How different is urban life in America at the start of the 21st Century than it was at the start of the Twentieth? This seminar explores the major themes facing the urban community and the political consequences that their interactions produce. We focus on major themes confronting urban and suburban life and interactions among governments, people, social structure, and economy.

Obviously, we have a great many images of cities and city life: as a system, as a tree, the engine or locale of economic development, a place of conflict, its people, or as a spreading, uncontrollable morass. Quite often these images produce a view of the city as inhospitable or something with problems – a place to retreat from. Others view the city as a liberating place, a center of culture and civilization.

Scholars studying urban life and the city have examined their subject from many distinct perspectives. For example, some view the City and what occurs within it as one independent variable helping to explain variations in political, social and economic life, while others explain how cities vary as a result of a dynamic interaction among those same political, social and economic conditions. Like many dichotomies, this division may appear superficial, and we know that the relationships are not linear. Politics and the political decision making process reflects the tensions which take place in the city. One class objective is to explore the context of American cities in which urban policy is made.

The course focuses on four main elements in the pantheon of urban politics: urban history – how the past is prologue, the economic and demographic underpinnings of urban life, and how we govern urban and suburban America. At the course’s conclusion you will gain a better understanding of:

- Major historical trends in the growth or development of American communities as the 21st Century begins,
- Policy choices facing our metropolitan communities,
- Analyzing economic and sociological constraints in urban America.

In getting to these points, we will examine a series of interrelated questions:
1. How and why have US urban centers change, especially after World War II?
2. What have been the impacts in making the “line” between cities and suburbs nearly indistinguishable? Is it?
3. How has the distribution of wealth and power in the larger society influenced the economic, social, and physical conditions of cities and metropolitan areas?
4. What role, especially after Katrina, should be the federal government play in helping U.S. cities? Shouldn’t it be left to the private market?
5. How much do non-governmental actors – businesses, community organizations, and nonprofits contribute to the urban and suburban scene?
6. Does the policy making process in American cities constrict or aid in “solving” urban America’s problems? Who/what actually governs American cities? Should we try a new governance model?
7. What makes Sacramento, Oakland, Los Angeles and San Francisco similar to New York, London, San Diego, Mexico City? What accounts for any differences and what can we learn from any variation?
8. What has “globalization” in its many manifestations done to urban America?

TEXTS


Douglas Rae, City, Urbanism and Its End, Yale University Press, 2003


>Note: This is on Reserve and referenced in this syllabus as The City.

There are other books that are recommended to purchase (all available in paper):


Stephanie Pincetl, Transforming California, A Political History of Land Use and Development, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003

The class reading materials are available through the class WebCt site. In addition, there are other articles and a bibliography on the class Web page.

In order to access and use this site you will need to obtain entry instructions from the WebCt site on the main campus web page.
Class Requirements:

1. This is a seminar. This presumes you will read the assigned materials prior to the class meeting and discuss the readings in a relevant manner. Because a substantial number of your colleagues are employed, I respect the demands for balancing various expectations. But I have difficulty with students believing that they can talk freely about the subject(s) under discussion, i.e. without basis or relevancy. In short, be prepared as best you can, but be prepared. Ten percent (10%) of your class grade is dependent upon careful, reasonable and “enthusiastic” participation in the seminar. All of us benefit if you contribute. If you do not attend the seminar, you may lose up to ten points.

2. You will lead one class discussion on a specific topic for one week’s seminar session. This means you will prepare a set of questions facilitating comments and analyses of each week’s reading assignments. You may reference material outside the readings, you can highlight one or more aspects of the subject, or you can discuss the topic in a totally different light. Your questions will be distributed no later than the evening before the class session (aka Sunday night) so that everyone will be prepared. A successful leader will have “excellent questions,” a stimulated discussion, and an ability to answer colleagues and my questions. This facilitating exercise accounts for 15% of the course grade.

3. You will write essays on three topics regarding “urban” life in the United States. For each 3 – 5 page essay you need to make an argument about one of the subject areas we will discuss. You should apply relevant literature you’ve read for this class. The first essay should focus on the historical setting of urban America and its suburbs. In the second essay you should analyze an aspect of how urban communities are governed or managed. The third paper should discuss/analyze a demographic, social or land use problem facing urban/suburban America. (This last essay cannot be the same subject as the major empirical paper below.) Each essay accounts for fifteen percent (15%) of the course grade.

