

Hyperdensity and the Future of the City

Fall 2014 Lecture

3 units

Vishaan Chakrabarti, Professor

vc2292@columbia.edu

Omar Toro-Vaca, Instructor and Research Associate

oat2103@columbia.edu

Day and time: Friday 10:00am-12:00pm, from September 5th to December 5th

Location: 200 Fayerweather

Course Description

This course, based on Professor Chakrabarti's book *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America*, hypothesizes that hyperdensity - defined as density above 30 units/acre - paired with robust transit infrastructure is a potential "silver bullet" for addressing many of the economic and social ills confronting the United States today. Structured as an analysis of urban policies that have led to America's profligate use of land, and as a proposition on how to correct course with new policy initiatives for creating an "infrastructure of opportunity," the book envisions a county of towers, trains and trees as the best path to keep our nation and our developing planet economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. Given the nation's role as a global purveyor of culture, America's embrace of a far denser land-use pattern is imagined to influence the development pattern of countries with emerging economies, where billions are moving from poverty to middle class affluence worldwide.

The book is required reading, while the syllabus will offer additional readings to be presented in teams of two or three on the dates assigned to each student on the first day of class.

The course will feature lectures by Professor Chakrabarti, covering book chapters from *A Country of Cities* as well as projects from his practice at SHoP Architects. For the final in-class student presentations, pairs of students will present an organized, well-documented body of research in support or critique of one or more of the central ideas of the class. The body of research will grow over the course of the semester, starting with an inaugural wiki page on October 3rd. Each group will take the role of a skeptic or a believer and make compelling arguments in support or critique of the book's hypothesis. The inaugural page must contain a thesis statement that clearly defines the pair's position. In addition to the content assembled on the site, each student is expected to individually blog about three other pages each week. The blog entries will be no less than 300 words each and must aim to question the assumptions in the content being evaluated. The final presentations at the end of the semester are intended to expose a body of evidence to substantiate the position presented on October 3rd, again, in support or critique of one or more of the main themes in the class.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to complete assigned readings for each class. In-class writing assignments based on these readings will be given without advance warning.

Course Grading Criteria

- Attendance, completion of assigned readings, and class participation, including the proactive discussion of events and policies currently debated in the media: 30%
- Group presentations: 20%
- Blog entries: 30%
- Final wiki page: 20%

Class participation is strongly encouraged. Failure to complete assigned readings, attend the presentation, or deliver the final paper by the due date will negatively impact student grades.

Outline, Readings and Assignments

September 5:

Course introduction, lecture, and provocation

Read: **A Country of Countries: Of Highways, Houses, And Hedges**

(introduction); *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America*

Additional readings

- Badger, Emily, "How the Federal Government Dramatically Skews the U.S. Real Estate Market."
- Campanella, Thomas, "Reconsidering Jane Jacobs: The Death and Life of American Planning."
- Wolff, Edward N., "Recent Trends in Household Wealth in the United States: Rising Debt and the Middle-Class Squeeze—An Update to 2007."
- Jacobs, Jane, "Cities' Own Regions." *Cities and the Wealth of Nations*.

September 12:

Lecture

Read: **Cities, Prosperity, and Globalization (chapter 1)**; *A Country of*

Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America, Why Cities Are Good

Additional readings

- Dougherty, Conor, and Robbie Whelan, "Cities Outpace Suburbs in Growth."
- Johnson, Carolyn, "Massive Housing Experiment Finds Those Who Moved to Less-Impoverished Neighborhoods Were Happier."

September 19:

Lecture

Read: **Cities, Sustainability, and Resilience (chapter 2)**; *A Country of*

Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America, Why Cities Are Good

Additional readings

- McKibben, Bill, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math."

