

Meets: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30am, 225 Temple Buell Hall

Instructor: Max Eisenburger, meisen4@illinois.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Once viewed as dirty, crime-ridden and corrupt, cities now occupy a favored place in the popular imagination. From students to professionals to empty-nesters, the demographic groups that once fled are now returning. They join a growing immigrant population, non-traditional families, young adults without aspirations for formal careers and a struggling workforce to power the bustling downtowns and lively neighborhoods that define cities as places of hope, innovation and conflict.

This course explores the transformation of the American City in its journey from abandonment to renewed growth. We will ask how and why this dramatic change happened. Understanding this shift will put students in a uniquely advantageous position to make sense of the many changes currently underway in urban areas. From exurban growth to suburban decay, from privatization to gentrification and urban agriculture, cities today are sites of rapid change and experimentation with new ideas for how people can and should live. Each week, we will focus on a different aspect of the modern American City – work, housing, Globalization, high finance – and explore its promise, challenges and implications for the future.

We give these explorations focus by scrutinizing the practical question of how cities can be improved. The path from decline to recovery was long, and success was by no means inevitable. Furthermore, the rebound of cities today comes with distinct costs and mounting challenges for large portions – if not the majority – of the urban population. Perspectives on these challenges vary, with *economists* generally stressing the necessity of market-driven urban development, even when it disadvantages many, and *political economists* suggesting that urban problems and their solutions arise from public decisions, social choices and organized political interests. Your preference for one perspective or the other will by necessity shape your ideas about how to improve cities. In the final paper, and an accompanying presentation to the class, you'll be asked to make an argument about *how* cities can provide more opportunities to their residents.

COURSE FORMAT: WHAT TO EXPECT FROM READINGS AND LECTURES

The beginning of the course examines the rebound of American cities and the basic perspectives you will need to determine whether they remain places of hope and opportunity. After that, we embark on a crash course of current issues. For a typical class, you will read a book chapter or academic article, and a short, accompanying piece from a newspaper or blog. In most cases, the academic material frames the questions we will ask on the topic at hand. The

lecture will tie together the basic questions and issues raised by the day's topic, and provide discussion questions for the class to address

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course has four basic goals.

- 1) *Learning about cities and the challenges of our urban future.* More than half of the world's population now lives in urban areas. In the U.S., that figure is much higher. Cities draw people from all walks of life, despite the fact that they're comparatively expensive, stressful and exhausting. They're sites of profound inequality at the same time that they're sites of real change and reform. The course readings cover as many aspects of cities, their opportunities, and challenges as possible. What you learn here will help to shape your understanding of the way Americans live.
- 2) *Applying academic knowledge to real-world problems.* Most of the issues we cover in the course are emergent topics about which scholars, policy experts and society know relatively little. This should push you out of your comfort zone. That's a good thing! To do well at this course, you'll need to develop convincing responses to questions and dilemmas for which there is no obvious right answer. Doing so is an important professional skill.
- 3) *Filling the holes in your education about contemporary America.* To this point, your education has equipped you to understand a broad range of enduring ideas about society, the economy and cities. *The Modern American City* is designed to deal specifically with the Great Recession, bankrupt cities, new laws, new types of urban politics and other important changes that complement your education in the basics. This is crucial: Successful planners, policymakers, and managers draw on the lessons of history without being locked in to them. You will benefit from learning about issues that are too new and too unsettled to be resolved elsewhere.
- 4) *Getting comfortable with complexity.* The issues we discuss in this class emerge from global changes, national policy, shifts in social norms, technological change and economic problems. All of these forces collide in cities, with exceptions to the supposed rules of urban development being just as common as the rules themselves. Cities are a microcosm of the current human situation. By the end of the course, you'll understand how city planners, policymakers, activists and everyday citizens thread together an enormous variety of perspectives, questions, approaches and evidence to make sense of real-time urban changes.

