

Meets: Tuesday and Thursday, 11am, 225 Temple Buell Hall

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 12:30-2, 210 Temple Buell Hall

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Once viewed as dirty, crime-ridden and corrupt, cities now occupy a favored place in the popular imagination. From students to professionals to empty-nesters, the demographic groups that once fled are now returning. They join a growing immigrant population, non-traditional families, young adults without aspirations for formal careers and a struggling workforce to power the bustling downtowns and lively neighborhoods that define cities as places of hope, innovation and conflict.

This course explores the transformation of the American City in its journey from abandonment to renewed growth. We will ask how and why this dramatic change happened. Understanding this shift will put students in a uniquely advantageous position to make sense of the many changes currently underway in urban areas. From exurban growth to suburban decay, from privatization to gentrification and urban agriculture, cities today are sites of rapid change and experimentation with new ideas for how people can and should live. Each week, we will focus on a different aspect of the modern American City – work, housing, Globalization, high finance – and explore its promise, challenges and implications for the future.

We give these explorations focus by scrutinizing the practical question of how cities can be improved. The path from decline to recovery was long, and success was by no means inevitable. Furthermore, the rebound of cities today comes with distinct costs and mounting challenges for large portions – if not the majority – of the urban population. Perspectives on these challenges vary, with *economists* generally stressing the necessity of market-driven urban development, even when it disadvantages many, and *political economists* suggesting that urban problems and their solutions arise from public decisions, social choices and organized political interests. Your preference for one perspective or the other will by necessity shape your ideas about how to improve cities. In the final paper, and an accompanying presentation to the class, you'll be asked to make an argument about *how* cities can provide more opportunities to their residents.

COURSE FORMAT: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM READINGS AND LECTURES

The beginning of the course examines the rebound of American cities and the basic perspectives you will need to determine whether they remain places of hope and opportunity. After that, we embark on a crash course of current issues. For a typical class, you will read a book chapter or academic article, and a short, accompanying piece from a newspaper or blog. In most cases, the academic material frames the questions we will ask on the topic at hand. The

lecture will tie together the basic questions and issues raised by the day's topic, and provide discussion questions for the class to address

For example, the February 23 class examines the economic potential of Colorado's recent decision to legalize marijuana. You will read a lively article on the economic development potential of *consumption* industries – such as restaurants, entertainment, retail and the arts – as opposed to the manufacturing industries typically seen to underlie urban growth. You will read a *Newsweek* article on corporate pot sellers. The lecture will provide background information on black-market goods and consumption industries, relating the news articles to economic theory. As a class, we will evaluate the economic development potential of marijuana tourism and clubs, and the potential for Colorado to become the national center of a legal pot industry.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course has four basic goals.

- 1) *Learning about cities and the challenges of our urban future.* More than half of the human population now lives in cities. In the U.S., that figure is much higher. Cities draw people from all walks of life, despite the fact that they're comparatively expensive, stressful and exhausting. They're sites of profound inequality at the same time that they're sites of real change and reform. The course readings cover as many aspects of cities, their opportunities, and challenges as possible. What you learn here will help to shape your understanding of the way Americans live.
- 2) *Applying academic knowledge to real-world problems.* Most of the issues we cover in the course are emergent topics about which scholars, policy experts and society know relatively little. This should push you out of your comfort zone. That's a good thing! To do well at this course, you'll need to develop convincing responses to questions and dilemmas for which there is no obvious right or wrong answer. Doing so is an important professional skill.
- 3) *Filling the holes in your education about contemporary America.* To this point, your education has equipped you to understand a broad range of enduring ideas about society, the economy and cities. *The Modern American City* is designed to deal specifically with the Great Recession, bankrupt cities, new laws, new types of urban politics and other important changes that complement your education in the basics. This is crucial: Successful planners, policymakers, and managers draw on the lessons of history without being locked in to them. You will benefit from learning about issues that are too new and too unsettled to be resolved elsewhere.
- 4) *Getting comfortable with complexity.* The issues we discuss in this class emerge from global changes, national policy, shifts in social norms, technological change and economic problems. All of these forces collide in cities, with exceptions to the supposed rules of urban development being just as common as the rules themselves. Cities are a microcosm of the current human situation. By the end of the course, you'll understand

how city planners, policymakers, activists and everyday citizens thread together an enormous variety of perspectives, questions, approaches and evidence to make sense of real-time urban changes.

COURSE READINGS

We will read a mix of book chapters, academic articles, policy reports, newspaper and magazine stories, and blog posts throughout the semester. In a typical week, you will read two articles or chapters, and a few supplementary newspaper and magazine articles. All readings are available either on Compass, or through the URLs provided in the syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS

The course has three assignments. The first two, an analysis of a Detroit neighborhood and a Policy Memo on a law in which you are interested, are simple and brief. They should be treated as diagnostic assignments, ways for you to engage the course materials and get feedback. In the final assignment, you will make an argument *for* something: A policy, idea, or strategy that can improve cities. The simple rule for the final is to go *big*, and argue for something radical, untried, expensive, etc.

