paper should serve as a building block in the development of your thesis or dissertation project.

To help get started, you will first prepare a paper abstract (200 to 300 words) and bibliography (minimum of five new references + whatever course readings you intend to engage with) for submission one month prior to the final due date. This counts for 5% of your final paper grade. I highly recommend that you make an appointment with me at some point over the course of the term to discuss your final paper topic. Please note the following due dates:

- **Abstract + bibliography due by Th 2/23 @ 9am**
- **Final paper due by Th 3/23 @ 9am**

Please use 1” margins and single-spaced 12-pt Times New Roman font for all writing assignments. Submit your abstract and final paper as a Word document (not PDF or .odt) so I can insert comments, and upload to the appropriate D2L Dropbox by the due date.

**Grading and Academic Integrity**

My general rubric for graduate-level assignments is as follows:

- A+ or A: Demonstrates original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis, and is clearly written or presented. Excellent work.
- or B+: Presents above average analysis with appropriate evidence to support the ideas and is clearly written or presented. Good work.
- B: Shows a basic level of understanding, with analysis limited to the most obvious arguments. Writing is competent. Adequate work.
- or below: Misunderstands or misrepresents the material, or is so poorly written presented as to obscure the analysis. Inadequate work.

You are graduate students and adults so I don’t need to elaborate on plagiarism and related issues of academic integrity as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct. I take this seriously, as I expect you to.
General classroom etiquette

- Please be on time so we can start right at 9am.
- Please inform me ahead of time, if possible, if you are unable to come to class for any reason. Barring extenuating circumstances, you must submit a reading response for any day you miss.
- Turn off cell-phones. Use of laptops is welcome for note taking, but please respect the rest of us by refraining from checking Facebook, email, or any other distraction. To fight temptation, turn off your Wi-Fi if you have to!
- Finally, given the various perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing in the room, please be patient and respectful with one another if you disagree. This class may push you into unfamiliar intellectual territory… I want your brain to hurt, but that’s it!

My contact info

Email: n.mcclintock@pdx.edu
Office: 350E Urban Center

Office hours

In general, my office hours will be TuTh 4 – 4:45pm or by appointment. It’s best to contact me ahead of time to sign up for a slot, as these tend to fill quickly.

Academic accommodations

If you are a student with a documented disability and are registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), please contact me immediately to facilitate arranging academic accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through the DRC should contact the DRC immediately at 503-725-4150.
Other campus resources

PSU’s Student Code of Conduct makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are strictly prohibited and offenses are subject to the full realm of sanctions. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources on PSU’s Enrollment Management & Student Affairs: Sexual Prevention & Response website at http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault.

The PSU Food Pantry offers supplemental food items to currently enrolled PSU students. The pantry is located in SMSU 325. For more information, you can email foodhelp@pdx.edu. For more information on food, housing, financial, utility, and childcare assistance for students, visit http://www.pdx.edu/studentaffairs/CISFS.

The Office of Diversity & Multicultural Student Services (Smith Memorial Union 425) provides structured, academic support service, advising, referrals, and advocacy for first-generation college students, low-income and others facing special challenges. Visit http://www.pdx.edu/dmss/ for info.

The Learning Center (Millar Library 245) mission is to foster the learning process by empowering PSU students to accomplish their academic and personal goals. In addition to helping with current coursework, academic support services can assist in developing effective learning strategies. See http://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/ for more info.

The Writing Center (Cramer 188) will help you with all varieties of projects, including class assignments, resumes, application essays, presentations, and creative writing. It aims to help writers at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to the final draft. You can schedule an appointment online: http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/. Their website also contains resource pages that suggest ideas and strategies for completing writing projects.
Course Outline & Readings

Week 1: Introduction

How did earlier strands of urban theory explain power and difference in cities? How do we define urban politics? Where does it occur? What is political about defining urban politics, and about theorizing urban life more broadly?

- H&B, Ch. 2: Urban Theories under Conditions of Post-Modernity.
- D&M, Ch 1: Davidson & Martin, Thinking Critically about Urban Politics.

Week 2: Machines, Mayors, Regimes

How have scholars theorized “formal” urban politics at over the past several decades? How do growth machines, and urban regimes align and differ as explanatory frameworks? What are their limitations, particularly in an era of “splintered governance”? Where does power lie?

- H&B, Ch. 4: Can Cities Act? Urban Political Economy and the Question of Agency (88-119)
- D&M Ch. 6: McNeill, Mayors and the Representation of Urban Politics.

