This readings course introduces graduate students to major themes and scholarly literature in American urban history. Readings are a combination of some classic texts in the field and new interpretations from more recent literature; they draw from the disciplines of history, sociology, city planning, and political science. Thematic areas of emphasis include political economy, city planning, natural and built environments, politics and policy, technology and economic development, spatial segregation, urban “crisis” and recovery, and cultural discourses of urbanism. The course will consider American cities in an international context, identifying major international trends and intellectual discourses that influenced American urban policy and planning, and comparing and contrasting the drivers of urbanization in other nations and continents.

The course assignments emphasize collegiality and learning through collaboration via in-class discussion and weekly participation in an online discussion board. We also will maintain a course wiki in which students can add suggestions of books and articles as a current and future resource for their colleagues. Course assignments also emphasize professional preparation for teaching and the adaptation of scholarly discourses and arguments for wider public audiences by asking students to write a hypothetical course syllabus, book review, and op-ed on an urban topic. The final review essay assignment asks you to synthesize what you have learned in the course and prepares you to discuss this field in general examinations and draw upon this literature in dissertation work.

**READINGS**

*Required books* are available for purchase at the University Bookstore and on 2-day reserve at Odegaard. You are expected to read and be familiar with these books in their entirety.

Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (2005)
Margaret O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (2005)
Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (1990)
**Recommended books** are on 24-hour reserve at Odegaard, or you may choose to purchase independently. We will read significant excerpts from these books.


**Articles** are available online using the links embedded below and via the course website.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

The assignments in this course are intended to support your professional education and are designed so that they may be repurposed at a later date in your training or your career. Naturally, participation, completion of readings, and collegial and productive participation in discussion are weighed heavily. The other assignments are:

1. **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS.** To start the discussion in advance of our meeting as a group, you should post discussion questions raised by the week’s reading on our class message board, accessed via the course web site. Questions can be posted throughout the week, up to 1PM on the day of class. You are welcome to post as early and as often as you like, although contributions will be assessed on quality rather than quantity.

2. **BOOK REVIEW.** One 4-page book review of one of the texts listed as additional reading on this syllabus, to be posted on the course website. These reviews are designed to expose the group to a wider historiography as well as provide you with the opportunity to do additional reading in an area of particular interest. The reviews should be similar in length and content to those found in a refereed scholarly journal like the *American Historical Review*. You will sign up for a book review the first week of class. *Book reviews should be submitted no later than seven days after this book appears on the syllabus.*

3. **SYLLABUS.** In order to begin to think about how you might teach this literature to future students, you will write a hypothetical course syllabus for a 400-level undergraduate seminar. The syllabus should be as substantively detailed and structurally precise as possible, built as if it were to be taught at the UW next autumn. The syllabus should be accompanied by an up to 500-word (one page, single-spaced) narrative describing your choices of readings and assignments. *This can be submitted at any time during the quarter, and no later than the last class meeting.*

4. **OP-ED.** The beginning of a new presidential administration has opened up new policy discussions about the future of metropolitan America. Urban transportation, sustainability, economic development, and land use continue to be topics of significant public debate both here in Seattle and nationwide. Thoughtful, historically grounded insights from scholars can be valuable to these discussions. You will be asked to write an 800-1000 word op-ed article suitable for publication in a regional or national US paper that places one element of this debate in historical perspective, using ideas and findings of the scholarly literature to make your case. *This can be submitted at any time during the quarter, and no later than the last class meeting.*

5. **REVIEW ESSAY.** The final assignment is a review essay of one strand of the urban history literature, approximately 15 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point font). Although shorter
than a review article found in a refereed journal such as *Reviews in American History*, the essay should be similar in spirit and tone of analysis. You may presume the reader’s familiarity with the substance of the works under discussion. Focus on how each of the works speaks to your chosen theme; contrast/compare sources and methods; discuss effectiveness of argument; assess contribution to the literature. *Papers are due by noon on the Friday of exam week.*

Grading breakdown is as follows: participation/readings 30%; discussion questions 10%; book review 10%; op-ed assignment 15%; syllabus-writing assignment 15%; final review essay 20%.

***Please note that most due dates are flexible so that you can accommodate other teaching and research demands. However, I strongly encourage you to manage your time wisely and not wait until the end of the quarter to submit all this work. Also be advised that I do not give extensions, and I do not allow incompletes outside of truly extraordinary circumstances.***

**SCHEDULE**

3/30  **Theory and Historiography** Please come to the first class prepared to discuss these articles. You do not need to post questions to the discussion board this week.


Additional reading:

- Park, Robert E., Ernest W. Burgess and Roderick Mackenzie, eds. *The City*. (1925)
- Tonnies, Ferdinand. *Community and Society (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)* (1887)

4/6  **Political Economy of American Urbanization**

Beckert, *The Monied Metropolis*

Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order*, 3-64, 123-142
Additional reading:


4/13 **City and Suburb**

Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*

Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 3-133

Additional reading:


4/20 **Policy and Progressivism(s)**

Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*

Radford, *Modern Housing for America*

Additional reading:

Eric Schneider, *In the Web of Class: Delinquents and Reformers in Boston* (1992)
Robin Muncy, *Creating a Female Dominion in American Reform, 1890-1935* (1991)

4/27 **The Urban Environment**

Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*

Klinge, *Emerald City*, 1-118

Tarr, *The Search for the Ultimate Sink*, at least two essays of your choice
Additional reading:

5/4 Race and Space

Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*

Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*

Additional reading:
Gregory Squires, *Capital and Communities in Black and White: The Intersections of Race, Class, and Uneven Development* (1994)

5/11 Crisis and Recovery

Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Isenberg, *Downtown America*

Additional reading:

5/18 Urban Institutions

O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge*

**Additional reading:**

5/25  **Suburbs and Politics**

Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*


**Additional reading:**

6/1  **Global Cities**

LAST DAY TO SUBMIT SYLLABUS AND OP-ED

Sassen, *Cities in the World Economy*

Friedmann, *China’s Urban Transition*

**Additional reading** [reviews of these books must be submitted by Thursday of exam week]:
- Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Race, Contact and Exoticism in Modern America* (2001)

6/12  **FINAL ESSAYS** due by 12PM