Explore a century of American hopes and fears about cities through the archetypes of Chicago and Los Angeles. Learn to see cities as built environments, ways of life, sources of community, and political economies. These paradigms ground our discussions of forces that shape cities and define American culture, including: race and residential segregation, technology, suburbanization, immigration, and gentrification. Central to this course are documentary films, field trips and curiosity about the cities you know.

This course satisfies the cultural diversity requirement (CD), ENVS Social Science requirement, and counts as a LAWS related course.

**Required texts**

**Contact info**
greggor.mattson@oberlin.edu
Mailbox on my door, King 305c
Office hours: Mon 2:30-3:30pm; Wed 10am-11am; by appointment

**Assessment**
- Participation 20% (attendance, homework, quizzes, discussion)
- Assignments 50%
- Tour writeup 10%
- Final Portfolio 20%

**Participation (in 6 easy steps)**
- Read the texts before class and take notes on them
- Bring the texts and your notes to class
- Come to class on time every time
- Actively participate in discussions
- Open laptops only in the front rows
- Be respectful to others

Your on-time attendance is essential to your ability to participate. If you miss, get notes from a colleague and come to office hours with questions about the material you missed. Provide documentation at least two weeks before absences for approved College events.
Reading Tips
Read the lecture headings – they tell you the purpose of the reading. Skim each of the texts in 5 minutes. Notice section headings, bold words, or highlighted quotations to get the story the author is telling. When you read the whole thing, you’ll know where the argument is going.

Assignments
In the first week of class you will choose a North American city and begin collecting information and newspaper articles on it, comparing it to Chicago and Los Angeles and interpreting your city using texts from the class. You will turn in the memos twice: once as we go and, finally, and again with the maps and newspaper articles you’ve collected and assembled as a portfolio in a three-ring binder with your final paper summarizing what you’ve learned.

Memo 1: Shape and ecology DUE MAR 1
In a page or two, answer the following: Does your city conform more closely to Burgess’ diagram or to Dear’s? In what ways? Why or why not? On a Google Map of your city, identify the major lines of transportation, zones of heavy industry, dense urban settlement, other ecological features that support your argument.

Memo 2: Residents DUE MARCH 22
On your Google Map, map ethnic areas and areas of racial segregation. Who lives in your city? What is the racial and ethnic makeup of your city? In a page or two, describe the similarities and differences between your city, Chicago and Los Angeles. Speculate on the reasons.

Memo 3: The ethics of (re)development DUE MAY 7
Can there be ethical gentrification? Use the online archive of a major newspaper to learn the major issues your city confronts in urban development. In 3-4 pages, what advantages or disadvantages does your city have? What are the long-term prospects for growth?

Final Portfolio
Clean up your Google Map and assemble your memos into a portfolio that assesses your city’s place and trajectory in the American urban system.

Cleveland Tour
We will spend the day in Cleveland toward the end of the semester on a mutually agreed-upon Saturday. Once the day is set, it is a mandatory class meeting.

Late Assignments
Late assignments will lose one letter grade for each day late – this includes not turning in a hard copy at the beginning of class. Excused lateness must come from a Class Dean.

Honor Code:  http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html
Sign the honor code on each assignment—it is your reminder to know the boundaries of cheating (not doing your own work) plagiarism (taking credit for someone else’s work) and fabrication (making up sources, quotations or observations). Refer to the honor code and/or talk to me if you
have concerns or are feeling so pressed that cheating seems attractive.

Disability Accommodations
If you are a student with a disability, make sure you’ve registered with the Office of Disability Services (Peters G-27/28 x55588) to develop a plan to meet your academic needs. Bring their recommendations to me at least two weeks before any due date or exam.

Grading rubric
Assignments will be graded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis sentence</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>UNDERLINED, answers how or why question appropriate to essay length. Yes, you get points for underlining it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>ideas grouped in paragraphs, evidence for main points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>synthesizes a variety of texts, in-text citations in APA format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On time</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>printed copy hand-delivered by beginning of class, all or nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>creativity, connections between texts, use of language, sparkle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventions</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>stapled, grammar, 1” margins, spelling, punctuated, 12-pt. font</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources & Citations (APA format)
You need not make a works cited for course readings but you must cite them properly in the text in APA format. *Wikipedia is not an academic source, but may lead you to primary sources.*

Paraphrasing primary sources (preferred):
Media in the 1950s catered to the rising middle class, giving a misleading impression of America’s families (Coontz 1990, p. 31).

Direct quotations (use sparingly) must be introduced:
Stephanie Coontz cites the enduring power of the media for creating a new American tradition during the baby boom: “The happy, homogenous families that we ‘remember’ from the 1950s were… a result of the media’s denial of diversity” (1990, p. 31).