COURSE READINGS

The course has one required text, *DIY Detroit* by Kim Kinder (University of Minnesota Press). It should cost you about \$15 used or \$20 new on Amazon.

Otherwise, we will read a mix of book chapters, academic articles, policy reports, newspaper and magazine stories, and blog posts throughout the semester. In a typical week, you will read two articles or chapters, and a few supplementary newspaper and magazine articles. All readings are available either on Compass, or through the URLs provided in the syllabus.

ASSIGNMENTS

The course has three assignments:

1. A short (1 page) weekly reflection paper: You will submit 8 of these; however, if you submit one during the first three weeks of class, I will count it for two (you may do this once). Your papers must engage the readings and in-class discussion that occurred that week, and include your own reaction to the readings and discussion. In other words: go beyond a reading summary and tell me what you learned, how it changed your assessment of an issue, etc.
2. A longer (3 pages) memo that takes on an urban issue we've discussed (or will discuss) and makes a policy recommendation.
3. A final paper, for which you will submit an initial proposal. In the final assignment, you will make an argument *for* something: A policy, idea, or strategy that can improve cities. The simple rule for the final is to go *big*, and argue for something radical, untried, expensive, etc.

GRADING

In addition to the exams, you will need to attend class regularly and participate in classroom discussion in order to secure a top grade

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|-----------------------------------|-----|
| 1) Attendance and Participation | 20% |
| 2) Reflection papers (8, 4% each) | 32% |
| 3) Policy memo: | 12% |
| 4) Final Paper: A Bold Idea | 36% |
| a. Initial proposal: | 10% |
| b. Paper: | 26% |

ATTENDANCE

You are permitted one absence from class. After that, I will deduct from your participation grade. Please remember to sign in at the beginning of every class.

HONOR CODE AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The Illinois Student Code states: “It is the responsibility of the student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions.” Note that you are subject to the Honor Code, as well as procedures for addressing violations to the Code, regardless of whether you have read it and understand it. According to the Code, “ignorance is no excuse.”

For your written work in this course, all ideas (as well as data or other information) that are not your own must be cited. Note that ideas that require citation may not have been published or written down anywhere. While you are free—and indeed encouraged—to discuss the assignments with your peers, all of your writing, data collection, and analysis should be your own.

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is rooted in the goals and responsibilities of professional planners. By enrolling in a class offered by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, students agree to be responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect in all DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. See Student Code Article 1-Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part 1. Student Rights: §1-102.

A NOTE ON COUNSELING

The University can be a stressful environment that puts a lot of pressure on even the strongest of us. If at any point in the semester you feel that you could use help, do not hesitate to seek out resources from the Counseling Center. The Counseling Center (<https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>) provides a range of services intended to help students develop improved coping skills to address emotional, interpersonal, and academic concerns. The Counseling Center provides individual, couples, and group counseling. All of these services are paid for through the health services fee. The Counseling Center offers primarily short-term counseling, but also provides referrals to the community when students could benefit from longer term services.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Introduction

8/29

- *The rebound of modern American Cities*
- *Familiar Questions: Will the Boom Last? And whom does the Boom Benefit?*
- *A Better Question: Are Cities Still Places of Opportunity?*

Triumph of the City? **8/31**

- *An Example: New York, Then and Now*
- *The Case Against Opportunity: Life in the Shadow of Wall Street*
- *The Case for Opportunity: Occupy Wall Street and the World it Created*

 "The City That Sweats Work," by Doussard

 "Revolution Number 99" in *Vanity Fair*. <http://goo.gl/8wkMk>

The Economists Speak: How Commerce Makes Cities Thrive or Fail **9/5**

- *Economists' Views on why Cities Work*
- *The Sticky Question of Distribution*
- *Threats to Urban Prosperity*

 "Our Urban Species" and "Why do Cities Decline?" in Ed Glaeser's *Triumph of the City*.

