

GEOG 583
Urban Geography
Spring 2009

TR 2:10-3:30 p.m., 104 Murkland Hall
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Office hours: TR 11:30-12:30, W 1-2

Purpose of the course

For the first time in history, most of the world's people live in urban areas. Cities, big and small, are central to the economic, political, and cultural life of every region on earth. How have cities come to play such a pivotal role in human activity? Where and why did the first urban places emerge? How have urban areas evolved? What explains their internal structure and defining characteristics? What role do cities play within larger urban systems? How do the processes of urbanization and the characteristics of cities differ around the world?

This course seeks to answer these and other questions, and to provide a general introduction to the geography of the world's cities. The course will examine seven themes — urban origins and evolution, urbanization processes, urban systems and hierarchies, urban land use and structure, the urban economy, housing and residence, and governance and planning. The first two-thirds of the course will focus on cities in more developed countries, such as the United States. The final third will provide an introduction to cities in the less developed world.

Neighborhood portraits

Course content will focus on general concepts, theories, issues, and macro-scale trends and patterns. In order to help you learn about urban geography at a more local level, each student is required to produce a portrait of a neighborhood in one of eleven urban areas within an hour of UNH. A list of neighborhoods that you can consider will be provided, though students are not limited to neighborhoods on that list. You should not choose your neighborhood hastily and may want to do some preliminary research before deciding. You will likely need to visit your neighborhood and the city in which it is located as part of your research, so if you don't have access to a car you should pick a neighborhood in a nearby city that is accessible by public transportation. You must notify the instructor of your neighborhood choice no later than February 3. No neighborhood can be chosen by more than one student.

In conducting research about your neighborhood, you should consider the various factors that help give any urban place its character. You should consider the characteristics of its site and its relation to other places. You should examine the nature of the physical environment. You should determine when the neighborhood first developed and find out why it emerged when and where it did. You should learn everything you can about how it has evolved. You should examine through time its demographic makeup, cultural attributes, economic characteristics, social conditions, and the characteristics of its buildings and infrastructure. You should identify any problems the neighborhood has faced, and consider any solutions that have been attempted or proposed. Facts alone will not be enough. You should get to know what the place looks and feels like, and try to understand it as you would a human being, seeking to comprehend its personality, appreciate its qualities but also its faults, and recognize its distinctive attributes but also its similarities and connections to other places.

This project may be different than other research projects you have undertaken because it requires you to do original research. But it is my hope that by doing more than regurgitating the work of others you will discover how rewarding research can be. You may find some information in published sources. You may locate information online. But it is unlikely that traditional sources will provide all you need to know. You will have to visit your neighborhood. You should walk or drive its streets. You may want to take photographs, if they help you better understand the neighborhood or convey its character. You may want to interview residents, business owners, real estate agents, government officials, and others who are knowledgeable about the neighborhood. You will have to be resourceful and use all your senses. The instructor will provide a list of questions for you to consider as you do your research and several suggestions of information sources.

The finished product of your research should be a narrative portrait that seeks to capture the essence of the neighborhood and how it has evolved. The organization and approach of your portrait should reflect the nature of your neighborhood. You should focus on those themes and characteristics that have been most important to shaping the personality of the neighborhood, just as a biography would focus on those aspects of a person's life that have been most significant. You should also situate the story of your neighborhood within its proper geographical and historical context and, where appropriate, relate it to course themes. You will be graded on how well you capture the personality of your neighborhood, the depth of your research, and the quality of your writing. Examples of published neighborhood portraits and student-written portraits from previous semesters will be made available.

Portraits should be 2,500-3,000 words in length, excluding citations. Because some neighborhoods will be harder to locate information about than others, the length of papers may vary. Papers must be typeset and double-spaced. Number your pages and write a word count for the main body of your paper on the last page. Sources must be cited using a widely accepted citation method (text notes, endnotes, and footnotes are all fine, so long as you use an accepted method and supply all information necessary to enable a reader to locate the source). There is no minimum number of sources. You should consult however many sources is necessary to create an effective portrait. The sources you cite should show that you consulted a variety of sources and source types (not just the web; not just a book or two). Papers that show an overreliance on web sources will be graded down. So the instructor can make sure you are on the right track, you must turn in a preliminary bibliography of sources you plan to consult on Tuesday, March 3.

