Description: An introduction to international urban history. Rather than a strict chronological survey, this course approaches urban history via case studies, the scrutiny of primary material, and the discussion of key themes (justice, health, worship, spectacle and entertainment, individual freedoms, city planning).

The city provides a lens for investigating the human search for the good and the beautiful across time and space. How have people sought to achieve just societies while living in dense groups? How have their concepts of architectural beauty, for example, changed over time? We will discuss cities not only as catalysts for growth and invention, but also as generators of social problems that can lead to the absence of the good and the beautiful, or even their destruction.

The longer-term aims of the course are: to prepare students to think creatively about shaping the cities of the future; to ask how knowledge of the past may help us to make better choices. The urban, as well as the natural, environment is in need of our care and attention. Do cities have environmental advantages? Are urbanization and the shrinkage of rural areas inevitable? Should cities become more dense or more sprawling? How can cities bridge social, political, cultural differences to become more inclusive and fair?

Evaluation: You grade will be determined by five assessments over the course of the term: 1. a mid-term examination on Oct. 30; 2. a 3-5 page summary of what you have learned from the course due Dec. 9; 3. class participation; 4. an oral presentation (working in groups on an issue drawn from chapters in LeGates) whose group text you will submit for a grade; over the course of the term I will assign interim due dates for this project: topic, outline, evidence; argument/objectives; and 5. a final examination. Each of these assessments will constitute 20% of your grade.

Electronic devices: You may not use them in the classroom without the permission of the instructor.

Plagiarism: is dealt with according to the guidelines set out in the Boston University handbook.

Books: the one required text for this course is available for purchase at Barnes and Noble. It is the Fifth Edition of The City Reader, edited by Richard T. LeGates and
Frederic Stout (Routledge, 2011). All other readings have been scanned so they are available through Mugar Library. Occasionally additional short documents will be distributed in class.

Note that changes may sometimes be made to the below syllabus.

INTRODUCTION

September 2: Welcome: how urban are you? What is your dream city and why? What is your relationship to the city?

September 4: What is a city? A deceptively simple question: Lewis Mumford “What is a city?” in LeGates, pp. 91-5

THE PRE-MODERN CITY


September 14: Rome 50-100 AD: elite pride in the city center: reading TBD

September 16: Medieval Cities: a stage for the monarch and the church: Mark Girouard, Cities and People, A Social and Architectural History, chapter 3 “Church and State” (pp. 41-66, scanned).


September 23: Beijing in the 1600s and 1700s, Prof. Shuishan Yu, Northeastern U., reading to be chosen by Prof. Yu


THE INDUSTRIAL ERA


October 9:  *Paris: the culture of urban protest and street politics*: Guest lecture by Prof. Brooke Blower: reading to be assigned by Prof. Blower


October 26:  *Field trip to West End Museum*, this may take place at another time than when our class normally meets.

October 28:  *St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad: A City on the Brink 1703-1945*. Guest lecture by Prof. Alexis Peri; documents selected by Prof. Peri

October 30:  Mid-term exam


November 4:  *Does historic preservation matter?:* Guest visit by Prof. Daniel Bluestone; reading to be assigned by Prof. Bluestone


THE FUTURE OF THE CITY


No class on Nov. 23

APPLICATIONS/THE FUTURE

November 30: Student presentations (by group of 4) 1
December 2: Student presentations (“) 2
December 4: Student presentations (“) 3
December 7: Student presentations (“) 4
December 9: Summing up: DUE: three to five page essay summing up what you’ve learned in this course; to discuss in class

Final examination