What is “critical” theory and how is it relevant to the study of the city? How can it help us understand the geographies of urbanization and social change? Urbanist Neil Brenner writes that critical urban theory “insists that another, more democratic, socially just and sustainable form of urbanization is possible” and “involves the critique of ideology and the critique of power, inequality, injustice and exploitation, at once within and among cities.” This reading-intensive, discussion-centered graduate seminar will expose students to various critical social theories relevant to the study of cities and the social process that shape them.

In this course, we’ll reflect on how various social theories – including those of Marx, Lefebvre, Bourdieu, Foucault, and a recent cadre of feminist political economists and critical race scholars – can inform our understanding of cities as social and material spaces produced and reshaped by flows of capital, as well as the way that such processes are mediated by the state and articulated along the contours of race, class, and gender. Running through much of this work are reflections on social change, how it arises, and how it can be mobilized.

In Part I of the course, “Capital and the Urban”, we’ll focus on the basics of political economic structures and their spatial implications (Marx, Harvey, Lefebvre), starting with some foundational building blocks of Marxian political economy. Then, in Part II (“Articulations”), we’ll move on to scholars who have pushed beyond these structural understandings by rethinking political economic categories such as class and production, and by demonstrating how capitalism articulates with gender, class, race, and settler colonialism. Finally, in Part III we’ll engage with “Power and the Political” using Foucault and recent debates on what constitutes a truly democratic politics. Throughout the course, we complement our readings of these theoretical frameworks with contemporary empirical scholarship in geography, urban studies, and planning.

By providing a foundation in urban political economy and an introduction to a number of critical theorists and their principal contributions, the course will serve as a point of embarkation into the world of critical urbanism. Some of the theoretical lenses we discuss may prove particularly relevant to thesis or dissertation research addressing relationships between urban processes, (in)equity, and action. Course content is primarily of interest to urban studies, planning, geography, sociology, and anthropology graduate students, but may also be of interest to doctoral students in social work, education, and health seeking to understand urban contexts in which they work.
Course Texts

Plan to read about 150 pages of dense academic prose per week. Given how reading-intensive the course is, you should read strategically [eg, focus on the authors’ key claims or arguments]. In general, it will be helpful to read these in the order listed on the syllabus. We will mostly be reading journal articles and book chapters, available as PDFs posted on D2L. As we will read significant sections [two or more chapters] from the following books, they might also be worth buying if you’re able and interested, but they’re not required:


However, we will read the following book in its entirety, so you’ll need to purchase a copy:


Expectations & Assignments

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, if necessary. 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* [20%]

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 10am each Monday so others have a chance to read over them before we meet. NB: Everyone should post a minimum of 8 times over the course of the term.

*Presentation* [10%]

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.
You are responsible for writing a short response paper or précis (~250 to 500 words) for any 8 of our class meetings. Your response should not simply summarize the key arguments from the reading; rather, it should synthesize the key insights you take from the ensemble of readings and raise new questions, or can respond to some of the questions raised by others on D2L. Please turn in a hard copy of your responses to me at the end of class. 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.

In addition to your weekly reading responses, you are required to write a short final paper (2,500 to 3,000 words). This should be a well-structured essay that applies some of the theory we’ve covered in the course to your research area of interest. Please use 1” margins and single-spaced 12-pt Times New Roman font. Submit as a Word document (not PDF or .odt) so I can insert comments, and upload to your D2L Dropbox by 12 noon on W 12/9. 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.

General classroom etiquette

• Please be on time so we can start right at 2 PM.
• 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!

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.
• A- 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.
• B- 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.

Office hours: MW 1 – 2pm [or by appointment] in 350E URBN. It’s best to contact me ahead of time to sign up for a slot, as these tend to fill quickly. My email is n.mcclintock@pdx.edu.

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 also 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 have not done so already, please complete the required Safe Campus Module in D2L. 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 services to currently enrolled PSU students, by providing a free, welcoming, and inclusive environment to acquire supplemental food items on a regular basis. 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: Critical Theory, Marx, and the City**

  - Introduction [1-11]

**Part I: Capital and the Urban**

**Week 2: Capital, Value, and Production**

- Merrifield, *Metromarxism*  
  - Karl Marx [13-29]
  - Introduction [1-14]
  - Ch.1: Commodities and Exchange: “Chapter 1: The Commodity” [15-47]
  - Ch.3: From Capital to Labor-Power [85-92, 98-105]
  - Ch.1.1. The Two Factors of the Commodity [125-131]
  - Ch. 4. The General Formula for Capital [247-257]
  - Ch. 7. The Labor Process and the Process of Producing Surplus Value [283-306]
  - Ch. 1: Commodities, Values, and Class Relations [20-35]
  - Ch. 6: The Dynamics of Accumulation [156-166]
- Marx, *Capital* Vol. 1
  - Ch. 26. The Secret of Primitive Accumulation [873-876]
- Harvey, *A Companion to Marx’s Capital*
  - Ch. 11: The Secret of Primitive Accumulation [289-313]

