

THE SHAPING OF THE MODERN CITY
Urban Studies V3545, Fall 2009

Section 1 (Mellis): Tuesday, 11:00 – 12:50, Lehman 421
Section 2 (Aggarwala): Monday, 6:10 – 8:00, Lehman 421
Section 3 (Mellis): Thursday, 11:00-12:50, Lehman 421

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Contemporary American cities have inherited tangled infrastructures, stratified economies, and complex social, political, and administrative structures. Understanding and shaping the future of the city requires a nuanced understanding of its past. This course is designed to introduce urban studies majors to the history of American city, with a particular emphasis on how history and the historian's approach can and should inform policy development and contemporary analysis. Each week we will have a focused discussion about one aspect of American urban history. As this class is a seminar, your well-considered thoughts, expressed in the seminar format, will be the engines of this course.

Course Requirements:

1) Seminar participation (50% of the final grade)

- overall in-class participation (including submission of 10 reaction papers): 40%
- formal presentations (debate, topic, and book review): 10%

Please come to every class with thoughtful questions and well-reasoned arguments based upon the assigned readings. The success of this course depends upon active participation by each and every member of the class, and your grades will be calculated accordingly.

As a part of your weekly participation, you will email, no later than one hour prior to class, a brief piece of writing (less than one page total) based upon the assigned readings for that week. This should include:

- a) a one-paragraph summary of the author's thesis; and
- b) a few sentences (no more than one paragraph) with a suggested area of discussion in seminar, based upon the assigned reading.

There are twelve formal class meetings after the first session; each student will be required to submit a total of ten weekly responses, which will count for part of your class participation grade, along with your consistent, active, and informed involvement in weekly seminar discussion.

2) Writing and Research Assignments (50% of the final grade)

- One 10-12 page book review, due October 26: 25%
- One 8-10 page short research paper, due December 14: 25%
- *Note: papers to be emailed to the professor no later than midnight on the due date*

Critical to the practice of urban history – whether for use in academia or in a policy setting – are the skills of evaluating secondary works and undertaking primary research and writing. The two are closely related. In assessing secondary work – history books, journal articles, policy memos – we make use of others’ interpretive abilities, as every historian, policymaker, or advocate must do. In order to determine the strengths, weaknesses, and significance of a secondary work, we must examine how the author frames his argument; how he writes it; which sources he uses and how he uses them -- and which sources he fails to use; which points he emphasizes, and which he ignores. We must also interpret what (if anything) each piece of secondary analysis adds to what we already know.

Primary research is a different challenge. Rather than dealing with a fellow analyst, we engage directly with the participants in history, through raw data, original letters, contemporary news coverage. We may need to think differently about the sources we have: a lobbyist’s op-ed must be assessed very differently from a history student’s dissertation. What is the point of view of the participant? Is there a hidden agenda we must watch for? Or perhaps a context or a broader trend of which the contemporaries may not have been aware? When engaging directly with the history, we must also ask ourselves: how are we to interpret what these people’s experience meant, and how can we do so being both insightful and yet also humble about our own shortcomings, biases, and shortsightedness? Primary sources may also include contemporary maps, census data, or other quantitative information.

Because both of these skills are important, **the main writing requirements of this class include one of each: a book review of two important monographs, and a short piece of primary research modeled on a “Notes and Research” article from a journal.** Each student will choose a broad topic area, as defined by the class titles. This topic will determine both the books reviewed in the first assignment and the research focus of the second assignment; thus, if the student has chosen “racial segregation and neighborhood change in the 20th century city,” then the book review will be of Sugrue or Self plus one of the complementary books listed in the syllabus, and the primary research will involve some primary material related to racial segregation and neighborhood change. **Students will choose their complementary books in class in the second class meeting.**

Book review – due October 26

The first assignment will be a 10-12-page academic book review of two books, as listed on the syllabus. **For each class, the student(s) who are working on that topic will open the class with a short presentation**, particularly highlighting the second book (which the rest of the class will not have read).

The book review will be graded on the basis of four criteria:

1. Thoroughness of evaluation of the books (e.g., approach, research, argument, style, omissions)
2. Overall argument about the books (e.g., did the review have an insightful and credible thesis?)
3. Organization of paper (e.g., was the paper easy to understand? Did it flow logically?)
4. Writing style (e.g., word choice, grammar, basics)

Note: The best set of examples for this kind of work is the periodical *Reviews in American History*, which is available online via CLIO. If you read a review of the books you are writing about, and it influences your argument, you must cite the review.

