

**Geography 370**  
**Urban Geography**  
**Department of Geology and Geography**  
**Ohio Wesleyan University**  
**Fall 2009**

**Course Syllabus<sup>1</sup>**

**Professor: David M. Walker**

**Office: SWSC 237**

**Office Hours: 11-12 MWF and by appointment**

I am in my office many times other than office hours. If my door is open, students are welcome and invited to come in if they wish to see me. I am also happy to make appointments to meet with students at other times.

**Office Phone Number: 740-368-3624**

**Email: [dmwalker@owu.edu](mailto:dmwalker@owu.edu)**

”Learning is not understanding the "true" nature of things, nor is it (as Plato suggested) remembering dimly perceived perfect ideas, but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the bewildering array of sensations which have no order or structure besides the explanations (and I stress the plural) which we fabricate for them.”  
Prof. George E. Hein

### **Course Introduction**

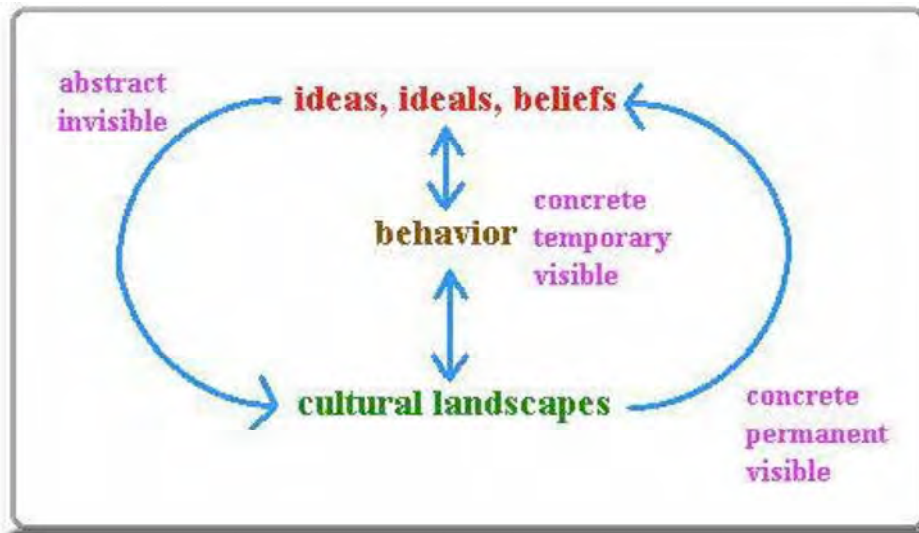
This course is called Urban Geography. What does that mean? The etymology of urban is *urbs*, derived from Latin, which signified city or town. *Urbs* contrasted with *rus*, signifying a rural landscape. From the same etymological Latin roots originate the words urbane—to mean refined and perhaps even sophisticated—and rustic to mean simple, unrefined or rural.

Cities and urbanization processes are intertwined. Since this is an Urban Geography course, we are to study cities from a geographical perspective, or a geographic framework. Our readings will primarily be in the discipline of Geography and we will read recent writings as well as classic works. In doing so, we will learn about the processes and practices within the city AND how geographers view the world and why geography matters in the way people live their lives.

---

<sup>1</sup> As per the usual caveat, this syllabus is a work in progress. I may alter the syllabus throughout the semester depending on events that emerge, new readings that surface, if I choose to include films as a pedagogical tool, invite guest lecturers, or if I choose to include in the syllabus any contemporary news-worthy events pertaining to the class.

Now, but what of geography? And what is a geographic framework anyway? Geography is about space. More specifically geography is about the socio-spatial dialectic. Geography is the study of relations between society and the natural environment. Geography looks at how society shapes, alters and increasingly transforms the natural environment, creating humanized forms from stretches of supposedly “pristine” nature, and then sedimenting layers of socialization one within the other, one on top of the other, until a complex natural-social landscape results. Geography also looks at how nature conditions society, in some original sense of creating the people and raw materials which social forces "work up" into culture, and in an on going sense of placing limits and offering material potentials for social processes like economic development and the emergence of cities to occur (Peet, Richard, 1998, *Modern Geographic Thought*. Blackwell Publishers, London/New York). The "relation" between “society and nature” is thus an entire system, a complex of inter-relations. These processes are what geographers call the socio-spatial dialectic (Edward W. Soja, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 70, No. 2, Jun., 1980, pp. 207-225).



