

# The American City

Instructor: Michael Allen

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Office hours: By appointment.

L98 AMCS 276

Term: Summer 2016

Times: MTWThF 3:00 – 4:45 PM

Room: Cupples II, L009

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The American city has multiple forms: as a place to live and work, as a measure of economic vitality, as an architectural creation, as a political setting for both the promise and peril of democracy, and as a mythic backdrop for fictive struggles of identity formation and personal liberation. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans abandoned rural life for cities changing the national identity. Still American cities are younger than many global peers, and most have been the setting for significant and often-tumultuous epochs in planning, industrialization, social struggle, artistic movements and political power. This course will begin a student's exploration of American culture and politics, with St. Louis serving as field laboratory for investigations that will also present the lives of New York, Chicago, New Orleans, Philadelphia and other cities. American cities carry material evidence of the economic and political reasons that they exist, the transportation networks that shape them, the street plans that give them form, the governments that provide the public good, the people who call them home, the role of public transportation systems, the geography of racial segregation, and the histories of immigrant communities. At the same time, the role of the American city has changed significantly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when most Americans now live in suburbs surrounding older cities.

Throughout the semester, this course will analyze the material and social culture of American cities through a series of lectures, films and field trips. Questions that will be central to the course include: Are there distinctive characteristics of American cities, and are these architectural, economic, social or otherwise? How does the dynamic of racial assimilation characterize the American city in a way distinct from the rest of the world's cities? How does the assertion of urbanism in American culture interact with America's national narrative of individual freedom? How has the historic aspersion toward American cities as sites of democratic citizenship, expressed by figures from Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright, shaped public policy at the federal, state and local levels? How does the rise of the suburb change the political, economic and racial balance of the city? Does the American city as a densely-built historic settlement have a future? Primary and secondary sources will guide our inquiry.

## **Required Texts and Readings**

There are four required texts (both available in the campus bookstore):

1. Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the 21st Century* (University of Kansas Press, 2013; ISBN: 0700613641).
2. Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton University Press, 1996; ISBN: 0691121869).
3. Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout, *The City Reader* (Routledge, 2015; ISBN: 0415556651).
4. Grady Clay, *Close Up: How to Read the American City* (University of Chicago Press, 1980; ISBN: 9780226109459).

Other required readings are accessible on Blackboard (<http://bb.wustl.edu>) or will be distributed in class.

### **Grading**

The grade will break down as follows:

25% Participation  
35% Response papers  
25% Final project

### **Response Papers**

Students will be assigned three 5-page response papers to each field visit that will integrate both observations and insights from current course readings. The directions for each response paper will be distributed in class at least one week before the assignment is due. Due to the compressed schedule of the course, these papers constitute a substantial part of the course grade since no midterm paper will be assigned.

### **Final Project**

Students will complete a final project that will be based on selecting a question from an assignment distributed during the second week of class. The final project will consist of a 10-page research paper and a 10-minute in-class presentation during the final week of class. The presentation will summarize the research question, method and conclusion for the class, along with any visual information that can be shared as a slideshow or handout.

### **Academic Integrity**

Needless to say, you are responsible for adhering to the university's academic integrity policies (for a full articulation of them, see <http://studentconduct.wustl.edu/integrity/policy>). In particular, you are expected to **produce your own work**, to **avoid inappropriate collaboration** (especially on the written assignments), and to **avoid various other forms of academic dishonesty**, including falsification of data and misrepresentation of sources.

**Failure to cite and formally acknowledge your sources constitutes plagiarism**, and will result in a failing grade (and likely disciplinary action within the bounds of Washington University's usual policies). You should produce work that is *very clear* in its acknowledgement of others' work – not only quoted material, but ideas and language as well. This is a standard of quality research that you are expected to meet. *When in doubt, cite!*

### **Citations and Formatting**

All work for the course should use **the Chicago Style of documentation** (footnoting of each source each time you quote, paraphrase, summarize or otherwise reference it – see [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) or other such sources for guidance). Please use **an 11-point font, double space your work, and provide page numbers**.

## Schedule

### Week 1: The Form of the American City

#### Monday, July 18

Introduction

Activity During Class: Mental Cartography

#### Tuesday, July 19

Lecture in Class:

The History and Evolution of the City of St. Louis

Reading:

Kingsley Davis, "The Urbanization of the Human Population," *The City Reader*, p. 19-29.

Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *The City Reader*, p. 115-123.

Suggested Reading:

St. Louis City Plan Commission, "Physical Growth of the City of St. Louis" (1969):

<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/archive/history-physical-growth-stlouis/>

#### Wednesday, July 20

Reading:

Grady Clay, *Close Up*, p. 1-84.

Hart Crane, "Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge" (poem, on Blackboard)

Gwendolyn Brooks, "A Street in Bronzeville" (poem, on Blackboard)

Suggested Reading:

Sandy Isenstadt and Grady Clay, "Metropolis Regained" (*Places Journal*, November 2015)

<https://placesjournal.org/article/future-archive-metropolis-regained/>

#### Thursday, July 21

Reading:

Clay, *Close Up*, p. 84-181.

