

**Art 297S/597V**  
**Spring 2005**

**American Urbanism**

Tuesdays 1:30 – 4:00

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This seminar investigates the history of American cities, with an emphasis on the 20th century. Using readings in history, architecture, urban ethnography, and literature, this course seeks to uncover the largely invisible forces that have created the physical shape and social experience of the modern American city. Following the Shaker proverb -- “Every force evolves a form” -- we will pay special attention to the ways in which urban change has been reflected and refracted in the forms and spaces of the city. We will also be charting the reverse of the Shaker proverb by asking how the physical structures of American urban life – not simply buildings, but highways, suburbs, natural landscapes -- become themselves forces in shaping individual and communal lives in the city.

This course will require extensive readings and a series of short writing assignments culminating in a longer research paper.

**Reading:**

The reading for this course is extensive. It is crucial that you keep up with the reading, for the purpose of making our discussions fruitful. The books for this course can be purchased at Food for Thought Books on North Pleasant Street. Some readings will be distributed via email, or distributed in class. Some readings may require Adobe Acrobat Reader, available for free at <http://www.adobe.com>.

LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, 3rd edition  
Conn and Page, *Building the Nation*  
Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America*  
Dolores Hayden, *Field Guide to Sprawl*

Lawrence Kennedy, *Planning the City Upon a Hill*  
Doug Rae, *City: The End of Urbanism*  
Michael Wise, *Capital Dilemma*

## Assignments

### 1. Research Paper

The final project will be a substantial research paper, between 15 and 20 pages in length. We will discuss this in greater detail in the next few weeks, but you should immediately be thinking of the kind of issue you would like to address.

The research project will require a **prospectus** describing your project, the sources you will use, and how you will proceed in your research, **due on March 1**. **You will present your research at our final classes, on May 3 or 10. The final papers are due on May 19. There can be no exceptions to this final date.**

### 2. Library Resources Report (completed with another class member)

In order to help everyone find the resources necessary to write a primary source research paper, groups of two will produce a guide to one library or institutional resource at UMass or the colleges in the valley, such as each of the college libraries, the Mount Holyoke Art Gallery, or The Mead Art Gallery at Amherst College. The goal is to give an overview of the library or institution's city-related holdings, with special reference to primary source collections and resources that might be useful to the class. **Due in class February 15.**

### 3. Journal

One of the most valuable documents you can take away from a seminar is a continuing record of your changing thoughts about the subject and reactions to the readings and discussions. Therefore, I want you to write what I call "journal entries" (typed, 2-3 pages) which you submit to me on a regular basis – **six** times over the course of the semester in weeks of your choosing. The entries could range from a reaction to one of our discussions, a review of the week's reading, or a rumination on a particular city. In order to free up your writing, the journal will not be graded. You will only be penalized if you do not submit six entries. I will not accept multiple entries at once (i.e. six journal entries on the last class, or even two in a single week) since that defeats the purpose of the assignment.

#### **4. Readings and Class Discussion**

A lecture class in which you don't say a single word all semester might actually be enjoyable and intellectually stimulating, depending on the quality of the readings and lectures. A seminar, however, depends on the regular, informed, energetic participation of its members. If you don't do the readings and come prepared to share your reactions and argue passionately (though respectfully) with your classmates, the seminar will be dull. The flip side is that if you read, think, and participate, you will find your brain exercised and stretched beyond where it ever could in a lecture course.

#### **5. Field Trips**

There are two required trips, one to New Haven on April 19 during class time (although we will need to plan to leave around noon, and will return by six), and New York, on a date to be determined.

## **Class Schedule**

### **February 1 Introduction**

*City Reader:*

LeGates, "How to Study Cities"

### **February 8 Studying the Design of Cities**

Readings:

*Building the Nation*, Introduction to Chapter 5

*City Reader:*

Lewis Mumford, "What is a City?"

Kevin Lynch, "The City Image and Its Elements"

Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life"

Kitto, "The Polis"

*First Person Accounts of Great Cities*

Engels, *The Great Towns*

### **February 15 The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century City**

Readings:

Kennedy, *Planning the City on a Hill*, chapters 1-2

*Building the Nation*, chapter 5:

Rev. Dr. Duche, "Description of Philadelphia," *American Museum*, vol. 5  
(March 1789), pp. 234-238.