The Political Economists Speak: How Politics Shapes Prosperity and Blight **9/7**

- *"Entrepreneurial" Cities and the Road Back*
- *Complex Inequalities: Housing, Work, Politics, Transportation and More*
- *The Deep Roots of Urban Problems in the U.S.*

 "Memo from Motown," by Reese et al.

Still Struggling: The Urban Midwest Tries to Recover from Deindustrialization **9/12**

- *Where Have the Good Jobs Gone? Changing Assumptions about Work*
- *The Job-Loss Traumas that Shape the Urban Midwest*
- *Related Challenges: Work, Housing, Land Use and Public Finance*

 "The Crisis of the American Dream," from Harrison and Bluestone's *The Great U-Turn*

 "The Geography of U.S. Inequality" from The Upshot (NY Times blog)

Can Manufacturing Come Back? The "Reshoring"/"Onshoring" Boom **9/14**

- *Factories and the Life of Middle-Class Cities*
- *The Rebound from Deindustrialization*
- *The Rebound from the Great Recession*

 "Post-Industrial Restructuring," in *Progressive Planning*

 “The Insourcing Boom,” in *The Atlantic*. <http://goo.gl/Y020b>

 “Making it in America,” in *The Atlantic*. <http://goo.gl/eVIDh>

The Maker Movement: Promise and Potential in Urban Innovation 9/19

- *Reluctant entrepreneurs*
- *Alternate paths to the 9-to-5 job*
- *How makers try to build large companies*
- *What can cities do for makers? What should they do?*

 “The Maker Economy in Action – Executive Summary”, by Schrock et al

 “Building a Nation of Makers”, from *Huffington Post*

Green Jobs and the Promise of a Middle-Class Revival 9/21

- *The promise of green jobs*
- *What Cities can do to align work and sustainability*
- *Barriers to the Green Future*

 “Sustainability as Economic Development” and “Building the Energy-Efficient City” in Joan Fitzgerald’s *Emerald Cities*.

 “Today’s Energy Jobs are in Solar, Not Coal”, NY Times

 Oakland’s Bid to Become a Solar-Power Hub”, *The Atlantic*

Rebuilding Cities by Recruiting Professionals: Creative Class Policies 9/26

- *The allure of the “Creative Class”*
- *Limits to the idea, or what would Muskegon do?*
- *The difference between creative people and “creatives”*

 “Cities and the Creative Class,” by Richard Florida

 “TED Talks are Lying to you,” in Salon, <http://goo.gl/SU7Qtm>

The Other Green Jobs: Legal Marijuana and Consumption-Driven Development (Guest: Professor Marc Doussard) 9/28

- *The Economic Potential of Black Market Goods*
- *Who Wins and Loses when Pot is Legal?*
- *Vice Economies and Positive Signs for Denver’s Green Economic Future*

 “Consumption-Driven Economic Development,” from Markusen and Schrock

 “Will Pot Barons Cash in on Legalization?” in *Newsweek*. <http://goo.gl/BOn6zp>

Policy Memo Due – Submit to Compass **9/29**

Housing Meltdown: Understanding the Financialization and its Effects on Housing **10/3**

In-class audio-presentation and video excerpts from *The Big Short* (2015)

The End of Public Housing (Guest: Professor Andrew Greenlee) **10/5**

- An overview of Public Housing
- Common Public Housing Problems and Solutions
- Where will Poor People Live?

 “The End of Federally Financed Ghettos,” in *New York Times*.

 “The Last Ghetto,” in *Harper’s*.

No Class – FAA Exchange Day **10/10**

No Class **10/12**

Explaining the Crash: Growth Pressures in the Finance Industry **10/17**

- *How Competition Encourages Risky Loans*
- *Investors Turn to Rental Housing*
- *Why Activists Want more Rental Housing – but won’t Get it*

 “Why Wall Street Loves Houses Again,” in *The Atlantic*. <http://goo.gl/gFzmnA>

It’s not about Houses: The Rise of ‘Super-Gentrification’ **10/19**

- *The Spread of Super-Gentrification in Global Cities*
- *Explanations: Taste vs. Capital*
- *It’s not About Your Neighborhood: Gentrification Goes Global*

 “Super-Gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City,” by Loretta Lees.

