

American Cities

CAS HI 316

Professor Andrew Robichaud

Spring Quarter, 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:45

Office:

HIS 507 (226 Bay State Road)

Email: andrewr1@bu.edu

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 11-12 & 2:30-3:30

Thursdays 3:15-4:15

(and by appointment)

Overview

How and why did cities emerge in the United States? What did American cities look like, smell like, and feel like over time? How and why did urban populations change? How did Americans understand cities and urban populations? In what ways are cities today the products of their historical pasts?

This course offers an introduction to the history of cities in the United States. We will examine the growth of cities in the Early Republic, focusing on the conditions that caused greater concentrations of human habitation, and the complicated and conflicting ideas about cities that emerged at the same time. We will examine the rise of the modern metropolis, and the political, social, and environmental dimensions of urban growth in the nineteenth century. We will examine the relationships between cities and migration and immigration, while also looking at the ways in which the distinctions of city and country have been continually drawn and redrawn over time. What caused these massive changes in urban and suburban life in America, and how do they connect to larger national and international trends?

Focusing on social, environmental, demographic, and cultural change, this course offers a broad overview of the development and meaning of urban life in America.

Evaluation

Attendance/Engagement	25%	
Final Paper	30%	(April 27)
Midterm Exam	20%	(March 2)
Final Exam	25%	(Finals Week)

Final Paper

Students will choose from several paper topics (or propose their own by week 4) and write a 8-10 page paper. More information on the paper will be presented in class. A hard copy of your paper with proper citations will be due in class on April 27.

Class Participation

Attendance and participation are mandatory. You will be evaluated not only for your attendance, but also for your active and thoughtful participation in class, when appropriate. On Thursdays we will usually open up part of the class to discuss the week's readings. If you are shy or unsure how to participate, please visit office hours so we can discuss how you can best prepare for class discussions.

Attendance is mandatory. For every unexcused absence, students will be marked down 3.33 points in their participation grade (out of 100 points). You are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. Up to two unexcused absences may be made up by submitting a two-page reflection essay (for each class missed) on the week's readings.

Depending on the size of the class, this course may be a hybrid of lecture presentations by the professor and class discussions and analysis. Some days we will analyze materials together and in groups. Please come prepared to engage with your classmates every day, which means staying on top of readings for the week.

Disabilities and Special Needs

Students with documented disabilities or special needs should contact the professor within the first week for appropriate accommodations. For more information, please contact the Office of Disability Services at (617) 353-3658. All discussions will be confidential.

Computers

Using computers is not allowed during class unless specifically stated by the professor for that day's class. One important part of historical thinking and scholarship is being present and focused. While computers can be helpful in certain types of historical analysis, they tend to be sources of distraction in a lecture setting. Please take notes by hand. If you have a documented disability that requires you to use a laptop, please speak with the professor at the beginning of the semester.

**** Cell phone use is not allowed at any time. If you are texting or using your phone you may be asked to leave the class for the day and lose credit for attendance.****

Academic Conduct

Your work for this course must be your own. Quoting or using another person's ideas without attribution, or presenting another person's work as your own, are forms of plagiarism. If you are found plagiarizing, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment, and possibly the course, with possible further sanctions by the University Academic Conduct Committee. Students should consult the Boston University Academic Conduct Code: <http://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/> It is your responsibility to read these policies carefully and to know exactly what constitutes plagiarism.

Late Work

Written work is to be handed in on the dates listed, at the very start of class or by the specific time assigned. Your paper will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day it is late (an A will become an A-, a B+ will become a B, etc.). Assignments more than one week late will not be accepted. I will consider extensions when there is a compelling reason and sufficient notice. If you need an extension, let me know well in advance (at least a full week).

Required Books

1. Chudacoff and Baldwin, eds., *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History* (A sourcebook of primary and secondary readings) (978-0618432769)
2. Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (978-0674416833)
3. Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (978-0691162553)

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be available on Blackboard.

Course Schedule

January 19

Introductions

- *Major Problems*, preface and chapter 1, “Interpreting Urban and Suburban History”

January 24 and 26

Early American Cities and Networks of the Atlantic World
Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Charleston, and New York
“Lower Sorts” and Revolutionaries: Cities in the Revolution and Early Republic

- *Major Problems*, chapters 2 and 3

January 31 and February 2

Industry, Boosterism, and the Rise of City Life

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 4
- Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, Introduction and Chapter 1

February 7 and 9

The (Un)Sanitary City

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 5, “Dealing with Sickness and Sanitation, 1830-1900”
- Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, Chapters 2-3
- Theodore Steinberg, “The Death of the Organic City” *

February 14 and 16

The Animal City

- Etienne Benson: Squirrels*
- Catherine McNeur: Pigs*
- Clay McShane: Horses*

February 21 – NO CLASS – MONDAY SCHEDULE

February 23

Chicago and the Nineteenth-Century Metropolis

- William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (introduction and selections)*
- Selections from Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle**

February 28 and March 2

*** * MIDTERM - Thursday, March 2 * ***

Gilded Age, Class, and Immigration

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 6 and 7
- Film: "Hester Street"
- Josiah Strong, *Our Country* (selections)*

March 6-10

SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

March 14 and 16

Urban Politics, Corruption, and Reform

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 9
- *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, selections*

March 21 and 23

Urban Communities, Urban Fractures

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 10
- George Chauncey, *Gay New York* (selections)*

March 28 and 30

No Class Meeting on March 30

Urban Environments and Inequalities

- Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities* (selections)*
- Ellen Stroud, “Troubled Waters in Ecotopia”*
- George Sanchez, “Familiar Sounds of Change in Mexican Los Angeles,” in *Major Problems*, pp.376-389.
- Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, chapter 5

April 4 and 6

Suburbanization and Sprawl

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 13
- Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (selections)*
- (review Rawson, chapter 3)

April 11 and 13

De-Industrialization and Idea of Urban Decline

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 14
- Sugrue, *The Urban Crisis* (part I)
- Film: James Baldwin, “Take this Hammer”

April 18 and 20

The Urban “Crisis,” and Urban Renewal

- *Major Problems*, Chapter 12
- Sugrue, *The Urban Crisis* (part II)

April 25 and 27

Boston and Detroit: Exploring Urban Divergence in the 21st Century

- Sugrue, *The Urban Crisis* (Part III)

FINAL PAPERS DUE ON APRIL 27

May 2

Conclusions

- Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, Epilogue
- Thomas O'Connor, "Urban Renewal in Boston: Successes and Controversies," in *Major Problems* pp.419-427

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FINAL EXAM – EXAM WEEK (Date TBA)