GRADING

In addition to the exams, you will need to attend class regularly and participate in classroom discussion in order to secure a top grade

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|------------------------------------|-----|
| 1) Attendance and Participation | 15% |
| 2) Detroit Neighborhood Assignment | 20% |
| 3) Policy Memo | 25% |
| 4) Final Paper: A Far-Out Idea | 40% |

HONOR CODE AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Illinois Student Code states: “It is the responsibility of the student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions.” Note that you are subject to the Honor Code, as well as procedures for addressing violations to the Code, regardless of whether you have read it and understand it. According to the Code, “ignorance is no excuse.”

For your written work in this course, all ideas (as well as data or other information) that are not your own must be cited. Note that ideas that require citation may not have been published or written down anywhere. While you are free—and indeed encouraged—to discuss the assignments with your peers, all of your writing, data collection, and analysis should be your own.

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is rooted in the goals and responsibilities of professional planners. By enrolling

in a class offered by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, students agree to be responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect in all DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. See Student Code Article 1-Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part 1. Student Rights: §1-102.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction 8/25

- *The rebound of modern American Cities*
- *Familiar Questions: Will the Boom Last? And whom does the Boom Benefit?*
- *A Better Question: Are Cities Still Places of Opportunity?*

Triumph of the City? 8/27

- *An Example: New York, Then and Now*
- *The Case Against Opportunity: Life in the Shadow of Wall Street*
- *The Case for Opportunity: Occupy Wall Street and the World it Created*

📖 “Degraded Work,” by Doussard

📖 “Revolution Number 99” in *Vanity Fair*. <http://goo.gl/8wkMk>

The Economists Speak: How Commerce Makes Cities Thrive or Fail 9/1

- *Economists’ Views on why Cities Work*
- *The Sticky Question of Distribution*
- *Threats to Urban Prosperity*

📖 “Our Urban Species” and “Why do Cities Decline?” in Ed Glaeser’s *Triumph of the City*.

The Political Economists Speak: How Institutions Shape Prosperity and Blight 9/3

- *“Entrepreneurial” Cities and the Road Back*
- *Complex Inequalities: Housing, Work, Politics, Transportation and More*
- *The Deep Roots of Urban Problems in the U.S.*

📖 “Memo from Motown,” by Reese et al.

Boom and Bust: The Rise, fall and Rebirth of the Midwest 9/8

- *Factories and the Life of Middle-Class Cities*
- *The Rebound from Deindustrialization*

- *The Rebound from the Great Recession*

📖 "Post-Industrial Restructuring," in *Progressive Planning*

📖 "The Insourcing Boom," in *The Atlantic*. <http://goo.gl/Y020b>

📖 "Making it in America," in *The Atlantic*. <http://goo.gl/eVIDh>

Where we live: The End of Public Housing 9/10

- An overview of Public Housing
- Common Public Housing Problems and Solutions
- Where will the poor live?

📖 "The End of Federally Financed Ghettos," in *New York Time*.

📖 "The Last Ghetto," in *Harper's*.

Where We Live: Gentrification Gives way to Super-Gentrification 9/15

- *The Spread of Super-Gentrification in Global Cities*
- *Explanations: Taste vs. Capital*
- *How Activists Keep Cities Affordable*

📖 "Super-Gentrification: the Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City," by Loretta Lees.

Housing Meltdown: Understanding the Giant Pool of Money 9/17

In-class audio-presentation

Where We Live: The New Investment Frontier of Rental Housing 9/22

- *Why Investors Like Rental Housing*
- *Foreclosed Properties get a Second Lease on Life*
- *Why Activists Want more Rental Housing – but won't Get it*

📖 "Why Wall Street Loves Houses Again," in *The Atlantic*. <http://goo.gl/gFzmnA>

📖 "An Appetite for Yield," by Phillip Ashton. (Note: This is a complicated and technical reading, but it is very important. Follow along the best you can, and we will discuss it in class).

Portlandia: Where Young People go to Retire? 9/24

- *Changing aspirations of young urban dwellers*

- *What makes creative places like Portland work?*
- *How creative places sustain themselves*

📖 “Will Portland Always be a Retirement Community for the Young? <http://goo.gl/XmHy0K>

📖 “Is Portland Really the Place Where Young People Go to Retire?,” <http://goo.gl/JqRoLU>

Boom and Bust: A Nation of Makers?

9/29

- *Manufacturing maker spaces and local production*
- *Development potential: How big can the maker movement get?*
- *The job-creation potential of the maker movement*

📖 “The Maker Movement,” in *Innovations*.

📖 “Building a Nation of Makers,” pp. 8-35. <http://goo.gl/04vZCh>

No Class

10/1

Detroit Neighborhood Assignment Due 10/2 at 12pm. Submit via Compass and SafeAssign.