Anonymous, "Description of the City of Washington," *The Massachusetts Magazine, or Monthly Museum of Knowledge and Rational Entertainment*, Dec. 1791, Vol. 3

*Building the Nation*, chapter 6:

Anonymous, "Landscape Gardening: Llewellyn Park," *The Crayon*,  
August, 1857; Anonymous, "Llewellyn Park," *Every Saturday*, vol.  
11 Sept. 2, 1871, p. 227

Olmsted, Vaux and Co. "Letter to the Riverside Improvement Company,"  
Sept. 1, 1868

*Suburban Homes on the West Jersey Railroad* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane and  
Scott Printers, 1881)

### **Library Resources Reports due in class**

## February 22 The 19<sup>th</sup> Century City

### Readings:

Kennedy, *Planning the City on a Hill*, chapters 3-4

*Building the Nation*, chapter 5: E

M.G. Upton, "The Plan of San Francisco," *The Overland Monthly* 2  
(February 1869), pp. 131-136

Josiah Strong, "The Problem of the Twentieth Century City," *North  
American Review*, vol. 165, pp. 343-349, 1888

Julian Ralph, "Colorado and Its Capital" *Harper's New Monthly* 86 (May  
1893), 935-948

Williams Jennings Bryan, Cross of Gold speech, 1896 E

## March 1 The Modern Metropolis

### Readings:

Rae, chapters 1-3

Kennedy, chapters 5-6

*Building the Nation*, chapter 5: E

John Coleman Adams, "What a Great City Might Be -- A Lesson from the  
White City," *The New England Magazine*, new series 14 (March 1896),  
pp. 3-13.

Charles Mulford Robinson, "Improvement in City Life: Aesthetic  
Progress," *Atlantic Monthly* 83 (June 1899), pp. 771-785

W.E.B. Dubois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899)

Henry James, *The American Scene* (1907)

"The Terrible Super-City," editorial, *Commonweal* v. 2, no. 1 (May 13, 1925),  
pp. 1.

*City Reader:*

Ebenezer Howard, "Author's Introduction" and "The Town-Country  
Magnet"

Le Corbusier, "A Contemporary City"

Camillo Sitte, "Relationship Between Buildings, Monuments, and Public  
Squares, and "The Enclosed Character of the Public Square"

**NOTE:** You are strongly urged to attend Dan Pitera's lecture at 4:30 on February 28 (Monday) in Gordon Hall. He will be speaking about his community design work in Detroit.

**Prospectuses due in class**

## **March 4 Downtown America**

**NOTE:** This is an additional meeting this week. Time to be determined.

### Readings:

Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America*

### *City Reader:*

Kaiser and Godshalk, "Twentieth Century Land Use Planning," pp. 354-61

Guest: Alison Isenberg, Rutgers University

## **March 8 Comparative Urbanism: The Case of Berlin**

### Readings:

Michael Wise, *Capital Dilemma*

### *City Reader:*

Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Islamic City"

Castells, "European Cities, the Informational Society, and the Global Economy"

Guest: Jason Danziger, Technical University, Berlin

## **March 15 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

## **March 22 Jane Jacobs and the Modernism of the Streets**

### Readings:

Doug Rae, *City*, 4-6

Kennedy, chapter 7

*Building the Nation*, chapter 5: E

E.B. White, "Here Is New York," *Holiday* April 1949

Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day By Day*, (*L'Amérique au jour le jour*)  
(Paris: Gallimard Publishers, 1954)

Jane Jacobs, "Downtown Is for People," *Fortune*, April 1958, p. 133 ff.

