

UP 330: The Modern American City

Meets: Tuesday and Thursday, 2pm, 225 Temple Buell Hall

Instructor: Prof. Marc Doussard, mdouss1@illinois.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

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

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course has four basic goals.

- 1) *Learn as much as you can about the issues.* So much is going on right now. We live in a rapidly urbanizing society and world. Anything you're going to want to do with your life will depend in part on the way cities are evolving. In addition to being ever-more important, cities are extremely complicated. The more you learn about finance, housing, transportation, the economy, city politics (and the list goes on!), the better.
- 2) *Find the Connections.* A generation ago, scholars and professionals looked at individual urban issues in isolation – housing was one domain, the economy was another, transportation yet another, and so on. Today, the best practitioners understand the fundamental interconnectedness of all of these issues. Big ideas and big theories help here – they give you a sense of why things are changing and thus the ability to diagnose the origins, meaning and reach of the new changes you'll encounter in your life and career.
- 3) *Apply 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.
- 4) *Learn how to be an expert.* I wish I could say you'll finish this class as a master of all the issues we discuss. But you won't. Don't take that too hard – *nobody* can master so many topics, and that's the point. Cities listen to thousands of people who pitch solutions to their problems. Some of those solutions are popular, and utterly misguided. Others are really smart, and would work – but they get ignored. If you want to work for a city, you'll need to become a mini-expert, all the time. You'll need to talk your bosses out of some very bad ideas. And you'll want to steer scarce public attention towards ideas that really work. Throughout the course, pay attention to the question of *what makes an idea get heard*. You'll learn a lot if you do.

COURSE READINGS

The course has one required text, *DIY Detroit* by Kim Kinder (University of Minnesota Press). It should cost you about \$15 used or \$21 new on Amazon.

Otherwise, 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: a policy memo, a group neighborhood assessment, and a final paper which will build on your group assessment. In the final assignment, you will make and 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) Policy Memo | 25% |
| 3) Chicago Neighborhood Assignment | 20% |
| 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 8/28

- *Cities are changing, and fast. What issues should we cover in this class?*
- *What worries or excites you the most about cities?*

Guns, Condos and Protests: A Sampling of the Issues Cities Face 8/30

- *Is this the best of times, the worst of times, or something else?*
- *Some of the big challenges cities face*
- *How cities provide solutions to big problems*

[Fifty Years after the Riots](#)

[Cook County's Budget](#)

[Blame Overbearing Government for Gentrification, not Just Neoliberalism](#)

[America's Great Infrastructure Stagnation](#)

[Revolution Number 99](#)

How we Got Here: The Fall and Rise of American Cities, 1960-2018 9/4

- *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*

 "Building an Urban Neoliberalism," by Sites

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

Take One on Detroit: The Economist's View 9/6

- *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*.

Take Two on Detroit: The Political Economist's View 9/11

- *"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.

Still Struggling: After Four Decades, the Urban Midwest Tries to Recover from Deindustrialization

9/13

- *Where Have the Good Jobs Gone? Changing Assumptions about Work*
- *The Job-Loss Traumas that Shape the Urban Midwest*
- *When cities pay to attract business: The case of HQ2*

📖 “Where Have the Good Jobs Gone?” from the National Employment Law Project

[Urban Leaders on the Right Way to Lure HQ2](#)

[Grading the HQ2 Finalists](#)

Can Manufacturing Come Back? The Insourcing Boom

9/18

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

📖 [“Made in America, Again: Why Manufacturing will Return to the U.S.”](#)

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

The Maker Movement: Promise and Potential in Urban Innovation

9/20

- *Reluctant entrepreneurs*
- *Alternate paths to the 9-to-5 job*
- *Portlandia*

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

📖 “The Maker Economy in Action,” from Doussard et. al.

Green Jobs and the Promise of a Middle-Class Revival

9/25

- *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*.

[Today's Energy Jobs are in Solar, Not Coal](#), *NY Times*

[Oakland's Bid to Become a Solar Power Hub](#), from *The Atlantic*

The Other Green Jobs: Legal Marijuana and Consumption-Driven Development

9/27

- *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*

📖 “The Other Green Jobs”

📖 A brewery or distillery bubble piece

No Class 10/2

The Appetite for Growth: Inside the Booming Food Industry 10/4

Rebuilding Cities by Recruiting Professionals: Creative Class Policies 10/9

- *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>

Policy Memo Due – Submit to Compass

Around 10/6

Explaining the Crash: Growth Pressures in the Finance Industry 10/11

- *How Competition Encourages Risky Loans*
- *Investors Turn to Rental Housing*
- *Why Activists Want more Rental Housing – but won’t Get it*

📖 “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).

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

It’s not about Houses: The Rise of ‘Super-Gentrification’ 10/16

- *The Spread of Super-Gentrification in Global Cities*
- *Explanations: Taste vs. Capital*
- *It’s not About Your Neighborhood: Gentrification Goes Global*

📖 “Super-Gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City,” by Loretta Lees.

The End of Public Housing 10/18

- An overview of Public Housing
- Common Public Housing Problems and Solutions
- Where will Poor People Live?

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

📖 “The Last Ghetto,” in *Harper’s*.

The End of Public Services? Detroit in Receivership 10/23

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

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

No Class 10/25

DIY Detroit: Making do without Public Services 10/30

- Old and New Ideas about who Provides Services
- How Detroiters Get by
- A Catalogue of Innovative Techniques

📖 “Do-it-Yourself Cities” and “Seeking New Neighbors” in *DIY Detroit*, from Kinder

Infrastructure Privatization 11/1

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

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

Group Assignment Due – Submit to Compass **11/2**

Michigan’s Emergency Manager Law: How Flint Happened 11/6

- *The theory and reality of Emergency Managers*
- *Application of the Law in Michigan*
- *Who is responsible for poisoned water and other problems?*

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

📖 Supplemental Reading, TBD

Making New Futures 11/8

- *Creative organizing from Detroit residents*
- *Limits to the idea: where DIY cities fall short*
- *The potential and promise of DIY cities*

📖 “Domesticating Public Works” and “Producing Urban Knowledge” in *DIY Detroit*, from Kinder

New Faces in New Places: Immigration Transforms Urban Neighborhoods 11/13

- *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>

The Urban Revolution: How Cities Became Centers of Social and Economic Reform 11/15

- *The conventional wisdom: “City limits,” and barriers to reform*
- *How cities became the laboratories of democracy*
- *Why cities? And why now?*

Readings TBD

No Class – Fall Break 11/20

No Class – Fall Break 11/22

How Workers Make Change on the Job 11/27

- *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>.

It Can Happen Here: The Fight for Living Wages 11/29

- *How and why the living wage movement works*

- *The limits to living wage laws*
- *What's next for living wage coalitions?*

📖 *"Fortune Favors the Organized," from Doussard and Lesniewski*

Who's Vulnerable to the Climate Crash? 12/4

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

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

Can't do One Without the Other: Movements for Sustainability and Equity 12/6

- *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*

Movements for Sustainability and Equity	Just Green Enough: contesting environmental gentrification in Greenpoint , by Curran and Hamilton And They Won, They Won Big - episode 6 from Containers podcast (audio)	Our Power Plan: Char Justice Alliance
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Summing Up: What will American Cities Look Like in 20 Years? 12/11

- *In-class exercise*

Final Assignment Due – Submit to Compass 12/8