

Course Last Updated 02/05/2024



## **Decoding the City: An Introduction to Urban Studies**

### **Section I: Course Overview**

**Course Code:** GEOG125

**Subject Area(s):** Geography

**Prerequisites:** None

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Total Contact Hours:** 45

**Credits:** 3

**Course Fees:** None

### **Course Description**

This interdisciplinary course introduces students to the study of cities, exploring their historical development, social dynamics, and key factors that shape urban environments. Through a combination of lectures, readings, discussions, and field studies, students will gain a foundational understanding of urban studies and develop critical thinking skills to examine urban environments and issues. The course provides insight into the city's changing identity; the ways in which past and present, local and global intertwine; and emphasizes the city as a text, encouraging students to read and interpret the cityscape, its urban dynamics, and consider the ways in which the city and its inhabitants continue to be shaped by their relationships with the rest of the world. Field studies enable students to interact with the city's varied urban geographies in an informed and analytical way to learn about the city's complex histories and the ways in which the city's past, present, and future are represented to contemporary inhabitants and visitors.

### **Learning Objectives**

Upon successful completion of this course, students are able to:

- Define key elements in the historical evolution of cities and in urban development.
- Explain social dynamics within and among urban communities.
- Develop the ability to read and interpret the city as a text, including architectural styles and symbolism, nomenclature, and iconography.
- Examine the role of culture, politics, and socioeconomic forces in shaping urban identity.
- Compare and contrast urban environments through the collaborative creation of a shared digital map illustrating fieldwork observations.

## Section II: Instructor & Course Details

### Instructor Details

**Name:** TBC

**Contact Information:** TBC

**Term:** TBC

**Course Day and Time:** TBC

**Office Hours:** By Appointment

### Grading & Assessment

The instructor assesses students' mastery of course learning objectives by using the forms of assessment below. Each of these assessments is weighted toward the final grade. The Assessment Overview section provides further details for each.

**Engagement - 20%**

**Digital Mapping Exercise – 15%**

**Urban Exploration Paper – 15%**

**Neighborhood Exploration Presentation – 15%**

**Field Study Analysis – 20%**

**Final Presentation – 15%**

### Assessment Overview

This section provides a brief description of each form of assessment listed above. Forms of assessment may be slightly modified in the term syllabus.

**Engagement (20%):** Students are expected to be engaged in class, to have read the CEA CAPA Engagement Policy, and to understand the [Class Engagement Rubric](#) that outlines how engagement is graded.

**Digital Mapping Exercise (15%):** Students will be instructed how to create multimedia digital maps, including inserting text, web-links, images, and film clips. These interactive documentary maps will illustrate each student's understanding of the city's physical morphology, political, economic, and cultural debates and social conflicts that have occurred in the modern city and have contributed to its present-day character. Students will identify and locate on their maps notable events, places, policies, and people contributing to the city's historical development and the ways in which the past has influenced the present. Students must insert a minimum of 5 markers of text and relevant quotes from academic sources into their maps, which equate to a short essay in terms of word count. The text will be analytical rather than descriptive and incorporate pertinent political, socioeconomic, and cultural aspects of the time periods covered. Each text box will also include visual documentation and where appropriate, downloaded film clips and web links. Students must demonstrate a good understanding of relevant theories and concepts from class discussion and set reading. A minimum of 5 images must also be included in each text box to illustrate the ideas to be discussed.

**Urban Exploration Paper (15%):** This assignment is based on an analysis of personal exploration of a specific city community or neighborhood. Students should spend time visiting their chosen location and incorporate their own experiences, observations, and insights into their work, applying appropriate methodologies employed in various disciplines to explore cities, including those of the nineteenth century *Flaneur*, contemporary visual ethnography, and semiotic analysis. Papers will engage with course concepts, theories, and readings to examine the character and significance of their chosen location. The paper should provide insight into the relationship among the city, its inhabitants, and its connections with the wider world. They should be approx. 1,000 words in length and should incorporate secondary research (min. 5 sources) as well as engage with ideas about the city as examined in class. Papers will be evaluated with respect to strength of argument, complexity of ideas, detail and sophistication of examples, and engagement with secondary sources and course themes. Students must include a range of images and photographs in their paper to illustrate examples of relevant methodologies and concepts. Sources must be clearly identified and referenced in the text and in a final bibliography.