The End of Public Services? Detroit in Receivership **10/24**

- *Michigan Public Law One and the bankrupt motor city*
- *Who bankrupted Detroit?*
- *Detroit's Public Manager picks winners and losers*

 "The Detroit Bankruptcy (p. 1-36)," from *Demos*. <http://goo.gl/7snUXu>

DIY Detroit: Making do without Public Services **10/26**

- Old and New Ideas about who Provides Services
- How Detroiters Get by
- A Catalogue of Innovative Techniques

 "Do-it-Yourself Cities" and "Seeking New Neighbors" in *DIY Detroit*, from Kinder

Proposal Due (Submit to Compass) **10/27**

Infrastructure Privatization **10/31**

- *Chicago, the privatizing city*
- *Why investors love infrastructure*
- *The risks of infrastructure privatization*

 "The Financialization of Infrastructure Privatization," by Ashton, Doussard and Weber

Michigan's Emergency Manager Law: How Flint Happened **11/2**

- *The theory and reality of Emergency Managers*
- *Application of the Law in Michigan*
- *Who is responsible for poisoned water and other problems?*

 "Emergency Financial Managers: Michigan's Unwelcome Savior," in *Governing*, <http://goo.gl/gn56al>

 Supplemental Reading, TBD

Making New Futures **11/7**

- *Creative organizing from Detroit residents*
- *Limits to the idea: where DIY cities fall short*
- *The potential and promise of DIY cities*

 "Domesticating Public Works" and "Producing Urban Knowledge" in *DIY Detroit*, from Kinder

The Sharing Economy: Who Shares, Wins? 11/9

📖 “Does the Sharing Economy Increase Inequality within the eighty percent?”, by Schor

📖 “The Sharing Economy Just Got Real”, from Shareable

New Faces in New Places: Immigration Transforms Urban Neighborhoods 11/14

- *America’s new immigration wave*
- *How immigration transforms older neighborhoods*
- *Who benefits from immigration?*

📖 “Chicago: The Immigrant Capital of the Heartland,” by Koval and Field.

📖 “The Economic Impact of Immigration on St. Louis (p. 1-10),” by Jack Strauss.

<http://goo.gl/2ugw>

The Urban Revolution: How Cities Became Centers of Social and Economic Reform 11/16

- *The conventional wisdom: “City limits,” and barriers to reform*
- *How cities became the laboratories of democracy*
- *Why cities? And why now?*

📖 “The City as a Growth Machine,” by Molotch

Fall BreakIt Can Happen Here: The Fight for Living Wages 11/28

- *How and why the living wage movement works*
- *The limits to living wage laws*
- *What’s next for living wage coalitions?*

📖 “Fortune Favors the Organized,” from Doussard and Lesniewski

How Workers Make Change on the Job 11/30

- *Community-labor coalitions organize the low-wage workforce*
- *Worker centers and other new tools*
- *Changing cities, one state house at a time*

📖 “Worker Centers,” by Janice Fine.

 “Can’t survive on \$7.35,” on Vimeo: <http://vimeo.com/68274355>.

Who’s Vulnerable to the Climate Crash? 12/5

- *Sustainable discourse vs. sustainability*
- *How environmental sustainability works*

 Ageyman, Julian. 2005. *Sustainable Communities and the Challenge of Environment Justice*. [Excerpts].

Can’t Do One Without the Other: Movements for Sustainability and Equity 12/7

- *How urban organizations link environmental sustainability and social equity*
- *New directions for sustainability policy*
- *The example of the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy*

 Kersten, et al. “Facing the Climate Gap” (Excerpts)

Summing Up: What will American Cities Look Like in 20 Years? 12/12

- *In-class exercise*

Final Assignment Due – Submit to Compass 12/14