Final Exam
The final exam will include short answers of key terms and concepts, essay questions, and news stories that require you to analyze them in terms of the course. I will distribute essay questions on the last day of class from which I will choose the ones you will answer on the final.
UNIT 1: URBANISM AND THE SOCIOLOGY OF SPACE

Sociologists study the way people use space and turn it into places. They are concerned with how strangers interact with each other and the unique networking opportunities that cities offer. The unit introduces the empirical study of people in space and provides a brief history of how strangers have interacted in American cities from the 17th century to the turn of the 21st century.

Feb 8: Urbanism as a way of life: making sense of a routine world of strangers


What are spatial and appearential ordering, and what do they make possible? What three distinguishing characteristics does Wirth identify as urban? Is Oberlin a city? Why or why not?

Feb 12: People in public: sidewalks and megastructures


LISTEN: “Hatfield 1980” by Everything But the Girl

Architects and urban planners try to shape the experience of humans in space; sociologists study how people actually use the places in the built environment. Read these articles and then make a quick trip to Mudd Library. Walk around the building. I mean really walk around the whole building, inside and outside.

HOMEWORK: How did these articles change the way you think about the building? What would Jane Jacobs say about Mudd’s outside? Its insides?

Feb 15: Theories of city life, especially subcultural urbanism
http://www.urbanarchipelago.com/

This article provides a succinct summary of a century’s worth of urban theory, so we will refer to it often. What does it mean to say that cities cause subcultural urbanism? What popular theories about cities does this approach overturn? Would Fischer agree or disagree with the editors of The Stranger?

Feb 17: Putting Jacobs and Fischer to work

St. Jean illustrates the insights gained by the union of a subcultural perspective with attention to the way people actually use places. What is the broken windows theory? What is collective efficacy? What do crime hotspots reveal about the explanatory power of these theories?

HOMEWORK: Use http://spotcrime.com to identify a crime hotspot in your city. Use the streetview function of Google Maps for evidence that St. Jean’s theory is correct. DUE MONDAY, FEB 22nd.

Feb 19: Shapes of the City

Why were American Colonial cities so similar to each other? What is a primate city? How would the strangers you might have encountered been different between Philadelphia and London in the 18th century? In what ways does Oberlin resemble those American Colonial cities?

EXTRA: Take CLAS 203 The City in Antiquity with Prof. Wilburn.

Feb 22: The Shape of Chicago, City of the American Century
LISTEN: “Come On Feel the Illinoise!” Sufjan Stevens. 2005. (read along with lyrics on google)

Note the “bullet” diagram of Chicago invented by Ernest Burgess. In class we will watch Chicago: The First Hundred Years DVD 5973. In what ways did technology shape Chicago, and what factors helped Chicago attain Midwest primacy?

EXTRA: Watch Chicago (2003) Miramax. Read Sister Carrie (1900) or The Devil in the White City (2003), Take ENGL 330 Modernist Chicago with Professor Johns

Feb 24: The Shape of Los Angeles: Anti-city, Broadacre City, just a grid?

Los Angeles has long puzzled urban theorists but is instantly recognizable to generations of media consumers from all over the world. One way to think about the diagrams (Burgess’ concentric zones vs. Dear’s keno capitalism) is that the newer one overlays the older one, at least in 19th century cities. How well do these two models of urban growth describe your city?

Feb 26: What is urban about Iowa? Or Oberlin? Or farms?
Van Biema Crookston, David. “Rural Churches Grapple with a Pastor Exodus - TIME.”

Replace “industrial” with “urban” in the first sentence to learn what farming has to do with a course on urbanism. In what ways are rural areas tied to urban ones?

EXTRA: Watch King Corn (2007) DVD 5778.

UNIT TWO: THE ETHNICITY: Space is organized, connecting and including some and excluding others. In the American context, this is racialized to a degree that “urban” is often synonymous with Black America. In this unit we explore the creation of ghettoes and ethnic enclaves, differences in their histories and effects, and their current-day prospects.

* * * MEMO 1 DUE MAR 1 * * *

Mar 1: “The problem of the 20th Century is the problem of the color-line” –W.E.B. Du Bois

This remarkable document of early 20th century race relations reveals how social meanings can be encoded in space, in terms of the built environment, practices and the meanings of places. In what ways are laws and norms in conflict when it comes to racial segregation?

Mar 3: From “the Black city within the white” to ghettos of concentrated misery
LISTEN: Randy Newman’s “Rednecks.”
EXTRA: take CAST 402 Barrios/Ghettos with Professor Perez

Mar 5: Urban Ethnography: In Search of Respect
In Search of Respect “Introduction” and “Violating Apartheid in the United States”
The urban ethnography is a traditional form of scholarship about city life, revealing through “thick description” the ways that space, people and social forces collide to create meanings and power relations.
Mar 8: In Search of Respect
“A Street History of El Barrio” + “Crackhouse Management: Addiction, Discipline, & Dignity”
A folk explanation might be that the land on which El Barrio arose is just cursed. What is the sociological explanation? In what ways is El Barrio connected to the rest of Manhattan...or not?