- people modify the spaces they live in (say, for example the creation and modification of cities)
- and in turn are modified by them

So, in this course we will study urban processes and cities employing the socio-spatial dialectic as our constructional framework.

## **Objectives of the Course**

1. Students should be able to identify what constitutes the urban (surely it is not just what is considered sophisticated, no?—and what does that mean anyway!)
2. Students should be able to explain how cities are formed, how they function, and how they change.
3. Students should be able to define characteristics of cities across space and time.
4. Students should be able to describe who and what are cities for. To elaborate, do people in different places and different time periods (and times of the day) have similar and/or dissimilar experiences of the urban?

In considering these questions, we will examine different approaches to cities in a contemporary and historical context and trace how urban spaces have come to be, how they have been utilized historically, the contemporary uses of cities and the future of cities.

## **Attendance is required**

You cannot pass this course without coming to class. I will take attendance daily.

Throughout the semester:

- You are allowed two unexcused absences—no questions asked.
- Each additional unexcused absence will result in a demotion of your grade by one letter.
- I will excuse absences if you provide me with an official written document – such as a doctor’s note in case of illness. Excused absences are exempt from the two rules stated above.

Do not come to class late!!! This disturbs me and the rest of the class.

## **Class decorum**

I do not mind if you eat or drink in the class- just do so discreetly. However, it is not tolerable for you to read magazines, newspapers, fill out crossword puzzles, **fiddle with cell phones, black berries etc., , sleep!**, or do work for other classes during Geography 3370. Please take care of these duties before or after class.

- If you repeatedly leave the classroom to check your cell phone, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.

- If you repeatedly text or fiddle with your cell phone, blackberry, etc., you will be counted as absent, unexcused and asked to leave.
- If you sleep in class, you will be counted as absent, unexcused.

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

The Dean's office is responsible for dealing with cases of plagiarism and cheating. Make sure you understand how these offenses are defined and what the punishment for either is. You can find this information in your copy of Students Rights and Responsibilities.

### **Late Papers**

**Absolutely no late papers will be accepted and no make up tests or presentations will be given.** If you have an emergency, and are unable to turn in a paper or attend class during a presentation, the only acceptable method for doing so will be with an excused letter from the Dean's office. No other form of excuse or letter will be accepted.

### **Readings**

Text: *Cities of the World*, Fourth Edition—available @ the bookstore

Additional readings- available from eres: password urban.

Please bring text and articles with you to class on a daily basis as we will frequently refer to the readings during lectures.

### **Course Requirements**

#### **1. Reading Reactions 15 POINTS EACH for 150 points**

You must write a summary and critique of the designated readings assigned for each class. These summaries form the basis of class discussion and are handed in (hard copy) at the end of each class.

These **two-page** (double-spaced, 12pt font, regular margins) submissions consist of questions and reactions to the assigned readings. These written reactions will be used to structure class conversations. Although you will include descriptions of the texts, the emphasis in these papers should be on your analysis of the arguments. Thinking deeply about the assumptions and intellectual frameworks of the readings in these papers is of utmost importance; such questioning will further your own interpretations and add depth and vitality to our class conversations.

Your short essay should include:

- a) A concise (1-1.5 paragraph) summary of the main points of the readings.
- b) Your critical analysis of the article might address the following questions: What are the main arguments? What strategies do the authors use to make their point? What are the research questions? What methods are employed? What theories are used? What data are employed? You may address other questions as you see fit.
- c) What questions or issues do the assigned readings raise in your mind? What things do the authors do well, what things do they do less well? What points of agreement and disagreement emerged between you and the text?
- d) During (or at the end of) your discussion develop at least three well-conceived, well-articulated, and non-rhetorical questions pertaining to the readings. These questions can be broad in scope, meaning you may query a particular theme across the readings, or quite specific, you may have questions about a certain passage or argument in one text.

Why am I doling out Reading Response Assignments? This assignment is a form of active pedagogy. Theorists have proven that through active pedagogical techniques students make sense of or develop meaning from knowledge through the facilitation of a higher order of thinking skills, not just knowledge and a recall of facts, but comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of knowledge. The implementation of active learning techniques requires that students engage with the subject matter by participating in an activity and then reflecting on her/his experience with the activity. Writing response papers, crafting three questions and discussing your papers in class will encourage you to internalize key concepts and make linkages between theory and practice in relation to urban processes and cities.

