Spring 2016
History 479: Readings in Twentieth Century Urban History

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Course Description

This course will investigate the history of the city over the course of the tumultuous twentieth century. During this century, cities were the homes of more people than any other form of settlements. Whether justly or unjustly, cities have also been the repositories of dreams, hopes, and fears of the future. We will engage both the experiences of urban dwellers as well as the visions of planners. This course is transnational in focus. We will be looking at topics including the planning of Soviet cities in the interwar period, Brazilian cities confronting inequality, and North American cities struggling with urban crisis. Throughout we will be looking for both the connections that can be made between different urban centers and the differences that distinguish them.

Requirements and Prerequisites

This is an advanced seminar. Due to the course’s transnational focus, I cannot and do not expect everyone to be equally familiar with all regions that we will be studying. However, an in depth knowledge of one region and a basic familiarity with the modern history of more than one of them would be great.

Your grade will be determined according to the following formula:

- 30% Participation
- 15% Response Papers
- 15% “Your Session”
- 40% Final Paper (and preliminary assignments)

All written work must be completed in order to receive credit for this course. You must attend every class during this semester. If you miss one meeting of the seminar, you can make this up by writing a five-page response paper on the readings for the class that you missed and turning this paper in before the next class meeting. Any additional absences will lead to a $\frac{1}{3}$ reduction in the final grade for the course. If you need to miss a class due to a medical or other emergency, you must provide adequate documentation (such as a doctor’s note) to avoid the absence penalty.

Over the course of the semester, you will be writing response papers for all but three class sessions (when we have readings). These response papers should be 2 pages long,
and engage with the author whom we have read for that week. You should summarize the author’s argument briefly at the start of your response (3-4 sentences at most) and then pick some more focused topic to engage with—this might include a critique of their sources, a relating of what they say to an earlier topic or book we discussed, or an engagement with a particular theme or section that you found really interesting or problematic. At the end of the response paper, you should include at least three discussion questions. You are required to turn in your response paper via email on **Monday at 9am** before each class meeting to both me and (if applicable) the presenter for that week. Response papers will be graded on a √-, √, √+ scale and will be returned to you at the start of each class.

You have the option to turn one response paper in late (by late, I mean in class on the day of discussion, no later). These papers are crucial means for you to prepare for class discussion, thus, after this one late paper, no other late response papers will not be accepted. In other words, you can miss response papers for two weeks, not turn in a paper on the day of your session (see below), and turn in an additional response paper “late” without penalty. For each response paper you miss (beyond these exceptions), your grade for the class will be lowered by 1/6th of a grade (i.e. if you miss two, your grade for the class will go down 1/3rd of a grade).

15% of your grade is based on “your” class session. Once during the semester, you will be responsible for sending out 5-10 reading questions over email to the class on the Friday before we meet. These are not exactly discussion questions, but more questions for people to think about as they complete the readings. You will also read two books (secondary NOT primary sources) that are in some way related to the book the class is reading. These additional readings do not necessarily have to be urban history, per se, but should in some way relate to/enhance your/our understanding of the main book for the day. They cannot be surveys (i.e. textbook or general histories) and ideally will be monographs published by a university press. Alternatively, you can use two articles and one monograph. You may have clues to what would be good books by looking at the author’s bibliography or introduction. **You will also turn in by noon on the day of your presentation a 2 page hand-out relating the book we all read to your additional readings—it should both summarize (briefly) those readings and also provide a few points relating them to what the class read.** I will copy this handout and distribute it to the class. In class, you will introduce the reading and situate it within the broader literature you found. In addition to the two days you are allowed to skip a response paper and the one day you can turn one in at the start of class, on the day of your presentation, you are not responsible for turning in a response paper.