Boom and Bust: Texas, Minnesota and the Many Paths to Prosperity

10/6

- *The Texas “miracle”*
- *Alternate approaches to economic regeneration*
- *Human capital: make or buy?*

📖 “Why Texas is the Future,” by Cowen. <http://goo.gl/xtbWKO>

📖 “The High Road Wins,” by Markusen <http://goo.gl/wL3Lqg>

The Next Wave: Green Jobs Promise a Middle-Class Revival

10/8

- *The promise of green jobs*
- *What Cities can do to align work and sustainability*
- *Barriers to the Green Future*

📖 “Sustainability as Economic Development” and “Building the Energy-Efficient City” in Joan Fitzgerald’s *Emerald Cities*.

The Next Wave: Marijuana Legalization as Economic Development 10/13

- *The Economic Potential of Black Market Goods*
- *Who Wins and Loses when Pot is Legal?*
- *Vice Economies and Positive Signs for Denver’s Green Economic Future*

📖 “Consumption-Driven Economic Development,” from Markusen and Schrock

📖 “Will Pot Barons Cash in on Legalization?” in *Newsweek*. <http://goo.gl/BOn6zp>

Chiraq: How bad is Chicago’s Homicide Problem? 10/15

- Myth and Reality on Chicago’s Nation-Leading Homicide Rate
- Explanations: Weather, Economy and Housing

📖 “How Chicago Became ‘Chiraq,’” in *The Daily Beast*. <http://goo.gl/zesspu>

📖 “Chicago, I do Mind Dying,” by Hagedorn.

Commodifying the Arts: The Chase for ‘Creatives’ 10/20

- *The allure of the “Creative Class”*
- *Limits to the idea, or what would Muskegon do?*
- *The difference between creative people and “creatives”*

📖 “Cities and the Creative Class,” by Richard Florida.

📖 “TED Talks are Lying to you,” in *Salon*, <http://goo.gl/SU7Qtm>

No Class 10/22

Arts Exchange Day: All Students Attend Different Classes 10/27

Banks in Charge: The Infrastructure Privatization Bubble 10/29

- *Chicago, the privatizing city*
- *Why investors love infrastructure*
- *The risks of infrastructure privatization*

📖 “The Financialization of Infrastructure Privatization,” by Ashton, Doussard and Weber.

Banks in Charge: Detroit in Receivership 11/3

- *Michigan Public Law One and the bankrupt motor city*
- *Who bankrupted Detroit?*
- *Detroit's Public Manager picks winners and losers*

📖 "Emergency Financial Managers: Michigan's Unwelcome Savior," in *Governing*, <http://goo.gl/gn56al>

📖 "The Detroit Bankruptcy (p. 1-36)," from *Demos*. <http://goo.gl/7snUXu>

New Faces in New Places: Immigration Transforms Urban Neighborhoods 11/5

- *America's new immigration wave*
- *How immigration transforms older neighborhoods*
- *Who benefits from immigration?*

📖 "Chicago: The Immigrant Capital of the Heartland," by Koval and Field.

📖 "The Economic Impact of Immigration on St. Louis (p. 1-10)," by Jack Strauss. <http://goo.gl/2ugw>

Policy Memo Due 11/6 at 12pm. Submit via Compass and SafeAssign.

New Faces in New Places: The Second Generation Moves up 11/10

- *Opportunities and barriers for second-generation urban immigrants*
- *How the changing face of urban America changes politics*
- *The suburbanization of immigration*

📖 "Introduction" and "Conclusion," in Massey and Sanchez's *Brokered Boundaries*

After the Crash: Where have the Good Jobs Gone? 11/12

- *The ever-faster demise of the urban middle class*
- *Is technology to blame?*
- *Changes at the bottom of the labor market*

📖 "Chicago's Growing Low-Wage Workforce," by Doussard.

📖 "How Technology is Destroying Jobs," in *MIT Technology Review*, <http://goo.gl/VlgWX>

After the Crash: How Low-Wage Workers Make Change on the Job 11/17

- *Community-labor coalitions organize the low-wage workforce*
- *Worker centers and other new tools*
- *Changing cities, one state house at a time*

📖 “Worker Centers,” by Janice Fine.

📖 “Can’t survive on \$7.35,” on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/68274355>.

After the Crash: The Fight for a Living Wage 11/19

- *How and why the living wage movement works*
- *The limits to living wage laws*
- *What’s next for living wage coalitions?*

📖 *Fighting for a Living Wage (Excerpts)*, by Stephanie Luce.

Who’s Vulnerable to the Climate Crash? 12/1

- *Sustainable discourse vs. sustainability*
- *How environmental sustainability works*

📖 Ageyman, Julian. 2005. *Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environment Justice*. [Excerpts].

Limiting Vulnerability: Movements for Sustainability and Equity 12/3

- *How urban organizations link environmental sustainability and social equity*
- *New directions for sustainability policy*
- *The example of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy*

📖 Kersten, et al. “Facing the Climate Gap” (Excerpts)

Summing Up: What will American Cities Look Like in 20 Years? 12/8

- Readings TBD

Final Assignment Due 12/11 at 12pm. Submit via Compass and SafeAssign.