Week 3: The Neoliberal City

What is neoliberalism and what does neoliberal urbanism look like? What processes, practices, and discourses are central to neoliberalization? What are the limits of neoliberalism as an epistemological framework?

Week 4: City, Ghetto, Suburb

How have urban scholars characterized and explained the relationship between social inequality and urban space? How have different theories of social stratification explained or failed to explain the socio-spatial unevenness of metropolitan regions?

- H&B Ch. 5: Spatial Expressions of Intra-Urban Inequalities. [50 pp]
- D&M Ch. 11: Davidson, Is Class Relevant to Urban Politics? [16 pp]

Week 5: The Gendered City, The Queered City

How are urban spaces gendered, and how do they reify gender and sexual difference? How did the “cultural turn”, and more specifically attention to gender and sexuality, helped to “queer” our understandings of the built environment and of urban politics and social relations? How does attention to embodiment and affect contribute to urban theory?

- H&B Ch. 6: Spatial Expressions of Differentiation.
- D&M Ch. 8: Oswin, Queering the City.

Week 6: The Racialized City

How does race shape urban space and how does urban space shape race? How do the epistemological frameworks presented here -- environmental racism as white privilege, the blues, plantation geographies, etc. -- result in the ontological transformation of urban space? How do they unsettle dominant understandings of racialized “others” and their actions?


**Week 7: The Settler Colonial City, The Postcolonial City**

How did settler colonial logics and practices shaped the cities of the “New World” and how is the “settler colonial present” manifest in urban(izing) spaces today? How do Western/Global North theories fail to explain “the urban” in the Global South, and how do they perpetuate oppressive colonial relations? What might Indigenous or postcolonial urbanisms look like?


**Week 8: Mobility, Immobility, Control**

Urban scholars have long focused on mobility, that is, the movements and flows of people, goods, capital, data, policies and the infrastructure mediating – both facilitating and constraining – such flows. How is mobility constrained? How is the public enrolled in the policing and control of urban space and the mobilities that shape it?

Week 9: The Contested City

What are urban social movements and how do they arise? How have motivations, strategies, and tactics changed in the neoliberal era and why? How do these unfold within or across particular spatial scales?


Week 10: Contested Urban Natures

What does urban politics look like in the more-than-human city? How does urban “nature” and its definitions serve as a key site of contestation? How do each of these authors contest urban nature as a construct? How do the theoretical frameworks, lenses, or constructs they employ allow us to make steps to overcome false binaries (e.g., urban-rural, nature-society)?

- D&M Ch 12: Huber, The Urban Imaginary of Nature: Cities in American Environmental Politics.
## Schedule

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<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Total pages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>H&amp;B Ch. 2; D&amp;M Ch. 1</td>
<td>46</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/19</td>
<td>Machines, Mayors, Regimes</td>
<td>H&amp;B Ch. 4; Logan &amp; Molotch; Morel; D&amp;M Ch. 3 (Ward); D&amp;M Ch. 6 (McNeill)</td>
<td>96</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/26</td>
<td>The Neoliberal City</td>
<td>Theodore, Peck &amp; Brenner; D&amp;M Ch. 4 (Wyly &amp; Newman); Weaver; Long; Le Galès</td>
<td>102</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/2</td>
<td>City, Ghetto, Suburb</td>
<td>H&amp;B Ch. 5; D&amp;M Ch. 11 (Davidson); Wacquant; Li</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/9</td>
<td>The Gendered City, The Queered City</td>
<td>H&amp;B Ch. 6; Garber; Markusen; Kern; D&amp;M Ch. 8: (Oswin)</td>
<td>110</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2/16</td>
<td>The Racialized City</td>
<td>Lipsitz; Gregory; Pulido; Woods; Ramírez</td>
<td>99</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2/23</td>
<td>The Settler Colonial City, The Postcolonial City</td>
<td>Edmonds; Safransky; Porter; Roy; Pieterse Abstract + bibliography due</td>
<td>97</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3/2</td>
<td>Mobility, Immobility, Control</td>
<td>Mose Brown; Simone; Serbulo &amp; Gibson; Meehan; Murphy</td>
<td>91</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>The Contested City</td>
<td>Rabrenovich; Harris; Nicholls; Pearsall &amp; Anguelovski; Stehlin &amp; Tarr; Fredericks</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/16</td>
<td>Contested Urban Natures</td>
<td>Huber; Biehler; McClintock; Knuth; Ranganathan</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam Week</td>
<td>No meeting</td>
<td>Final paper due on Th 3/23. Upload to D2L by 9am.</td>
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**H&B = Harding & Blokland; D&M = Davidson & Martin**