Syllabus

Introduction:
This course should help students understand how major American cities became systematically related in a changing system during the 20th Century and why that system continues to change. It will explain how economic and political decisions have shaped the way we work, live and consume within urban networks. The major hubs of the city system-- New York, Chicago and Los Angeles-- will receive much of the attention, but so will cities like Philadelphia, whose street grid and later restructuring of the business core set national patterns; Detroit, which has followed the trajectory of a single industry; Portland, which embraced environmental consciousness; Las Vegas, which became a specialized city based on a culture of abundance, and Miami Beach & Sun City, Arizona, which grew because of public policies coinciding with an extension of the human life cycle.

Course Organization
The course is organized chronologically, to explain, first, the structure of the city system that developed between 1880 and 1910. These years were marked by intensive industrialization and heavy immigration which concentrated diverse ethnic groups in specific neighborhoods and led the Catholic church to create a network of parishes. At the same time innovations in building techniques, public transportation and a free market in real estate allowed for the dispersal of populations according to income. At first the vast expansion in the scale of urban living was ignored by antiquated city government, but reformers called “Progressives” gradually enlisted professional expertise and expanded the power of city government to cope with the consequences.

We will then examine the extensive black migration from the rural South to northern cities, and its effects on employment, living space and politics. For the 1920s, when population shifts made the United States a predominantly urban society, we will examine the tensions between Nativism, with its demand for immigration restriction and Prohibition, and the first decade of extravagant mass consumption expressed in the term, “the Jazz Age.” We will also see how public policies like zoning and state expenditures for roads enabled further class separation through the construction of “automobile suburbs.”

The segment on the New Deal and World War II will focus on the new relationship between the federal government and the city. We will look particularly at the growing complexity of public financing because of federal expenditures on public housing, roads and bridges, and local decisions about urban renewal. New York City provided the setting for the origins of this innovation because its aggressive “planner,” Robert Moses, and its mayor, Fiorella LaGuardia had close contacts with fellow New Yorkers holding positions in New Deal agencies. During World War II millions of newcomers arrived in major industrial cities and in seaports. Here we will look especially at Detroit, Portland/ Vanport, and Los Angeles to understand the consequences.
The segment on the mid-20th century will examine the relationship between the great African American urban migration beginning in 1941, de-industrialization of cities like Detroit, and the expansion of racially segregated suburbs beyond the legal borders of major cities. We will look closely at the unique social safety net (and tax structure) developed in New York City, and at slum clearance projects that “renewed” the business core of Philadelphia. We will then see how in the 1960s, federal civil rights laws and anti-poverty programs changed the urban landscape and encountered violent resistance in cities from Oakland to Boston.

The last segment of the course will examine how American cities have been affected by Defence contracting, changes in the location of industrial production, the aging of the American people and the new positioning of the United States in a more intensively linked global economic system. Defense contracting enabled the growth of Sun Belt cities and a general shift of the population west and south, while the decentralization of production led to the decline of Detroit and other cities. Social Security, pensions and Medicare have enabled the growth of sub-cities for the elderly, while a new level of affluence led to the growth of Las Vegas as a new kind of specialized city. Concern for all manner of sprawl led to new efforts to control growth, which were especially visible in Portland. New decisions by large corporations about production, about capital formation by Wall Street, and new policies by the federal government on trade and immigration have led to a more intense integration of the United States into a globalized economy whose impact on our cities has been immense.

**Required Readings (available at U of Oregon Bookstore)**
- Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*
- Hal Rothman, *Neon Metropolis, How Las Vegas Started The 21st Century*
- Packet of primary sources
- Essays posted on Blackboard

**Assignments**

The course is designed pedagogically to coordinate lectures with readings; the lectures should provide the historical context for the assigned readings. The readings in the packet are largely primary sources, consisting of essays written by journalists or experts commenting on events as they occurred. There are also several essays posted on Blackboard, rather than being placed in the packet. (Essays on Blackboard should be followed by the letter B on the class schedule.) Writing assignments will require student to “integrate” lectures and readings.

Students should expect to write **three critical essays of 5 pages in length**. [There is no final examination for this class.] Each essay will be worth 20% of the student’s grade. The due dates for these writing assignments will be spaced fairly evenly through the quarter, and they are indicated on the schedule of lectures & assigned readings. Students knowing that they will be out of town on a date when an assignment is due must make arrangements in advance to turn the assignment in to me on time. Assignments turned in late will face deductions, **unless** a student has made prior arrangements with me or has a serious extenuating circumstance.

**20% of a student’s grade** will be based on participation. I would like to devote half of at least four sessions to class discussion. These days are marked as D on the
schedule of lectures and assigned readings, though the actual dates may change as the class proceeds). For these discussion students will be required to prepare three or four questions based on a selection from the readings assigned for that session. I will explain this more fully in class.

The **final 20%** of your grade will be based on a term project, in a media of your choosing, with the consent and agreement of the instructor. The project must be based on one of the major themes on which the course focuses. Two students may work on the same project and will share the same grade.

**Memo on the Term Project**

This project is designed to allow students to utilize their individual skills to demonstrate knowledge of an event or theme in the history of American cities in the 20th century. Your project will be worth **20%** of your grade. **Two** students may collaborate on a project, and the grade will be the same for each member of the team.

A **proposal** for the project must be given to me, in written format of approximately one type-written page, by the 1st session of the **third week** of class. A **bibliography** of items to be used or of persons to be consulted or interviewed must accompany the proposal. Students should read through the schedule of lecture topics and look through the packet of readings to get ideas for the project. **No project will be accepted without a proposal that has been approved by me.**

The projects can be on almost any theme--architecture, city planning, neighborhood or parish organization, cultural life (including sports), political leadership, public policy affecting transportation, housing, education, ethnic businesses--and should be presented in a format agreeable to both the student and the instructor. **The project must be turned in to me during the 10th week of class.**

**1st essay question**

This essay should be five to six pages in length [Times New Roman, 12 font size, 1.5 line spacing]. You should hand it to me in class on Wednesday, April 16, 2014. As you read the question you will see that there is no correct answer. You must makes choices, which you verify with examples from lectures and assigned readings.

1. As a reader of major news magazines between 1900 and 1920:
   
   (a) What would you say were the three or four major issues or problems facing America’s largest cities? (examples: too rapid growth & need of city services to keep up, peculiar changes in allocation of real estate, immigration of the wrong peoples, poor housing & public health, corrupt government or the wrong people making key decisions).
   
   (b) Are these issue or problems related in some systematic way, and are they more severe in some cities than in others? If so, why?
   
   (c) Are the issues that you have identified being effectively addressed in any of these cities? Give two or three examples to verify your opinion.
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<td>Industrialism &amp; America’s Working Class</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5/5 D</td>
<td>Disinvestment &amp; Rebellions 3rd essay due</td>
<td>Sugerue, <em>Origins of Urban Crisis</em></td>
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<td>5/19 D</td>
<td>Cities of Escape: Levittown, Sun City, Leisure as Industry: Las Vegas</td>
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<td>Post-War USA: Civic Renaissance vs Social Democracy “2nd essay due</td>
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<td>Memorial Day no class</td>
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<td>5/28</td>
<td>Planning Regional City: Portland 3rd essay due</td>
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<td>Los Angeles &amp; Pacific Rim</td>
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2. Rabbi Leo Franklin, “The Housing Problem in Detroit,” Charities & the Commons (January 4, 1908), 1358-44.
7. Andrew W Crawford, “Recent City Planning in Philadelphia,” Charities & the Commons (February 1, 1908), 1536-42.
History 410: American City in the 20th Century Spring 2014

Essays available on Blackboard