**Week 3: Urbanization of Capital and Uneven Development**

  - Ch. 1: The Urbanization of Capital [17-58]
  - Ch. 2: The Urban Process Under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis [59-89]
  - Ch. 3: Land Rent Under Capitalism [90-108]
  - Ch. 4: Class Structure and Residential Differentiation [109-124]
**Week 4: Space, Scale, and Planetary Urbanization**

  o Foreword by Neil Smith [vii – xxiii]
  o Ch. 1: From the City to Urban Society (1-22)
  o Ch. 1: Plan of the Present Work. XVII (36-46)

Choose one:


**Part II: Articulations**

**Week 5: Class**

  o Introduction [1-6]
  o Part II: Field Theory [41-81]
  o Ch. 5: Social class (87-99)
  o Ch. 6: Capital (101-117)
  o Ch. 7: Doxa (119-130)
  o Ch. 1: Social Space and Symbolic Space [1-13]
  o Appendix: Social Space and Field of Power (31-34)

Choose two:

**Week 6: Gender**

  - Introduction: New Frontier’s in Life’s Work [1-18]
  - Introduction [11-17]
  - The Accumulation of Labour and the Degradation of Women [68-75, 92-100]

**Week 7: Race**

  - Introduction [1-18],
  - Ch. 4: A Theory of Racial Formation [105-136]

**Week 8: Settler Colonialism**

  - Introduction: Subjects of Empire [1-24]
  - Ch. 2: For the Land [51-78]
  - Conclusion: Lessons from Idle No More [151-179]
  - Ch. 1: Welcome to the Hotel California [1-28]
  - Ch. 4: Land and the Postcolonial City [105-138]
Part III: Power and the Political

Week 9: Power

  - Introduction [1-9]
  - Ch. 1: Foucault’s theory of power [13-26]
  - Ch. 2: Disciplinary power [27-39]
  - Ch. 3: Biopower [41-54]
  - Ch. 9: Foucault’s theory and practice and subjectivity [127-142]
  - Ch. 11: Subjectivity and power [159-172]
  - Ch. 2: 14 January 1976 [23-40]

Choose two:


Week 10: The Political

## Meeting Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Key Theorists</th>
<th>Key Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9/28</td>
<td>Critical Theory, Marx, &amp; the City</td>
<td></td>
<td>Critical urban theory, Marxian political economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10/5</td>
<td>Capital, Value &amp; Production</td>
<td>Marx</td>
<td>Commodities, use vs. exchange value, value / labor theory of value, production, general formula of capital (M-C-M'), abstract labour, socially necessary labor time, surplus value, labor power, class, industrial reserve army, division of labor, accumulation, primitive accumulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10/12</td>
<td>Urbanization of Capital &amp; Uneven Development</td>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>Urbanization of capital, spatial division of labor; Keynesian vs neoliberal city, crisis, devaluation, fixed capital, circuits of capital, circuit-switching, uneven development, land or ground rent [absolute, monopoly, differential 1 and 2], residual differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10/19</td>
<td>Space, Scale &amp; Planetary Urbanization</td>
<td>Lefebvre Brenner &amp; Schmid</td>
<td>Urbanity / the urban, urban revolution / planetary urbanization, production of space, Lefebvre’s spatial triad: spatial practice [material space], representations of space [conceived space], representational spaces [lived space]</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10/26</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Bourdieu</td>
<td>Species of capital [economic, cultural, social, symbolic], distinction, field, habitus, doxa</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11/2</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Meehan &amp; Strauss Federici</td>
<td>Precarious work, precarious life, social reproduction [production/reproduction], bodies/embodied practices/bodily performance, materiality, feminization of reproductive labor, international division of reproductive labor, flexibilization of labor,</td>
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<tr>
<td>7**</td>
<td>11/9**</td>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Omi &amp; Winant McKittrick Woods Wilson Pulido ...</td>
<td>Racial formation, racialization, racial project, forms of racism [individual, cultural, institutional, structural], racial despoticism, racial democracy, racial hegemony, plantation logic, plantation futures, colorblindness blues epistemology, regional blocs, New South, black economy, whiteness, white privilege, racial mode of social regulation + neoliberal regime of accumulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>Settler Colonialism</td>
<td>Coulthard, Blomley</td>
<td>Settler colonialism, recognition, dispossession, grounded normativity, transformative vs. affirmative redistribution, decolonization, terra nullius/urbs nullius, property, ownership model, unsettlement, mapping/remapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11/23</td>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Foucault</td>
<td>Force relations, power as exercised, power from below, force vs. resistance, sovereign power, disciplinary power / governmentality, surveillance, subjectivity, biopower, administering life</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>11/30</td>
<td>The Political</td>
<td>Lefebvre, Laclau &amp; Mouffe, Deleuze &amp; Guattari, Rancière, Purcell</td>
<td>Democracy, lines of flight, the political, post-politics OTHERS TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam Week</td>
<td>12/9 (Wed)</td>
<td>No Meeting - FINAL PAPER due to D2L Dropbox by 12 noon</td>
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**Please note:** we will meet in 220 URBN on this day.