

## GEOG 2023 Urban Geography

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### **Synopsis**

This course provides an introduction to the sub-discipline of urban geography. It explores the distinctive contribution that geographers have made to the analysis of cities and city life. The course outlines the economic and social origins of urban life, and explores the relationship between population density, size, and diversity that characterise cities. Drawing on a range of illustrative case studies from both the Global North and Global South the course systematically outlines how contemporary cities can be interpreted as economic spaces, social spaces, and political entities. Given that cities – for all their attractions and strengths – are frequently defined by their dysfunction and inequality, the course also examines how such poor outcomes are generated. It also explores the kinds of policy programmes that might be capable of generating more liveable and equitable cities.

### **Aims of the Course**

This course will provide students with an introduction to and overview of the sub-discipline of urban geography. The aims of the course are:

- To examine the key social, economic, and political dynamics that structure urban life.
- To provide students with a grounding in the key intellectual traditions upon which contemporary urban geography is built.
- To provide an overview of some of the key intellectual debates within contemporary urban geography.
- To present case studies of cities that are paradigmatic of a range of different patterns of urbanization.
- To give students an overview of both the aporia and potentialities of urban life.
- The course will place particular emphasis on examining examples from the Global South along side case studies from the Global North.

### **Structure**

The course is divided into three main sections with two introductory lectures outlining the key themes of the course and how they will be approached, and two concluding lectures drawing the themes of the course together around the question of city futures.

**i) Urban Economies.** This section examines the foundations of cities as generators of economic wealth and prosperity. It outlines the different economic drivers shaping urban development, focusing in particular on the importance of agglomeration to the urban economy. It considers the role of a wide range of globalising economic processes which shape cities and their futures.

**ii) Social Worlds.** Cities are very distinct social spaces. The size and density of their population lends a particular dynamic to the social life of cities. Indeed, urban life is often characterised as being anonymous. But parallel to this anonymity it is possible to trace out complex networks of association and support. This part of the course explores these networks. It will also explore spatial segregation. Cities are defined by their diversity. Nonetheless, this diversity is often organised in such a way that many social groups only rarely come into contact with each other. This part of the course explores the dynamics of racial, ethnic, and class segregation. In particular, it highlights the damage that high levels of segregation inflict on disadvantaged groups.

**iii) Urban Politics.** The diversity and dynamism of city life, as well as the many challenges posed by urbanisation, mean that politics is an important component of all cities. Various groups and organisations mobilise to demand change; governments attempt to respond to and co-ordinate the diverse requirements of different interest groups, often through partnerships with business or communities. An important question concerns the spatial scale of urban politics – to what extent is urban politics focussed on the territory of the city, or part of wider global and regional processes? This section of the course will consider some core elements of urban politics today through the themes of governance, participation, social movements and urban planning, and also attend to the cultural politics through which the meaning of life in cities, and the right to the city, is contested.

## Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course students should; 1) have an understanding of the key social, economic and political dynamics that structure urban life; 2) an overview of the intellectual traditions that have shaped the sub-discipline of urban geography and a reasonable understanding of the differences between these traditions; 3) understand and be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a number of key intellectual debates that are shaping contemporary urban geography; 4) appreciate and be capable of explaining analytically the different forms of urban settlement and development that characterise cities in different parts of the globe; 5) appreciate the complexity of organising and governing urban environments.

## Method of Teaching

Lectures.

## Lecture Timetable

Lectures are every Friday, 2-4.00 PM, Lectures are every Friday, 2-4.00 PM, Christopher Ingold Auditorium, Christopher Ingold Building.

**Assessment**

40 percent 2,500 word coursework assignment, 60 percent two hour unseen examination.

**Unit Value**

0.5 unit

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**Lecture Timetable**

Lectures are every Friday, 2-4.00 PM, Christopher Ingold Auditorium, Christopher Ingold Building.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture</b>	<b>Lecturer</b>
1	15 Jan	Introduction What is a city? What is urban geography?	AL
<i>Urban Economies</i>			
2	22 Jan	Dynamics of urban growth Fordist and Global cities	AL
3	29 Jan	Globalising cities Diverse urban economies	JR
<i>Urban Social Worlds</i>			
4	5 Feb	Community, sociality, and urban life	AL
5	12 Feb	Public space and public life	AL
6 READING WEEK			
7	26 Feb	Segregation and why does it matter? Segregation in American cities	AL
<i>Urban Politics</i>			
8	5 Mar	The challenges of improving city life From government to governance?	JR
9	12 Mar	Urban regimes and the politics of development The politics of participation and protest	JR
10	19 Mar	Grand plans... And creative re-use: remaking cities	JR
<i>City Futures</i>			
11	26 Mar	Representing city futures What kinds of futures for cities?	JR JR/AL

AL = Alan Latham; JR = Jenny Robinson

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### Reading Materials

Urban geography is a diverse and wide ranging sub-discipline. As a result this course is also frequently wide ranging in terms of the themes and subjects that it covers. Urban geography also tends to draw inspiration from a wide range of cognate disciplines such as sociology, planning, architecture, ethnography, and social history. The reading lists for this course reflect that. Each week you will be required to read a small number of key readings that accompany each lecture. You are strongly encouraged to read widely and to follow up your own interests within the topics and go beyond the set texts where you think necessary.