**2. On in-class test: 50 points:** Consisting of multiple choice and short answer questions

**3. One take-home test: 100 Points**

**4. Place and Space Assignment: 75 points Due September 29<sup>th</sup>**

**For** this assignment, you will (1) choose a domestic, urban or a consumption space (i.e., the kitchen of your parent's house; a street corner or street block; a mall, farmers market or grocery store) and (2) conduct a mini-ethnography<sup>2</sup> (i.e. a "filed study or a "case report") of that space and how it is used by different people. You will examine your site's spatial layout and think about how understandings of gender, race, class, sexuality, and so on are inscribed into this site. (No you can't use your dorm-room). Pay special attention

---

<sup>2</sup> Ethnography is a research strategy used to provide descriptions of social-spatial sites, which as a methodology does not prescribe any one particular research finding tool (e.g. observation, interview, questionnaire), but instead prescribes a combination of these tools through the nature of the study (i.e. to describe socio-spatial sites through writing).

to the readings from week four as they will greatly help guide you through this assignment. This should be a 3-5 page analysis.

### **5. Film/Video Analysis Assignment 75points due October 20<sup>th</sup>.**

View a film on your own or in a group during the course of the semester that deals directly with topics covered in this class. A 3- 5 page analysis of how the film engages specific urban geographic concepts is required. Describe how the city is a character in the film. How do the film makers capture the essence of place (the city) in the film?

This assignment is not a summary or a reflection of your thoughts but rather a critical interpretation of how concepts we have discussed are reflected/treated in the films, how place is constructed by the film maker and how that can be related to urban geography.

*See handout for example.*

#### ***Some film suggestions:***

Blade Runner (Brasilia)	Pulp Fiction (LA)
Metropolis (Berlin)	Sleepless in Seattle (Seattle)
Paris je t'aime (Paris)	Femme Nikita (Paris)
Woman on the verge of a Nervous Breakdown (on Madrid, or any of the Almodovar films)	Diva (Paris)
Amores Perros (México DF)	Dirty Harry (San Francisco)
Y tu mama también (México DF)	Traffic (Tijuana, San Diego...and?)
City of God (Río de Janeiro)	Bye-bye Mumbai (Mumbai)
Vertigo (SF)	Pixote (Río de Janeiro)
Across the Bridge (Istanbul)	Othello Negro (Río de Janeiro)
Crash (LA)	Maquilapolis (Tijuana)
Colors (LA)	L.A Story
Boyz in Da Hood (LA)	Paris is Burning (New York)

**Other suggestions from you???**

### **6. City Presentation. 150 Points**

**In class group presentations worth 150 points.**

For the in-class, group city project, I will divide you into groups. Each group will vote on a representative. The representative will choose a piece of paper with the name of a city written on it from a hat. This will be your assigned city.

Each group will follow guidelines below in order to give a successful, in-class, power-point, geographical presentation on their selected city. In the presentations you want to demonstrate that you can successfully answer the following questions and engage with the following themes (in no particular order) in relation to your city:

- Describe what constitutes the “urban” of this site.
- Explain how the city was formed, how it functions, and how it has changed.
- Define characteristics of the city across space and time – and why these changes occur(ed).
- Describe who and what the city is for. To elaborate, how people in different places and different time periods (and times of the day) have similar and/or dissimilar experiences of the urban in your city?

Each member of the group will be required to cover one particular aspect of the city and provide a presentation on this feature of the city. You will be graded for your individual contribution to the overall group project. You will not be graded en masse. Each member of the group will download her/his section of the assignment onto a disk in order to provide a fluid presentation and to provide me with the final copy. .