Film Viewed in Class:

*The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1988; William H. Whyte, director)

#### Friday, July 22

*Field Trip During Class: Downtown St. Louis*

Depart at foot of Brookings Hall, 3:00 PM; Return, 5:20 PM.

Suggested Reading:

Built St. Louis Downtown Tour (online):

<http://builtstlouis.net/opus/index.html>

## **Week 2: Government in the American City**

Monday, July 25

Reading:

Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the 21st Century*, Chapter 1-3

FIRST PAPER DUE

Tuesday, July 26

Reading:

Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the 21st Century*, Chapters 4-6

Wednesday, July 27

Reading:

Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom, *Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the 21st Century*, Chapters 7-10

Thursday, July 28

*Field Trip During Class: City Hall*

Depart at foot of Brookings Hall, 3:00 PM; Return, 5:20 PM.

Friday, July 29

Elijah Anderson, "The Code of the Street" and "Decent and Street Families," *The City Reader*, p. 131-138.

George Kelling and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows," *The City Reader*, p. 259-269.

James Baldwin, "A Report From Occupied Territory" (*The Nation*, July 1966)

<https://www.thenation.com/article/report-occupied-territory/>

## **Week 3: The Growth of the American City**

Monday, August 1

Reading:

Sam Bass Warner, "Evolution and Transformation: The American Industrial Metropolis, 1840-1940," *The City Reader*, p. 63-72.

Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project," *The City Reader*, p. 178-186.

Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Drive-In Culture of Contemporary America," *The City Reader*, p. 73-82.

## SECOND PAPER DUE

### Tuesday, August 2

Film In Class:  
*The City* (1939)

Reading:

Frederick Law Olmstead, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," *The City Reader*, p. 364-370.

Ebenezer Howard, "Author's Introduction" and "The Town-Country Magnet," *The City Reader*, p. 371-378.

Le Corbusier, "A Contemporary City," *The City Reader*, p. 379-387.

Frank Lloyd Wright, "Broadacre City: A New Community Plan," *The City Reader*, p. 388-393.

Suggested Reading:

*Civic League of St. Louis, A City Plan for St. Louis* (1907; PDF posted on Blackboard)

### Wednesday, August 13

Reading:

Robert Brueggmann, "The Causes of Sprawl," *The City Reader*, p. 218-227.

Clarence Perry, "The Neighborhood Unit," *The City Reader*, p. 563-575.

Frederic Stout, "The Automobile, the City and the New Urban Mobilities," *The City Reader*, p. 696-706.

### Thursday, August 4

Reading:

Jane Jacobs, "Gradual Money and Cataclysmic Money," *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961; PDF on Blackboard).

Dennis Judd and Donald Swanstrom, "Reviving the Central Cities," *City Politics: Private Power and Public Policy* (New York: Pearson Education, 2004), p. 346-373. (PDF on Blackboard)

### Friday, August 5

*Field Trip During Class: Old North St. Louis and Pruitt-Igoe*  
Depart at foot of Brookings Hall, 3:00 PM; Return, 5:20 PM.

Suggested Reading:

Jarrett Medlin and Jeannette Cooperman, "North Side Story," *St. Louis Magazine* (27 October 2009).

<http://www.stlmag.com/Special-Report-North-Side-Story/>

#### **Week 4: The Crisis in the American City**

Monday, August 8

Film in Class: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth* (2011; Chad Friedrichs, director)

Reading:

Katherine Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth." *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 44, No. 3 (May, 1991; PDF on Blackboard).

THIRD PAPER DUE

Tuesday, August 9

*Field Trip During Class: Cherokee Street*

Depart at foot of Brookings Hall, 3:00 PM; Return, 5:20 PM.

Reading:

Jane Jacobs, "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety," *The City Reader*, p. 149-153.

Wednesday, August 10

Reading:

Thomas Sugrue, *The Urban Crisis*, Chapter 1-5

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, "The Formation of Racial Ghettos," *Report of The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1968. (PDF on Blackboard)

Thursday, August 11

Reading:

Sugrue, *The Urban Crisis*, Chapters 6-9

Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic* (June 2014)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Friday, August 12

Reading:

Rebecca Solnit and Susan Schwartzenberg, "Skid Marks on the Social Contract," from *Hollow City* (PDF posted on Blackboard)

Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (excerpt) – posted on Blackboard (PDF posted on Blackboard)  
Mike Davis, “Fortress L.A.,” *The City Reader*, p. 212-217.

### **Week 5: The Future of the American City**

Monday, August 15

Reading:

David Harvey, “The Right to the City”, *The City Reader*, p. 270-278.

Project for Public Spaces, “Placemaking and the Future of Cities,” *The City Reader*, p. 629-640.

Edward Glaeser, “Our Urban Species,” *The City Reader*, p. 707-716.

Richard Florida, “The Creative Class,” *The City Reader*, p. 163-170.

Suggested Reading:

Allan Mallach and Lavea Brachman, *Regenerating America’s Legacy Cities*

[https://www.lincolnst.edu/pubs/2215\\_Regenerating-America-s-Legacy-Cities](https://www.lincolnst.edu/pubs/2215_Regenerating-America-s-Legacy-Cities)

Tuesday, August 16

Final Presentations

Wednesday, August 17

Final Presentations

August 18

FINAL PAPER DUE