40% of your grade is based on a 12-15-page historiography paper. This paper will be on a topic in twentieth century urban history of your choice, and need not be limited by the scope of the specific topics that we will be covering in this course. While you are encouraged to think about a topic that allows you to address material from more than one national context, this is not a requirement for the paper. As this is a historiography paper, you will be writing less about a particular topic than about the ways that historians (and other academics) have discussed a particular issue. Thus one of the challenges of this
paper is to find a topic that is both sufficiently broad that enough historians have addressed it and sufficiently narrow that you are not trying to master a literature that is well beyond the scope of a paper of this size. We will be discussing and refining your topics over the course of the first half of the semester.

On February 29th, you will turn in a 1-paragraph paper proposal along with a preliminary bibliography listing at least five sources, either books or scholarly articles/chapters. You don’t need to have read the sources by this point, just list them. This will be ungraded.

On April 4th, you will turn in an annotated bibliography that lists at least 4 secondary sources—at least 3 of which are scholarly monographs, with the remaining source either a monograph or an article published in an academic journal or as part of an edited collection—related to your topic with a paragraph summarizing each of them. You will also submit a basic outline for the paper. This will be graded on a √-, √, √+ scale.

On April 28th you will turn in a draft of the paper. This draft must be turned in to me and your reading group. I will establish reading groups before this date based on related topics. You must return your fellow group members drafts (with required comment sheets) by class on May 2nd. Your draft must be at least 10 pages long, of which 7 of those pages must be real text. The draft must also have a thesis statement. Your draft will be graded on a √-, √, √+ scale.

All preliminary assignments are due at noon on the day they are due. They should be submitted over blackboard. It is your responsibility to make sure these have uploaded. So if you have any questions about whether you did so correctly, please make sure to check.

If you turn in any of the preliminary assignments for the historiography paper late, the entire paper will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day it is late. If there is a genuine emergency (you know what a genuine emergency is, but if you aren’t sure, this would be the kind of thing that you would inform your class dean about), let me know as soon as possible and we can try to work something out. Ultimately, any extension is entirely up to my discretion.

You have two “indulgences” that you can apply towards the preliminary assignments (including the draft) for the historiography paper. Each indulgence allows you to turn in the assignment a day (24 hours) late. In other words, you could use one indulgence to turn the paper proposal on March 7th and a second one to turn in the draft on May 4th. How you apportion these indulgences is at your discretion; however, when you (finally) turn the late paper in, you should mark the number you are taking in the text that accompanies your blackboard submission. You cannot use indulgences to turn the final paper itself in late.

All work for this class is governed by the honor code. You must write and sign the honor code pledge at the end of each assignment. We will talk briefly about the honor code in class, but if you have further questions, please go to the honor code page on blackboard.
Texts Available for Purchase

Paul Stronski, Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010)

Schedule of Topics and Readings

February 1: Introduction

February 8: The City at the Fin-de-Siècle
Till van Rahden, Jews and Other Germans

February 15: The Soviet City
Paul Stronski, Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City

February 22: World War II and its Aftermath
Gregor Thum, The Uprooted, excerpts

February 29: Urban Crisis in the US
Thomas Sugrue, The Origins of Urban Crisis
PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL DUE AT NOON

March 7: Corbusier in Concrete & Steel
Kenny Cupers, The Social Project
CIAM, Athens Charter (on blackboard)

March 14: Gentrification and its Discontents
Suleiman Osman, Brownstone Brooklyn
Jane Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*, excerpt (on blackboard)

**SPRING BREAK**

**March 28:** The Suburb and the City, pt. 1
Robert Self, *American Babylon*

**April 4:** Local Activism
Bryan McCann, *Hard Times in the Marvelous City*

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE AT NOON**

**April 11:** The Suburb and the City, pt. 2
Lila Corwin Berman, *Metropolitan Jews*

**April 18:** Gentrification, pt. 2

**April 25:** The Postmodern City
Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe, eds., *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*, selections

**April 28:** **PAPER DRAFT DUE AT NOON**

**May 2:** Approaches to Transnational Urban History
Readings tba

**FINAL PAPER DUE SUNDAY, MAY 15, 11AM VIA BLACKBOARD**