Mar 10: In Search of Respect
“‘Goin’ Legit’: Disrespect and Resistance at Work” + “School Days: Learning to be a Better Criminal,”

FILM EVENING: Watch Do the Right Thing (1992) or La Haine / Hate (1995) 7pm place TBA

Mar 12: In Search of Respect

Mar 15: Ethnic enclaves vs. ghettos: the case of Chinatown

How are ethnic enclaves different from ghettos? In what ways does the melting-pot ideal fail to explain why new immigrants choose to live in Chinatown?

Mar 17: The transnational community in the American City

Immigration is both intrinsically connected to the history of American cities and a challenge to lay understandings of citizenship and belonging. Are the Mexicans in Smith’s study just in America or are they also of it? What does it mean to say a migrant is transnational? How is this related to globalization? How is it related to urbanism?

Mar 19: Los Angeles and Immigration

The historical image of Chicago immigration is that of European immigration; the reality of Los Angeles immigration reveals the reality of the New Americans and how they are shaping our cities and American culture.


UNIT THREE: SUBURBS AND SPRAWL
The story of American suburbs is the flip side of the coin that are ghettos and barrios. This unit reviews the cultural beliefs and meanings that built white suburbs before turning to current issues in urban sprawl and the movement of immigrants beyond the city center.

Mar 22: The shapes of suburbia
xi-25, p 44-2-3

Mar 24: Streetcar suburbs
45-49; 61-2-70; Chapter 5, entire
WATCH: Minelli and Garland, “The Trolley Song.”

Mar 26: Making white suburbs
Chapter 6, entire
What is red-lining? HOLC? The FHA? In what ways did social meanings come to be encoded into the law and then into urban space? What residues of these policies remain today?


*** SPRING BREAK ***

Apr 5: Boom! Economic-, Baby-, and suburban housing
Chapter 7, entire
LISTEN: Malvina Reynold’s “Little Boxes” (1962)
What is Levittown and why is it (are they) important? What is the relationship between WWII and suburbia? Why is it not true that suburbs “just exploded over the landscape” by themselves? What parts of the suburban infrastructure were built publicly and which were built privately?


Apr 7: Beyond bedroom communities: living and working in edge communities
Chapter 8, entire
What is an edge node or edge city? What government infrastructure projects transformed rural crossroads into edge cities?

Apr 9: Consumption: from downtown to malls to big boxes
Selections from Christensen, Julia. Big Box Reuse. The MIT Press, 2008.
Apr 12: Exurbs and the real estate crisis

You could read Chapter 9 of Hayden’s book, but I have selected a series of articles about the current housing crisis. You should still be able to answer the questions that Hayden poses: What are exurbs? Why are Whites but not Blacks worried about urban sprawl? What is the relationship between sprawl, persistent poverty, crime and growing inequality?

EXTRA: Hayden Chapter 9, “Rural Fringes.”

Apr 14: Nostalgia and Futurism
Chapter 10, entire “Nostalgia and Futurism” + 230-234.

Apr 16: Urban redevelopment in our backyard

UNIT FOUR: THE MIDDLE CLASS REDISCOVERS URBANISM: GENTRIFICATION
This unit answers the question “what is urban about urban outfitters” by examining the lifeways of today’s city dwellers and the roles they play in today’s service and culture-oriented economies. For whom is the city redeveloped? Who benefits and who loses? How do we know?

* * * PORTFOLIO MEMO 3 DUE * * *

Apr 19: Introducing Neobohemia
Lloyd, Chapters 1+2 “Introduction” + “Production and Neighborhood” + “Notes”

Apr 21: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City
Lloyd, Chapters 3+4: “Bohemia” + “Grit as Glamour”

Apr 23: Living the life
Lloyd, Chapters 5+7: Living Like an Artist + “The Neighborhood in Cultural Production”

Apr 26: The Bohemian Ethic and the Spirit of Flexibility
Lloyd, “The Digital Bohemia” + Conclusion

Apr 28: There Goes The ‘Hood
Freeman, “Introduction” + “There Goes the ‘Hood”

Apr 30: Whose Gentrification?
Freeman “Making Sense of Gentrification”

May 3: Implications
Freeman, “Neighborhood Effects in a Changing ‘Hood” + “Implications for Planning & Policy”

May 5: How do we know what we know about gentrification?
Freeman, Conclusion

Neil Smith is perhaps the world’s leading scholar on gentrification. What do you make of his critique of Freeman’s book?

MINIUNIT: GLOBAL CITIES
We conclude by considering the ecological forms and challenges of major world cities. Which resemble Chicago, which Los Angeles, and why? What conclusions can we draw about the impact of urban ecology, social meanings, and economic forces on the urban world?

May 7: An urban world
Burdett and Sudjic, “The Urbanization of the World” + “London” + “Shanghai”

May 10: Cities of the Global South
Sennett, “The Open City,” “Mexico City” + “Johannesburg”

May 12: Seeing like a City
Sassen, “Seeing Like a City,” “The Death and Life of the Urban Office,”

May 14: Final Exam Preparation