### General texts for the course

The recommended text for the course is:

Latham, A., McCormack, D. McNamara, K., and McNeill, D. *Key Concepts in Urban Geography*. London: Sage, 2009.

There are a number of books that you will find useful as background reading and throughout the course:

- Allen, J. Massey, D, and Pryke, M. (eds.) (1999) *Unsettling Cities: Movement and Settlement*, London: Routledge.
- Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002) *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Brenner, N. and Keil, R. (2006) *The Global Cities Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Bridge, G. and Watson, S. eds. (2000) *A Companion to the City*, Oxford; Blackwell.
- Bridge, G. and Watson, S. eds. (2002) *The Blackwell City Reader*, Oxford; Blackwell.
- Hall, P. (1998) *Cities in Civilisation*, London: Weidenfield and Nicolson.
- Harvey, D. (1989) *The Urban Experience*, Oxford; Blackwell.
- Hubbard, P. (2006) *The City*, London: Routledge.
- Knox, P. and Pinch, S. (2006) *Urban Social Geography: An Introduction*, 5th edition, Longman.
- Le Gates, R. and Stout, F. eds., (2003) *The City Reader*, 3rd Edition, London: Routledge.
- Ley, D. (1983) *A Social Geography of the City*, New York: Harper and Row.
- Massey, D., Allen, J. and Pile, S. 1999. *City Worlds*. London: Routledge.
- Mumford, L. (1961) *The City in History: Its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects*, London: Secker and Warburg.
- Robinson, J. (2005) *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, London: Routledge.
- Sudjic, D. (1992) *The 100 Mile City*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace.
- Zukin, S (1995) *The Culture of Cities*, Oxford: Blackwell.

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**Sample Exam Questions (Questions 1-5 are from the 2007-8 Exam)**

**Answer TWO questions. Please answer each question in a separate booklet.**

1. To what extent does contemporary urban geography present a coherent and consistent account of the contemporary city?
2. To what extent does Saskia Sassen's global city hypothesis accurately describe the dynamics of contemporary urban economic development?
3. Barry Wellman (1988) has suggested that community is often characterised as either being 'lost', 'found' or 'liberated' in the contemporary city. Using examples explain what Wellman means, and discuss the utility of these categories.
4. Should cities be governed by 'top-down' or 'bottom-up' strategies? Illustrate your answer with examples.
5. 'Urban residential segregation is a natural social and economic phenomenon that should be allowed to flourish.' Discuss your response to this statement using (historical **and/or** contemporary) examples.
6. In what ways, and with what consequences, does urban politics stretch beyond the physical bounds of the city?

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**Coursework**

Answer EITHER question 1 OR question 2.

Question 1

**Choose ONE city that interests you and write a critical essay around ONE of the following topics. Please clearly state which city and topic you have chosen.**

*Topics:* sociality, informality, development, public-ness, movement and mobility, suburbanisation, segregation, participation, economy, governance.

Question 2

**Write a critical commentary of up to 2,500 words based around an urban film from the list below. Discuss the issues your chosen film raises in relation to academic work on the city (or cities) in which it is set and to urban theory more generally. Please clearly state which film or book you have chosen.**

**Films:** Wings of Desire (Wim Wenders, 1987); Wall Street (Oliver Stone, 1987); Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927); La Haine (Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995); Tsotsi (Gavin Hood, 2005); Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974); Do the Right Thing, (Spike Lee, 1989); City of Angels (Brad Silberling 1998); Manhattan (Woody Allen, 1978), The Godfather (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972); On the Waterfront (Elia Kazan, 1954); District 9 (Peter Jackson, 2009); West Side Story (Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins, 1961); Once Were Warriors (Lee Tamahori, 1994); Beijing Bicycle (Xiaoshuai Wang, 2001); Roma (Fellini, 1972).