**Neighbourhood Exploration Group Presentation (20%):** This assignment involves an analysis of personal exploration of a specific city community or neighborhood. Students should spend time visiting their chosen location and incorporate their own observations, experiences, and insights into their analysis. Presentations should engage with specific details from the community which highlight its character and distinctive elements. Students are encouraged to include photographs of the area, interviews with members of the local community, and a consideration of relevant community issues, such as the impact of government funding cuts, local development projects, and community programs. Video material may be used but must be brief (2-3 mins). Presenters must include at least one question to engage the class and create discussion.

Presenters will address the character, main points of interest, and significance of their location in terms of themes such as: society, arts and culture, architecture, historical development, environment, housing, demographics, multiculturalism, style, tourism, and industry and the economy. (Note: they should not address all these themes but should select those more relevant to the selected neighborhood). Collectively, these presentations provide insight into the diverse nature of the city and its inhabitants and will allow students to identify points of comparison. Presentations should be approx. **15 minutes duration**, and students are encouraged to be creative in their presentation technique through the use of audio/visual display etc. Students will be evaluated on

their ability to assess the significance of their chosen neighborhood for understanding of the city's character, connect the topic to the main themes of the course, and engage the class through the use of questions and discussion points.

**Field Study Analysis (15%):** This assignment is based on an analysis of two course field studies. The aim of the field study assignment is to 'read' the sites students encounter in order to assess their significance for understanding the city's development and character, and to write analytically about them. Papers should be about 1,000 words in length and based on a specific topic linked to the selected field studies relating to the nature of the city and its development. Possible topics may include: the impact of migration and multiculturalism; urban change and regeneration; arts and culture; globalization and the city's changing global connections; economic change; social dynamics; architecture and the built environment; heritage; tourism; community & identity; local politics and activism; fashion and style; and the role of the past in shaping the present. The paper should specifically address the ways in which the chosen field studies enhance the student's understanding of the city in relation to selected topic. Each paper should relate to the specific topics covered in class and demonstrate a firm understanding of the concepts and ideas discussed. Papers should be analytical rather than descriptive, based on a clearly stated thesis, and supported by specific details from the field studies, class discussion, and readings. **Papers must be original, based on the content of this course and should not reproduce content from other courses.** Whilst the primary source will be students' own observations and experiences at the sites themselves, written analysis must be supported by a **minimum of four secondary sources**, which should be cited in the text and in a final bibliography.

**Final Presentation (15%):** This assignment is composed of an in-class presentation (8-10 mins.) based on an analysis of a specific activity or event in the city undertaken independently by students during the semester. Students will be required to attend a venue or event of their choice, such as a festival, exhibition, museum, gallery, performance, or other cultural activity. Presentations should be supported by specific details of student experiences at the event, provide analysis of the significance of the event, and refer directly to course themes, ideas and concepts to illustrate how the event provides insights into the character and dynamics of the host location. Students are encouraged to be creative with their presentation format and to engage the class through discussion. Specific guidelines for the presentation will be covered in class.

Students should also read further around the topics in preparation for their papers and presentations. Relevant resources can be found in the CEA CAPA resources as well as through students' institutional online access to scholarly journals. Specific study materials and questions to consider will be provided before each field study. Students can also include an analysis of photographs, charts, and any other relevant material in their papers.

## Active Learning

Experiential learning is an essential component of education abroad, and participation in field studies is a required part of coursework. In this course, students explore the city in which they are studying using a variety of methods. This provides the opportunity to gain nuance and perspective on the host context and course content, as well as to collect information and resources for assigned papers, projects, and presentations.

- Neighborhood Tours

- City Exploration

## Readings and Resources

The below readings and resources are representative of what will be assigned as required in this course, but may vary slightly in the term syllabus.

All students are given access to the online library of the University of New Haven (UNH), accessible [here](#), and are expected to comply with [UNH Policies](#) regarding library usage.

Wherever possible, required readings are made accessible through the online library or Canvas. Students are responsible for obtaining all required readings.

Each course utilizes Canvas as its LMS. Students are expected to check Canvas regularly for updates and deadlines. Canvas is also the primary platform for contacting your instructor in case of questions or concerns about the course.

### Required

#### Textbook

Bridge, G and Watson, S. (2002) *The City Reader*. Oxford. Blackwell. Available in Centre Library. Specific chapters will be made available on Canvas.