Research paper – due December 14

For the primary topic, each student will identify one specific experience, dataset, event, or source directly related to the topic, and write a paper modeled after a “Notes and Research” article from a history journal. This will not be a complete thesis, but it will consider a historical event or trend in its context; use a primary source or small set of sources to explain the event or trend; evaluate it for its relevance to the contemporary historiographical debate; and conclude with a direction for future research that would validate the hypotheses set forth. Each student will consult with the professor about this topic in the first three weeks of class, and a one-page proposal including the primary sources for the notes and research paper will be handed in attached to the book review. After receiving feedback on your proposal, you will present to the class a brief description of your topic and reasons for choosing it, the sources you have identified, and your proposed approach. This early presentation is, of course, preliminary, but you will need to be thinking about all these things early on, in order to write the strongest possible paper. The research paper will be graded on five criteria:

1. Quality of primary research (e.g., was the research well done? Did the writer really understand and analyze the primary sources well?)
2. Positioning (e.g., did the paper clearly establish the historical and historiographical context, and make it clear how this research contributed to it?)
3. Overall argument (e.g., did the paper have an insightful and credible thesis?)
4. Organization of paper (e.g., was the paper easy to understand? Did it flow logically?)
5. Writing style (e.g., word choice, grammar, basics)

Please see the class schedule for ideas for different research topics; these are not exhaustive lists, but are intended to help provoke thinking about your own interests and avenues for research.

READING ASSIGNMENTS AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Required books are at the Columbia University Bookstore, and on reserve at Barnard Reserves.

Please note: changes to this reading list may be made via email or announcements in class, and you will be responsible for any such changes.

Week 1 -- Introduction

Sept. 8/10/14

- In-class reading and discussion:
 - Billy G. Smith, "Inequality in Late Colonial Philadelphia: A Note on Its Nature and Growth," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 1984), pp. 629-645
 - Richard Stott, "Respectable Artisans," *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Jun., 1994), pp. 223-228 (review of *Keepers of the Revolution: New Yorkers at Work in the Early Republic* by Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock; and *The Republic of Labor: Philadelphia Artisans and the Politics of Class, 1720-1830* by Ronald Schultz.)
- Talk about book review and research topics

Week 2 – Conceiving and Growing a City

Sept. 15/17/21

- **Choose book review topics – sign up in class**
- Required reading:
 - William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*
 - ♣ Chapters 1-2 (pp 23-99), 3 or 4 or 5 (choose one), and 6-8 (pp 263-370)
- Book review options:
 - Jacob M. Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century." *Perspectives in American History* (1974) 8:123-186
 - Robert G. Albion, *The Rise of New York Port, 1790-1860*
- Potential research topics:
 - History of boosterism in one city during its early years
 - History of one piece of early infrastructure
 - How the "logic of capital" affected one city – e.g., railroad rates, fixed capital investments

Week 3 -- The Nineteenth-century City as a Place of Social Novelty

Sept. 22/24/28

- Required reading:
 - Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860*
- Book review options:
 - Timothy Gilfoyle, *City of Eros: New York City, Prostitution, and the Commercialization of Sex, 1790 – 1920*
 - Patricia Cline Cohen, *The Murder of Helen Jewett*
- Potential research topics:
 - One nineteenth-century organization or institution (e.g., YMCA in Utica, American Bible Society in New York)
 - One reform effort in one location (e.g., temperance movement in Albany)
 - One court case involving gender or class issues in the nineteenth century

Week 4 -- European Immigrants in the American City

Sept. 29/Oct. 1/5 (Section 2: This class will be taught by Professor David Weiman)

- Required reading:
 - John Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*
 - Robert D. Fairbanks, "From Better Dwellings to Better Neighborhoods," in Bauman, et al (eds.), *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*
- Book review options:
 - Dennis Clark, *The Irish in Philadelphia: Ten Generations of Urban Experience*
 - Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White*
 - Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War*
 - Thomas A. Guglielmo, *White on Arrival: Italians, Race, Color, and Power in Chicago, 1890-1945*
 - Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City*
- Potential research topics:
 - History in one defined period of one ethnic parish, church, or synagogue
 - Origins of one ethnic institution or specific community in one location (e.g., Sicilians in Pittsburgh in the 1880s)
 - One riot between nativists and immigrants

Week 5 -- Machine Politics and the American City – IN-CLASS DEBATE

Oct. 6/8/12 (Section 2: We will have no class meeting; the discussion will be combined with the subsequent week's. **NOTE: Your pre-class reading summaries are still due at the normal time.**)

- Required reading:
 - William Riordon, *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall* (you **must** use the 1994 Bedford/St. Martin's Press edition, edited by Terrance MacDonald). In addition to "The Document" (pp. 45-102), you must also read: Introduction (pp. 1-38), and "Related Materials," (pp. 105-134)
- **DEBATE** (details to be discussed prior to class)