**Books:** The Famished Road (Ben Okri, 1997); Metropole (Ferenc Karinthy, 1970); The Man Without Qualities (Robert Musil, 1930, 1942); Berlin Alexanderplatz (Alfred Döblin, 1929); Life: A User's Manual (George Perec, 1978); Last Exit to Brooklyn (Hubert Selby, Jr, 1964); A Tale of Two Cities (Charles Dickens, 1859); Midaq Alley (Naguib Mahfouz, 1947); The Ladies' Paradise (Émile Zola, 1883); Millennium People (J G Ballard, 2003); Native Son (Richard Wright, 1940); The Bonfire of the Vanities (Tom Wolfe, 1987); Beirut 75 (Ghada Samman, 1974), The Restless Supermarket (Ivan Vladislavić, 2001); Ways of Dying (Zakes Mda, 2002), Welcome to our Hillbrow (Phaswane Mpe, 2001), The Black Book (Orhan Pamuk, 2002).

*If you wish to review a book/film not on this list you must discuss this in person with Alan Latham or Jenny Robinson.*

You might find the following literature helpful in guiding you in the use of popular literature/media in your coursework:

- Alter, R., (2005) *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Ball, J. C., (2004) *Imagining London: Postcolonial Fiction and the Transnational Metropolis*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bruno, G. (1993) *Streetwalking on a Ruined Map: Cultural Theory and the City Films of Elvira Notari*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Clarke, D. (1997) *The Cinematic City*, London: Routledge.
- Coser, L. A., (ed), (1972) *Sociology Through Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Diken, B., (2005), "City of God", *City*, 9(3): 307-20.
- Donald, J. (1999) *Imagining the Modern City*, London: The Athlone Press.
- Finnegan, R., (1998) *Tales of the City: A Study of Narrative and Urban Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lehan, R., (1998) *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lewis, D., Rodgers D., and Woolcock M., (2008), 'Development: Literary Representation as a Source of Authoritative Knowledge', *Journal of Development Studies*, 44.2: 198-216.
- McLaughlin, J., (2000) *Writing the Urban Jungle: Reading Empire in London from Doyle to Eliot*, Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Rotella, C., (1998) *October Cities: The Redevelopment of Urban Literature*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Pratt, G. and San Juan R.M., 2004, 'In Search of the Horizon: Utopia in The Truman Show and The Matrix', in Lees, L. (ed.), *The Emancipatory City? Paradoxes and possibilities*, London, Sage.
- Sharpe, W. C., and L. Wallock, (eds), (1987) *Visions of the Modern City: Essays in History, Art, and Literature*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Williams, D. (1988) 'Ideology as Dystopia: An Interpretation of Blade Runner', *International Political Science Review*, 9, 4: 381-394.
- Wirth-Nesher, H., (2003) *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## **Coursework Objectives/Aims**

This assignment is primarily about linking theoretical and literary/film concepts with empirical reality. It is not sufficient to simply describe your chosen city/film/book, you must also refer to appropriate academic literature on your chosen topic(s). Crucially, you must develop a logical and consistent argument related to your chosen city/film/book that includes *your* opinion, supported by referenced literature and empirical information. In other words, use the literature (theoretical and empirical) to support your arguments, do not simply summarise the literature or describe the city/book/film.

## Method

In order to research this assignment you should read academic and popular articles/books about your chosen city/film/book as well as the theme(s) you intend to explore. You might also need to identify relevant empirical information about the city/ies you are investigating. A reference list of 10-20 texts is expected. Use of the internet is welcomed (in addition to library-based research) but use of wikipedia is *not* acceptable.

## Presentation

The length of the paper should be no more than **2,500 words** (excluding references). If you exceed this limit, points will be subtracted. The paper should be clearly structured, with sub-headings where necessary. Maps and illustrations are encouraged. If maps and illustrations are used, ensure they are referenced correctly. All quotations must be referenced appropriately alongside a full reference list at the end of the paper employing a consistent style. The paper must be written on a computer using 12 pt font and double-spaced.

## Support

If you have any questions regarding this coursework do not hesitate to contact one of the course lecturers either via email to make an appointment (Jennifer.Robinson@ucl.ac.uk and alan.latham@ucl.ac.uk), or by attending office hours. The earlier you think about this assignment the easier it will be!

## Submission

Coursework must be submitted in hardcopy to Nick Mann in the Map Room by 12noon on Wednesday **March 24, 2010**, AS WELL AS submitted online to TurnItIn® by 12noon on the same day. Both copies must be identical, any difference will be interpreted as plagiarism and receive an automatic fail. All courses are now using TurnItIn® to combat plagiarism. The following website has lots of useful information on how to use TurnItIn®.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/study/plagiarism/>

You will not be able to submit coursework directly to TurnItIn® after the normal coursework deadline.

NB.: All affiliate students will be assessed in the same way as geog students.