### Selected Reading

Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002) *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. Oxford. Polity Press.

Atkinson, D., Jackson, P., Sibley, D. and Washbourne, N. (2005) *Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris.

Barry, P (2017) *Beginning theory: An introduction to literary and cultural theory*. UK. Manchester University Press.

Calvino, I. (1997) *Invisible Cities*. Translated by Weaver, W. Great Britain: Vintage.

Cresswell, T. (2004) *Place: A Short Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Jackson, P. (1989) *Maps of Meaning*. London & New York: Routledge.

Lynch, K. (1960) *The Image of the City*. Cambridge. The MIT

Raban, J (1974) *Soft City*. Great Britain. Fontana.

Sibley, D. (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion*. London: Routledge.

White, E, (2008) *The Flaneur: A Stroll Through the Paradoxes of Paris*. London. Bloomsbury

## Course Calendar

Session 1	
Topics	Course Overview Introducing the City: Iconography & Nomenclature
Activity	Lecture & Discussion

	Field Studies to local study center neighborhood
Readings & Assignments	Review Syllabus

Session 2	
Topics	Searching the Hidden City
Activity	Lecture and Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Reading</b> extracts from: Calvino, I. (1997) <i>Invisible Cities</i> .

Session 3	
Topics	The City and Everyday Life: The Flaneur. and Mapping The City
Activity	Digital Map Workshop
Readings & Assignments	<b>Reading</b> extracts from:  Bridge, G and Watson, S. (2002) <i>The City Reader: Jane Jacobs "Hudson Street Ballet"</i> .  Calvino, I. (1997) <i>Invisible Cities</i> .  White, E, (2008) <i>The Flaneur: A Stroll Through the Paradoxes of Paris</i> .

Session 4	
Topics	<b>The Colonial City</b>
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Assignment:</b> Individual Student Presentations

Session 5	
Topics	The Post Colonial City
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Reading</b> extract from:  Atkinson, D., Jackson, P., Sibley, D. and Washbourne, N. (2005) <i>Cultural Geography: A Critical Dictionary of Key Concepts</i> . London and New York: I.B. Tauris.

Session 6	
Topics	The Post Colonia City (Continued)
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Assignment:</b> Individual Student Presentations

Session 7	
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Topics	Cultural Nationalism and the cultural landscape
Activity	Field Study TBD
Readings & Assignments	<b>Assignment:</b> Urban Exploration Analysis due

Session 8	
Topics	Unequal City: Urban Regeneration & Social Division
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	Neighborhood exploration group work

Session 9	
Topics	Mental Maps and The Image of the City
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Reading</b> extract from: Lynch, K. (1960) <i>The Image of the City</i>  <b>Assignment:</b> Neighborhood Exploration Group Presentation due

Session 10	
Topics	Heartbeat of the City
Activity	Lecture & Discussion Field Study TBD
Readings & Assignments	<b>Reading</b> extract from:  Amin, A. and Thrift, N. (2002) <i>Cities: Reimagining the Urban</i> . Oxford. Polity Press.

Session 11	
Topics	The Multicultural City
Activity	Lecture & Discussion Field Study TBD
Readings & Assignments	<b>Assignment:</b> Field Study Analysis due

Session 12	
Topics	“Recapital city”
Activity	Lecture & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Assignment: Final Presentation Preparation</b>

Session 13	
Topics	Course Review
Activity	Course Review & Discussion
Readings & Assignments	<b>Assignment: Final Presentation</b>

## Section III: Academic Policies and Standards

### Academic Policies

Students are expected to review and understand all CEA CAPA student policies, including our [Academic Policies](#) and [Engagement Policy](#). CEA CAPA reserves the right to change, update, revise, or amend existing policies and/or procedures at any time. Additional requirements that may be associated with a specific course or program are addressed in the term syllabus.

### Student Learning & Development Objectives

CEA CAPA has identified [Student Learning and Development Objectives \(SLDOs\)](#) for all programs in all locations: content in context, navigating differences, power and equity, critical thinking and intellectual curiosity, career and professional development, and sustainability and migration. These are meta-level learning objectives that transcend coursework and are infused across all elements of program delivery, beyond specifics of course offerings, addressing student learning holistically and framing it a larger learning context.