### *City Reader:*

Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety"

Le Corbusier, "A Contemporary City"

Whyte, "The Design of Spaces"  
Jackson, "The Almost Perfect Town"  
Soleri, "Arcology"  
James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, "Broken Windows"

Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, introduction \*

## March 29 Suburban Landscapes and Lives

### Readings:

*Building the Nation*, chapter 3: E

Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1964)

*Building the Nation*, chapter 5: E

Norman Bel Geddes, from *Magic Motorways* (1940)

*Building the Nation*, chapter 6: E

Christine Frederick, "Is Suburban Living a Delusion?" *Outlook*, Feb. 22, 1928; Ethel Longworth Swift, "In Defense of Suburbia," *Outlook*, April 4, 1928

Thomas H. and Doris Reed, with Murray Teigh Bloom, "Does Your City Suffer from Suburbanitis?" *Collier's*, Oct. 11, 1952

Frederick Lewis Allen, "The Big Change in Suburbia," *Harper's Magazine*, June, 1954.

William H. Whyte, "Are Cities Un-American?" *Fortune* 56 (September 1957), p. 122 and after.

Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 1963

*City Reader:*

Gans, "Levittown and America"

Frank Lloyd Wright, "Broadacre City: A New Community Plan"

**NOTE:** You are strongly urged to attend John Cary's lecture on Wednesday, April 6 at 4:30 in Gordon Hall. He will be speaking about "public architecture" in San Francisco and beyond.

## April 5 NO CLASS – WORK ON RESEARCH PAPERS

## April 12 Urban "Decline"

### Readings:

Rae, *City*, chapters 7 – 10

### *Building the Nation:*

Alfred Kazin, "Fear of the City, 1783-1983," *American Heritage*  
February/March 1983, pp. 14-23

Camilo Jose Vergara, "The New American Ghetto," *Architectural Record* v.  
182, no. 11, November 1994

### *City Reader:*

William Julius Wilson, "From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos"

Mike Davis, *Fortress L.A.*

Ali Madanipour, "Social Exclusion and Space"

## April 19 Urbanism and Its End

Trip to New Haven.

We will carpool to New Haven, leaving at noon, and meet Doug Rae, who will show us a few key places in the city related to his book.

Visit <http://www.library.yale.edu/newhavenhistory/> before our trip.

## April 26 The Contemporary American City

### Readings:

Kennedy, chapter 9

### *Building the Nation*, chapter 5: E

Kurt Andersen, "A City on a Hill," *The New Yorker*, Sept. 29, 1997

Richard Todd, "Las Vegas, Tis of Thee," *The Atlantic Monthly*, February,  
2001

### *Building the Nation*, chapter 6: E

Guterson, "Enclosed. Encyclopedic. Endured. One Week At the Mall of  
America," *Harper's* (August 1993)

### *City Reader:*

Zukin, "Whose Culture? Whose City?"

David Harvey, "Contested Cities"

Melvin Webber, "The Post-City Age"

Saskia Sassen, "A New Geography of Centers and Margins"

Michael Porter, "The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City"

Ed Soja, "Taking Los Angeles Apart"

### May 3 The Solution to Our Problems? New Urbanism and Its Critics

#### Readings:

Dolores Hayden, *Field Guide to Sprawl*

#### *City Reader:*

Duany and Plater-Zyberk, "The Neighborhood, the District, and the Corridor"

Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital"  
Kaiser and Godshalk, pp. 361- 74

Critiques of the New Urbanism Movement E

*Building the Nation*, chapter 2

Suzanne Stephens, "Manifest Disney," *Architectural Record*, vol. 180, June, 1992

*Building the Nation*, chapter 6

James Howard Kunstler, "Home from Nowhere," *Atlanta Monthly*, September 1996.

Russ Rymer, "Back to the Future: Disney Reinvents the Company Town," *Harper's* (October 1996) \*

#### **Final Presentations**

### May 10 The Future of the American City

#### Readings:

Rae, *City*, chapters 11-12

*Building the Nation*, chapter 1: E

Douglas Davis, "Towers of Mammon" *Newsweek* July 2, 1973 (vol. 82), p. 56

*Building the Nation*, chapter 5: E

Max Page, "On Edge, Again," *The New York Times*, (October 21, 2001)

#### *City Reader:*

Fishman, "Beyond Suburbia: The Rise of the Technoburb"

Jacobs and Appleyard, "Toward an Urban Design Manifesto"

Stephen Wheeler, "Planning Sustainable and Livable Cities"

William J. Mitchell, "The Teleserviced City"

Dolores Hayden, "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like?"

#### **Final Presentations**