

Spring 2014  
History 479: Readings in Twentieth Century Urban History

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Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30-2:30; Thursday 4-5

*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. As urban history was not necessarily bounded by national divides, this course is transnational in focus. We will be looking at topics including provincial Japanese cities in the interwar period, Eastern European cities under Communism, 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 its transnational and transregional 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:

- 35% Participation
- 15% Response Papers
- 10% "Your Session"
- 40% Final Paper

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 1/6<sup>th</sup> 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 two 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. 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 **Wednesday at 5pm** before each class meeting to both me and (if applicable) the presenter for that week. Response papers will be graded on a  $\sqrt{-}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ ,  $\sqrt{+}$  system and will be returned to you at the start of each class.

10% of your grade is based on “your” class session. Once during the semester, you will be responsible for sending out reading questions over email to the class on the Monday before we meet. 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. 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. I will copy this handout and distribute it to the class. In class, you will introduce the reading, situate it within the broader literature you found, and start the discussion.

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. 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 this and refining your topics over the course of the first half of the semester.

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, 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.

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, you will turn in an annotated bibliography that lists at least 4 sources related to your topic with a paragraph summarizing each of them. You will also submit a basic outline for the paper.

On May 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 based on related topics. You must return your fellow group members drafts (with required comment sheets) by class on May 8<sup>th</sup>. 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.

All preliminary assignments are due at 5pm 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...), 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 “screw-ups” that you can apply towards the preliminary assignments (including the draft) for the historiography paper. Each screw-up allows you to turn in the assignment a day (24 hours) late. In other words, you could use one screw-up to turn the paper proposal on March 7<sup>th</sup> and a second one to turn in the draft on May 4<sup>th</sup>. How you apportion these screw-up dates is at your discretion; however, when you (finally) turn the screw-up in, you should mark the number you are taking in the text that accompanies your blackboard submission. You **cannot** use screw-ups to turn the final paper itself in late.

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, and turn in an additional response paper “late” without penalty. The remaining response papers must be turned in by **Wednesday at 5pm** the day before our discussion. For each response paper you miss (beyond these exceptions), your grade for the class will be lowered by 1/6<sup>th</sup> of a grade (i.e. if you miss two, your grade for the class will go down 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a grade).

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:  
[http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student\\_pages/honor\\_code.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/student_pages/honor_code.html).

#### *Texts Available for Purchase*

Steven Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street: Mass Housing and Everyday Life after Stalin* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013)

Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society 1949-1956* (Cornell University Press, 2013)

Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid* (Cornell University Press 2008)

Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (Oxford University Press 2010)

Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011)

Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Daniel Burnham and the Remaking of the American City* (University of Chicago Press, 2006)

Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton University Press, 2005)

Gregor Thum, *The Uprooted: How Breslau became Wroslaw during the Century of Expulsions* (Princeton University Press, 2011)

Louise Young, *Beyond the Metropolis* (University of California Press, 2013)

### *Schedule of Topics and Readings*

February 6: Introduction

February 13: The City at the Fin-de-Siècle  
Carl Smith, *The Plan of Chicago*

February 20: Interwar Cities Beyond the Center  
Louise Young, *Beyond the Metropolis*

February 27: World War II and its Aftermath  
Gregor Thum, *The Uprooted*, excerpts

March 6: The Stalinist City  
Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia*  
**PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL DUE**

March 13: Urban Crisis in the US  
Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of Urban Crisis*

March 20: Urban Modernism & its Critics  
\*Le Corbusier, *The City of Tomorrow*, Forward & Part I  
\*Jane Jacobs, *Life and Death of Great American Cities*, Part I & Part III  
\*Robert Caro, *Power Broker*, excerpts  
\*Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), Part III.

### SPRING BREAK

April 3 Gentrification and its Discontents  
Suleiman Osman, *Brownstone Brooklyn*

April 10 NO CLASS—**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

April 17: The Post-Stalinist City  
Steven Harris, *Communism on Tomorrow Street*

April 24: The Capitalist City  
Martin Murray, *Taming the Disorderly City: The Spatial Landscape of Johannesburg after Apartheid*

May 1: Drugs: An Urban Problem?  
Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City*

May 3: **PAPER DRAFT DUE**

May 8: Final Discussion

**FINAL PAPER DUE SUNDAY, MAY 18, 11AM VIA BLACKBOARD**