Here are some themes/topics you can use to frame your presentation. We want to know:

- what particular cultural, economic and physical geographic features have impacted the morphology (i.e. shape and structure, the way it is) and social characteristics of the city?
- how the city came to be: its history—through the long durée of the socio-spatial dialectic? Explain why the city is located where it is: its site and situation-location, the socio-spatial dialectic that led to the production of this site; its historical geography vis-à-vis society/nature relations.
- what the city is like- what is the nitty-gritty feeling of the city, what is the city like on a day-to-day basis?: description—this must include the built environment and the people that live there and helped create the environment; the plazas, streets, architecture, bridges—combined with location. E.g., is it a port city; is it on a river; the physical geography of the city combined with the built environment of the city, but also the contemporary culture of the city.
- how it functions (the culture(s) and economies of the city)?
- how it fits in the world (the politico-economics of the city) and where it is going (cities in the age of globalization)?
- what sorts of current events are impacting your city (i.e. Olympics; World Cup; Gallery Hops; Farmer’s Markets)?

Obviously, you can't cover all of these overlapping themes. These are suggestions. You may choose whatever you wish about a city in order to engage with and answer the above themes/question and provide the class with a description for this urban site.

Please remember, that cities are sites of social relations that are produced through society/nature interactions. That means you must include "people" in your presentations and people's relationship with nature juxtaposed to the construction of the city.

Please use the *geographic language* from the class readings and discussions to develop a narrative about and describe your city.

**Remember!** Use your geographic imagination for this city presentation! Have fun with this assignment! There are myriad interesting contemporary cultural and economical things occurring in cities that are quite exciting. If your presentation is *boring*, this is only because of your own lack of imagination (and preparedness). You can choose any aspect of the city you wish, just clear it with me.

You will gradually work on the in-class, city presentation throughout the semester.

- **November 5th**, *Individual* Annotated Bibliography<sup>3</sup> due. 5 peer review geography journal sources; 2 websites pertaining to geography of the city; pertinent maps. **50 points**
- **November 19<sup>th</sup>**, individual *outline* of your own personal aspect of the presentation. **25 points.**
- **Date of Final Presentations to be announced. 100 points.**

To insure the success of the in-class Group Presentations, attendance is mandatory on all presentation days (nobody likes to give a presentation to an empty classroom). It will be impossible to receive full credit on your own presentation unless you attend all of the other presentations (If you miss one day of presentation, **25 points** will be taken off your presentation grade, 2 days **50 points**, etc.).

### **One Required Fieldtrip Thursday October 8<sup>th</sup>**

We will analyze urban socio-spatial phenomena in Columbus focusing specifically on ethnic socio-spatial changes occurring along the Morse Rd corridor; the gentrification of the near east side; and attempts to revitalize Columbus' downtown through the greening of its urban landscape and efforts to create mixed use urban space. We will leave a Noon and return to campus by 7. Again, this fieldtrip is a requirement. ***If you are not able to go***

---

<sup>3</sup> For instructions on how to prepare an annotated Bibliography, please refer to, <http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm>



*on the fieldtrip you may not take this class.*

### **Grading**

So, there are 600 possible points in the class. You all start out the same and then build up your points throughout the semester. Your grade will be determined on the percentage of points you receive.

Percentages = Letter Grades:

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

## **Reading Itinerary**

### **Week One: Class Introduction: World Urban Development: What is Urban Geography?**

- August 25<sup>th</sup> = Class Introduction. Read Syllabus.
- August 27<sup>th</sup> = Tim Hall, Chpt 1&2, “Why urban Geography” –**and-** “New Cities, New Urban Geographies” **1<sup>st</sup> reading reaction due**

### **Week Two: World Urban Development: What is a City?**

- September 1<sup>st</sup> = Cities of the World pp. 3-26.
- September 3<sup>rd</sup> = “What is a City”, by Lewis Mumford –**and-**  
Cities of the World, pp. 25-50. **2<sup>nd</sup> reading reaction due** Please write on both Mumford, “What is a City” and the Cities of the World Chapter

### **Week Three: World Urban Development: What is a City?**

- September 8<sup>th</sup> = “What is a City” Steve Pile pp. 1-19. **3<sup>rd</sup> reading reaction due**
- September 10<sup>th</sup> = **First Test**

### **Week Four: Urban Spaces: consumption, inclusion, exclusion—race gender and the city**

- September 15<sup>th</sup>= “Domesticating Urban Space” Dolores Hayden, **and**

Designers push to make cities more female-friendly By Haya El Nasser, USA TODAY [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-12-25-Designingwomen\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-12-25-Designingwomen_N.htm) **and**