Students are required to have a draft of their final paper reviewed by a writing assistant at the Connors Writing Center in a writing conference (see <http://www.unh.edu/writing/connors.html> for more information). Ask the writing assistant to send the instructor a note to verify your participation; it will also summarize what was discussed. Your finished paper should show that you paid attention to the writing assistant's suggestions. Students who fail to complete a writing conference will have their paper grades lowered. Writing conferences must be completed no later than Tuesday, April 28.

Neighborhood portraits are due in class on Tuesday, May 5. Late papers and electronic submissions will not be accepted.

Examinations and grading

There will be three exams, each covering one-third of the course. The last exam will be given during the final exam period, but will not be comprehensive and will have the same format and length as the other exams. Exams will be composed of identification, short answer, and essay questions. Examination questions will seek to measure your general understanding of key course themes, concepts, and issues, and may be drawn from any aspect of the course.

Each of the exams will be worth 25 percent of your course grade, 75 percent total. The neighborhood portrait will be worth the remaining 25 percent. Final grades will be assigned based on the traditional scale in which an A represents work of exceptional quality (90 percent or better), a B is considered good (80-89 percent), a C is satisfactory (70-79 percent), a D is poor (60-69 percent), and an F is unsatisfactory (below 60 percent). The instructor may modify that scale downward if the class as a whole performs below expectations. Plus grades will be awarded to any student in the B, C, or D ranges whose semester average is within two percentage points of the minimum score for the next highest letter grade. Minus grades will be awarded to any student in the A, B, C, or D ranges whose semester average is within two percentage points of the next lowest letter grade. Extra credit is not available.

You are also required to complete a personal information card and turn it in by January 27. Any student who fails to turn in a card by that date will have one percentage point deducted from their final grade.

Attendance and missed exams

Attendance will not be taken, but students are responsible for obtaining notes from classmates for any classes missed. The instructor will not re-teach material or provide notes to individual students. Students are responsible for obtaining information about any announcements made during class periods they miss.

Makeup exams will rarely be permitted and will only be considered when circumstances beyond a student's control prevent them from taking an exam during the scheduled class period. If you think you have a legitimate excuse, you must notify me by e-mail or telephone *before the exam begins*, or, when that is logistically impossible, very soon afterwards on the same day. You must also be able to prove your excuse in writing. Conflicts with jobs, other classes, and your personal life are not satisfactory excuses. Exams cannot be taken early for any reason.

Academic honesty

Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated in this course and will be severely punished when discovered. The instructor will review the university's academic honesty policy in class and will provide examples of behavior that would be considered violations of that policy. If you have questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, ask the instructor or see the university's *Students Rights, Rules and Responsibilities* handbook, available at <http://www.unh.edu/student/rights/srrr0809.pdf>

Blackboard

The university's Blackboard computer system (<http://blackboard.unh.edu/>) will serve as an archive for course materials, will provide students access to their grades, and may be used as a method for distributing information between class meetings. It will be assumed that the e-mail address linked to your Blackboard account is your primary e-mail address and that you check it periodically.

Textbook

Michael Pacione. *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Tentative Course Schedule

Cities in the More Developed World I

January 20: Introduction to the course.

January 22-29: Introduction to urban geography/origin and evolution of cities. Read chapters 1-3.

January 27: Personal information card due.

February 3-10: Urban systems and hierarchies. Read chapter 6.

February 3: Student neighborhood choice due.

February 12-19: Urban land use and structure. Read chapter 7.

February 24: Exam 1.

Cities in the More Developed World II

February 26-March 5: The urban economy. Read chapters 12, 14.

March 3: Preliminary bibliography for neighborhood portrait due.

March 10-24: Housing and residence. Read chapters 10, 18.

March 16-20: Spring break; no classes.

March 26-April 2: Governance and planning. Read chapters 8, 20.

April 7: Exam 2.

Cities in the Less Developed World

April 9-21: Urbanization processes. Review chapter 5. Read chapter 21, 23.

April 23-30: The urban economy. Read chapter 24.

April 28: Deadline for students to complete writing conference, Connors Writing Center.

May 5-7: Urban structure and housing: Read chapters 22, 25.

May 5: Neighborhood portrait due.

Tuesday, May 19, 3:30-5 p.m., Exam 3.