

Urban Studies 201 (20672)
Introduction to Urban Studies
Spring 2006

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Overview

This class is designed to introduce students to the discipline of urban studies and the topics it encompasses; expose students to the diverse issues and problems that face urbanized areas and their citizens; and provide a framework for examining and understanding how cities work and how they have developed over time.

Some of the subjects we will study and discuss:

- ❑ What are the different perspectives from which a city can be viewed? What qualities make a city "successful" or "livable," from those perspectives?
- ❑ The physical development of cities - from architecture to infrastructure - and its impact on residents, neighborhoods, and the local economy;
- ❑ How decisions in a city are made - where governance, politics, and power intersect - and how citizens can influence and shape those decisions;
- ❑ The many institutions, from the block club to city hall, that educate, serve, support, and connect (or separate) the citizens of a city.

The class will consist of lectures, reading, class discussion, and service learning. These will be focused around seven broad topic areas. Although these are presented in a linear manner (below), students will be expected to "look ahead" on the syllabus and think about (1) ways in which the characteristics of cities are interrelated, and (2) issues, such as poverty and urban revitalization, that cut through most urban studies discussions.

Class Requirements

- ❑ Midterm Exam - 20 percent of grade
- ❑ Final Exam - 20 percent of grade
- ❑ Class Discussion - 20 percent of grade
- ❑ Written reports (4 @ 3-5 pp) - 20 points
- ❑ Field Project - 20 points

Required Readings

- City Lights: Urban-Suburban Life in the Global Society. E. Barbara Phillips.
- Urban Society Annual Editions. Selected articles will be distributed or left on reserve at the library.
- Readings in Planning Theory. Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein, ed. Selected articles will be distributed or left on reserve at the library.
- Additional articles and readings as assigned.
- Smart City Memphis blog: <http://smartcitymemphis.blogspot.com/>, authored by Carol Coletta, CEOs for Cities.
- News for Civic Leaders - monthly email newsletter from Civic Strategies. Sign up at: <http://www.civicstrategies.com/e-letter.html>

January 12 - Course Overview

January 17 - Introduction to Urban Studies

- Come to class prepared to discuss your own personal experiences in cities (and towns), contrasting at least one other place you have lived with Memphis from the perspective of politics, built environment, local economy, or another characteristic. (No written assignment needed.)

Focus Area 1: How we see and understand cities. 1/20-1/24

Readings: Phillips, Chapters 1 & 2.
"The Glory, Destruction, and Meaning of City Beautiful Movement." William H. Wilson. From Readings in Planning Theory.

Focus Area 2: Urbanization Past, Present and Future. 1/27-2/2.

- The history of cities
- Types of cities and urban forms
- Urban development in the U.S.
- Global cities

Readings: Phillips, Chapter 4

Focus Area 3: Urban Communities. 2/7 - 2/16

- ❑ Social connections
- ❑ Concepts and measurement of the metropolitan area
- ❑ Population movement - from rural to urban/suburban - and its impacts
- ❑ Examining the suburbs

Reading: Phillips, Chapter 6 & 7

Focus Area 4: The Sociology of Cities. 2/21 - 3/3

- ❑ Race, class, and ethnicity, and social rank
- ❑ Immigration - historical and contemporary impacts
- ❑ Urban problems: crime, poverty, health, and education

Readings: Phillips, 8 & 9

Broken Windows. James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling. *The Atlantic Monthly*, March 1982. From Urban Society.

Focus Area 5: Metropolitan Politics and Governance. 3/7 - 3/21

- ❑ Evolving forms and structures of city government
- ❑ The context of local government and the federal role
- ❑ The "players" - elected officials, machine politics, reformers, etc.
- ❑ Community power & coalitions

Readings: Phillips, 12, 13, & 14

"The Death and Life of America's Cities," Fred Siegel. *The Public Interest*, Summer 2002, From Urban Society.

Focus Area 6: The City as Place. 3/24 - 4/11

- ❑ Urban spaces: public, private, and social
- ❑ The design of cities
- ❑ Urban growth patterns and the issue of sprawl

Readings: Phillips, 15 & 16

Article: "Home from Nowhere," James Howard Kunstler.

Excerpt: "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," Jane Jacobs. From Readings in Planning Theory.

Focus Area 7: Urban and Regional Economies. 4/14 - 4/28

- Local occupations and industries
- The underground economy
- Local cities and the global economy
- Poverty
- Public finance - how cities support themselves

Readings: Phillips, 17, 18, & 19

"The Rise of the Creative Class," Richard Florida. *The Washington Monthly*, May, 2002. From Urban Society.

Field Project

Students will conduct a field project working with the Coalition for Livable Communities (a coalition of organizations working on issues related to sprawl in Shelby County) and the Hollywood Springdale community (a distressed neighborhood located near the Rhodes campus. Using a combination of literature review, quantitative research, and interviews with community members, students will prepare a case history of the neighborhood, analyzing and reporting how its residents, institutions, businesses, etc. have been impacted by urban sprawl. Specific components and expectations for the project will be distributed and discussed in class.