Making Space for Women in Cities. **4<sup>th</sup> reading reaction due,**

- September 17<sup>th</sup>= “The Magic of the Mall: An Analysis of Form, Function and Meaning in the Contemporary Retail Built Environment” by Jon Goss **and**

Once-Upon-a-Time in the Commodity World: An Unofficial Guide to the Mall of America, by Jon Goss, **5<sup>th</sup> reading reaction due**

### **Week Five: Race-Space –Consumption-Place-Domesticity-Gender**

- September 23<sup>rd</sup>= NO READING: Go to the AV center in the library, room 43. View Documentary, *Flag Wars*, do worksheet.
- September 25<sup>th</sup> = NO READING go out and work on your Space and Place Assignment

### **Week Six: An Abundance of Natural Resources and the Gift of Immigration: North American Urbanization**

- September 29<sup>th</sup>= Cities of the World Chapter 2 pp. 53-71 **Space and Place Assignment Due**
- October 1<sup>st</sup> = Cities of the World Chapter 2 pp. 71-101 **and** Gentrification, by Lees, Slater and Wyly. Chapters 1

### **Week Seven: Gentrification: the emergence of revanchist urbanization processes**

- October 6<sup>th</sup> = Gentrification, by Lees, Slater and Wyly. Chapters 2
- October 8<sup>th</sup> = Gentrification, by Lees, Slater and Wyly. Chapter 3 **6<sup>th</sup> reading reaction due: Write on Gentrification**

**FIELD EXCURSION: MEET AT NOON IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **Week Eight: Film/Video Analysis Assignment/Mid Semester Break**

- October 13<sup>th</sup> = No Class Work on Film/Video Analysis Assignment
- October 15<sup>th</sup> = Mid Semester Break

### **Week Nine: Fortress Cities and Command Centers: Cities of the Caribbean and Middle America**

- October 20<sup>th</sup> = Cities of the World Chapter 3 pg. 103 - 141 **and**  
Between Cultures: Public Space in Tijuana, by Lawrence A. Herzog

#### **Film/Video Analysis Assignment Due**

- October 22<sup>nd</sup> = U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, by Altha Cravey **and** Global Tijuana: The Seven Ecologies of the Border, by Lawrence Herzog **and** The Excess of Modernity: Politics of Garbage in Oaxaca, Mexico, by Sarah Moore  
**7th reading reaction due**

Listen to this broadcast from NPR:

<http://www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&t=1&islist=false&id=111100400&m=111566149>

### **Week Ten: La Ley de Las Indias and Latin American Cities**

- October 27<sup>th</sup> = Cities of the World Chapter 4 pp. 145-177pg
- October 29<sup>th</sup> = Cities in the World Chapter 4 pp. 177-199 **and**  
Identifying the Inner City in Latin America, by Gareth Jones. **8<sup>th</sup> reading assessment due**

### **Week Eleven: The Birth of Urbanization?: Cities of the Greater Middle East**

- November 3<sup>rd</sup> = Cities of the World Chapter 7 pp. 301-323
- November 5<sup>th</sup> = Cities of the World Chapter 7 pp. 323- 339 **Individual Annotated Bibliography Due**

### **Week Twelve: So Old and Cold and Settled in Her Ways: Cities of Europe**

- November 10<sup>th</sup> = Cities of the World Cpt. 5 pp. 203-253 **9<sup>th</sup> readings response due**
- November 12<sup>th</sup> = Attend talk or work on City Projects

- **Week Thirteen: De-centering Eurocentric Urbanization: Cities of Sub-Saharan Africa**
- November 17<sup>th</sup> = Cities of The World Chapter 8 pp. 345-60 **Individual *outline* of your own personal aspect of the presentation Due**
- November 19<sup>th</sup> = November 17<sup>th</sup> = Cities of The World Chapter 8 pp. 360-382 **10<sup>th</sup> readings assessment due**

**Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Break**

- November 24 = No Class
- November 26 = Eat Turkey

## **City Presentations**

**Week 15: Recapitulation/City Presentations**

- December 2<sup>nd</sup> = NO CLASS: Finalize Country Presentations
- December 4<sup>th</sup> Recapitulation **2<sup>nd</sup> Test Due**

**Week 16: City Presentations**

- December 8<sup>th</sup> = Country Presentations
- December 10<sup>th</sup> = Country Presentations

**Week 17: City Presentations**

- December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1:30-4:30 = City Presentations