4. By the last class meeting, you will submit a detailed, research paper on one or more aspects of urban/suburban life. Define a particular urban problem. Justify the attention given to it and review the policy issues and/or history involved. This exercise will account for thirty percent (30%) of your final course grade.

You have two options:
Option A is a review of the philosophical, political, or economic basis of an urban policy issue or problem. This is a literature review of a major theme. Include a critical evaluation of the strategies used in dealing with this problem applying a model described in class or readings. This could be a start on the literature review chapter of a thesis.

Option B is an empirical analysis of this problem within a specific context or illustration of the issue. For instance, what are the financial consequences of a specific development project, a revenue sharing scheme, or a new welfare policy on a community’s economic, social and demographic welfare? Similarly, you may wish to look at the historical patterns of development in a community or area resulting from the introduction of new transit programs or other public improvements, i.e. a dam.
Weekly Assignments
(Additional material may be placed on the Syllabus)

Week 1: Introduction to The City and expectations.
Introduction to the Seminar, my expectations and yours
What do you/we mean by urban? City or suburb?
What are the critical three issues facing urban America?
How do policy makers and elected leaders perceive the problems?

Week 2: The American City: Its current existence
Drier, et. al. Place Matters Preface and Chapter One


Week 3: The American City: Its history and culture
Douglas Rae, Preface, Chapter One, and Part One

Edward Soja and Allen Scott, “Introduction to Los Angeles: City and Region,” in The City


Week 4: The American City: Its Governance
Part A The central city’s decision makers and process
Douglas Rae, Chapters Seven, Eight, and Nine

Drier, et. al. Place Matters Preface, Chapters One and Two


**First Essay Due at Week 5**

**Week 5: The American City: Its Governance**

**Part B, The central city’s relationship to suburban neighbors**

Drier, et. al. *Place Matters* Chapters Six and Seven

Richard Weinstein, “The First American City,” in *The City*

Paul G. Lewis, “Considerations Concerning Possible Merger of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Agency,” presented to the Senate Select Committee on Bay Area Infrastructure, Oakland, California, October 30, 2001

**Week 6: The American City: Its Governance**

**Part C, cities in a federal and state system**

Drier, et. al. *Place Matters* Chapters Three, Four and Five


**Week 7: City Life: People and Race**

Raymond Rocco “Latino Los Angeles, Reframing Boundaries/Borders” in *The City*


http://www.thenewrepublic.com/archive/0599/051099/wolfe051099.html

**Second Essay Due at Week 8**

**Week 8: City Life: Economy and Jobs**

Douglas Rae, Chapter Ten


Walker, Richard "Industry Builds out the City: The Suburbanization of Manufacturing in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1850-1940." Occasional paper


Steven Sass, “How Much is That Building in the Window?” Regional Review (Federal Reserve Bank of Boston), 3,3, (Summer 1993), 7-12

**Week 9: Job and Housing Generation Policy Options**

Jennifer Wolch, “From Global to Local: The Rise of Homelessness in Los Angeles during the 1980s”, in *The City*


Peter Eisinger, "The Politics of Bread and Circuses” Urban Affairs Review, 2000, 35, 3;


**Week 10: Policies dealing with land, people and culture**


“The Big City or Bust: Surviving the South’s Urban Revolution” UNESCO Courier (June 1999, pp. 17-35) [http://www.unesco.org/courier/1999_06/uk/dossier/intro.htm](http://www.unesco.org/courier/1999_06/uk/dossier/intro.htm)

There is an entire web site devoted to California’s urban sprawl considerations as a result of the State Legislature’s concern about the financial and land use problems associated with regional growth patterns: [http://www.regionalism.org](http://www.regionalism.org)

For example: the Speaker’s Final Report, reports by Wassmer and Teitz


**Week 11: Transportation in the city – options and consequences**


Edward Weiner, Urban Transportation Planning in the United States: An Historical Overview at, [http://www.bts.gov/tmip/papers/history/utp/toc.htm](http://www.bts.gov/tmip/papers/history/utp/toc.htm), Preface and Ch. 1-2 *(NOTE: The preface is here, the balance is on the Web)*
Third Essay Due at Week 12
Week 12: Where does the city go? Ideological and political battles over the future economy and community

Douglas Rae, Chapters Eleven and Twelve

Drier, et. al.  Place Matters Chapter Eight

Congress for the New Urbanism, at http://www.cnu.org (referred to as New Urbanism)


Mitchell Sviridoff, “The Seeds of Urban Revival,” The Public Interest, 114 (Winter 1994), 82-103