Week 6 -- City Government and the Building of the Twentieth-Century City

Oct. 13/15/19

- Required reading:
 - David C. Hammack, *Power and Society: Greater New York at the Turn of the Century*
- Book review options:
 - Sven Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie*
 - Carl Smith, *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief in the Great Chicago Fire, the Haymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*
 - Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900*
 - Keith D. Revell, *Building Gotham: Civic Culture and Public Policy in New York City, 1898-1938*
- Potential research topics:
 - One specific election in one city and reform issues or political machines behind it
 - One party club or machine in one city in one period (e.g., Jersey City machine in the 1920s)
 - One late 19th/early 20th-century infrastructure investment in one city other than New York (e.g., Boston subway, San Francisco's water system)
 - Creation of zoning in one city other than New York

Week 7 -- African-Americans and the Northern City

Oct. 20/22/26

- **Book review papers and research paper proposals due**
- Required reading:
 - James Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*;
 - Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*, Chapter 1
- Book review options:
 - Nicholas Lemann, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How it Changed America*
 - Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *Or Does it Explode?: Black Harlem in the Great Depression*
- Potential research topics:
 - Demographic history of one African-American neighborhood outside of New York or Chicago
 - One race riot in an American city prior to 1940

Week 8 – Suburbanization, Federal Policy, and the Automobile

Oct. 27/29/Nov. 9 (Nov. 2, 3: holidays)

- Required reading:
 - Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*
 - Wiese, *Places of Their Own* (selections)
- Book review options:
 - Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965*
 - Scott Bottles, *Los Angeles and the Automobile*
 - Owen Gutfreund, *Twentieth Century Sprawl: Highways and the Reshaping of the American Landscape*
- Potential research topics:
 - One suburb's original settlement
 - One specific policy decision related to suburbanization (e.g., the imposition of a restricted gas tax in one state; the design and construction of one highway; redlining in one neighborhood)
 - One company's decision to move its headquarters outside a downtown area

Week 9 – Downtown, the Retailers, and the Developers

Nov. 5/10/16

- Required reading:
 - Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It*
- Book Review options:
 - Carol Willis, *Form Follows Finance: Skyscrapers and Skylines in New York and Chicago*
 - Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer's Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*
- Potential research topics:
 - The career of one developer, building, or real estate project (*not* the ESB or the WTC)
 - The history of one downtown retailer (e.g., Wanamaker's)
 - One urban renewal project

Week 10 -- Segregation, Race, and Neighborhood Change

Nov. 12/17/23

- Required reading (choose one):
 - Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*
 - Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*
- Book review options:
 - Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem, the Making of a Ghetto*
 - Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960*
 - Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*
- Potential research topics:
 - One post-1940 race riot
 - The demographic and spatial change of one city between 1900 and 1970
 - One neighborhood organization in the 1960s-80s

Week 11 – Saving the American City

Nov. 19/24/30

- **Research paper presentations (1 of 3)**
- Required reading:
 - Zachary Schrag, *Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro*
 - John F. Bauman, “Jimmy Carter, Patricia Roberts Harris, and Housing Policy in the Age of Limits,” in Bauman, et al, (eds.), *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*
- Book review options:
 - Peter Derrick, *Tunneling to the Future: The Story of the Great Subway Expansion That Saved New York*
 - Alex S. Vitale, *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics*
- Potential research topics:
 - One Great Society transportation project (e.g., the Buffalo subway, MARTA)
 - One non-transportation master planning effort in 1960-1980 (e.g., northern New Jersey)

Week 12 – Globalization and the American City

Dec. 1/3/7

- **Research paper presentations (2 of 3)**
- Required reading:
 - Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*
- Book review options:
 - Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger*
 - Howard Gillette, Jr., *Camden After the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City*
- Potential research topics:
 - One global bank’s expansion between 1950 and 2000
 - Change in one service industry in one city
 - Global mapping exercise of one industry (e.g., what are the centers of activity and jobs in the fashion/clothing industry? The aerospace industry? Reinsurance?)

Week 13 -- Gentrification, the Sunbelt, and the 21st Century City

Dec. 8/10/14

- **Research papers due**
- **Research paper presentations (3 of 3)**
- Required reading:
 - Davis, Sorkin, Crawford, and Boyer articles in Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*
 - Bernard and Rice article from *Sunbelt Cities*
- Book review options:
 - Joel Garreau, *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*, and William Sharpe and Leonard Wallock, "The Edge of a New Frontier?", *Journal of the American Planning Association* 58 (Summer 1992), 391-393
 - Martin V. Melosi and Joseph A. Pratt, *Energy Metropolis: An Environmental History of Houston and the Gulf Coast*
 - Matthew Klinge, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*
 - by (Author)
- Potential research topics:
 - History of one gated community, planned new urbanist development, or historic redevelopment
 - Growth patterns (population, demography, geography) in one city in the sunbelt
 - One growing urban industrial center
 - History of one business improvement district or similar institution