September 26:

Lecture

Read: **Cities, Health, and Joy (chapter 3)**; *A Country of Cities: A*

Manifesto for an Urban America, Why Cities Are Good

Project Lecture

Dallas, The Connected City Competition

Additional readings/resources

- Litman, Todd, "If Health Matters: Integrating Public Health Objectives into Transportation Decision-Making," Victoria Transport Policy Institute, Dec. 6, 2012, <http://www.vtpi.org/health.pdf>
- Regarding the political environment:
 1. <http://frontrow.dmagazine.com/2013/07/city-sponsored-architecture-competition-on-collision-course-with-trinity-tollway/>
 2. <http://www.dallasnews.com/entertainment/columnists/mark-lamster/20130724-architecture-three-teams-to-preview-trinity-river-plans-tonight.ece>
 3. http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2013/07/architects_propose_dynamiting.php
 4. <http://artandseek.net/2013/07/25/dallas-big-urban-design-challenge-connecting-steel-and-concrete-to-the-water/>
- About the toll road:
<http://www.tollroadsnews.com/node/5926>
- Text from the Mayor of Dallas:
http://www.dallascityhall.com/government/mayor/pdf/TrinityPC_050212.pdf

October 3:

Inaugural Wiki Pages Due

Lecture

Read: **Building Hyperdensity and Civic Delight (chapter 4)**; *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America, How to Build Good Cities*

Project Lecture

Melbourne

Additional readings:

- Laura Wolf-Powers, "Up-Zoning New York City's Mixed Use Neighborhoods: Property-Led Economic Development and the Anatomy of a Planning Dilemma."
- Brown, Jeffrey R. and Gregory L. Thompson, "Should Transit Serve the CBD or a Diverse Array of Destinations? A Case Study Comparison of Two Transit Systems."

October 10:

Project Lecture

Domino Sugar Refinery Master Plan, Brooklyn, NY

Additional readings/resources

- <http://www.vanityfair.com/online/daily/2013/03/williamsburg-skyline-brooklyn-waterfront-redesign>
- <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/real-estate/domino-delivers-williamsburg-article-1.1288656>
- <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/real-estate/domino-sugar-factory-site-brooklyn-sold-160-million-article-1.1092844>

October 17:

Lecture

Read: **Building an Infrastructure of Opportunity (chapter 5)**; *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America, How to Build Good Cities*

Additional readings

- Petra Todorovich, Daniel Schned, and Robert Lane, "High-Speed Rail, International Lessons for U.S. Policy Makers."
- Inman, Phillip, "Spain Must Halt Rail Expansion, Says Expert."

October 24 (ULI Week):

Project Lecture

Gotham Gateway: A New Pennsylvania Station and the Next Madison Square

Garden, New York

Additional readings/resources

- <http://mas.org/design-challenge-for-a-new-penn-station-and-the-next-madison-square-garden/>
- http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/25/nyregion/madison-square-garden-is-told-to-move.html?_r=0
- <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/27/arts/design/penn-station-madison-square-garden-report-needs-rethinking.html>

October 31:

Lecture

Read: **Building the Equitable City (chapter 6)**; *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America, How to Build Good Cities*

Project Lecture

Seward Park, New York

Additional readings/resources

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/16/nyregion/16housing.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seward_Park_Urban_Renewal_Area
- <http://www.nycdc.com/project/seward-park-mixed-use-development-project>

Additional readings

- Associated Press, "US Poverty on Track to Reach 46-Year High; Suburbs, Underemployed Workers, Children Hit Hard."

November 7:

Class cancelled.

November 14:

Lecture, class discussion, project assignments

Read: **A Country of Cities: Of Trains, Towers, And Trees (conclusion) and A Country of Cities: The Manifesto**; Required from *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America*

Additional readings

- Sullivan, Paul, 2011. "Despite Critics, Mortgage Interest Deduction Persists."
- **For a reference on developing opposing, yet rigorous views see: Reinhold Martin, Raphael Sperry, Amit C. Price Patel, Liz Ogbu, and Tom Angotti, "A Roundtable Debate on 'Foreclosed: Rehousing the American Dream.'"

November 21:

In-class presentations (first half of the groups), from 10am to 12pm; presentation schedule TBD

November 28:

No class due to Thanksgiving Holiday.

December 5:

In-class presentations (second half of the groups), from 10am to 12pm; presentation schedule TBD

Bibliography

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