History 227

LIVING IN THE CITY

Fall 2018

MWF 10:10-11, ASC 505

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Description: A gateway course 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, and beauty).

HUB: historical consciousness, global citizenship and intercultural literacy, teamwork/collaboration

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 you to think creatively about shaping the cities of the future; to ask how knowledge of the past may help us to make better choices on issues like the following. 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? The urban, as well as the natural, environment is in need of our care and attention.

Evaluation: Your grade will be determined by five assessments over the course of the term: 1. a mid-term examination on Oct. 26; 2. a 5 page summary of what you have learned from the course due Dec. 10; 3. class participation; 4. an oral Powerpoint presentation (working in groups on an issue drawn from chapters in LeGates) whose group-text you will submit for grading; over the course of the term I will assign interim due dates for the individual parts of this project: topic, outline, evidence; argument/objectives; and 5. a final examination on Dec. 12. Each of these assessments will constitute 20% of your grade.

Hub Outcomes: historical consciousness, global citizenship and intercultural literacy, teamwork/collaboration
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.

We will abide by the CAS Academic Conduct Code: https://www.bu.edu/academics/cas/policies/academic-conduct

Attendance: Please forewarn me if you must miss class. More than three absences over the course of the term will result in a lower grade.

Books: the two required texts for this course are available for purchase at Barnes and Noble. They are the Sixth Edition of The City Reader, edited by Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout (Routledge, 2011) and Andrew Lees, The City, A World History (Oxford, 2015). 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

Sept 5: Welcome: how urban are you? What is your dream city and why? What is your relationship to the city?


THE PRE-MODERN CITY

Sept. 14: The First Cities and the Temple (referring to Uruk, Téotihuacan, Great Zimbabwe): V. Gordon Childe, “The Urban Revolution,” in LeGates, pp. 30-8; Lees, ch. 1; selections from The Epic of Gilgamesh

Sept. 16 (Sunday): Report-back hour in my Beacon Hill apartment 3-4 pm (with cake) of your self-guided walking tour of Boston

Sept. 19: *Rome 50-100 AD: What gave the city cohesion?:* Lees, ch. 2; Mary Beard, *SPQR*, chapter 9 (scanned)

Sept. 21: *Medieval Cities: a stage for the monarch and the church (case studies of Notre Dame and Lincoln cathedrals):* Mark Girouard, *Cities and People, A Social and Architectural History*, chapter 3 “Church and State” (pp. 41-66, scanned); Lees, ch. 3.


Sept. 28: *Early Modern Cities and the birth of capitalism:* Lees, ch 4


**THE INDUSTRIAL ERA**


Oct. 5: NO CLASS


Oct. 26: MIDTERM EXAM


THE FUTURE OF THE CITY

Nov. 14:  *Does historic preservation matter?:* Guest visit by Prof. Daniel Bluestone; reading to be assigned by Prof. Bluestone

Nov. 16: film


APPLICATIONS/THE FUTURE


Dec. 5: Student presentations, group 1

Dec. 7: Student presentations, group 2

Dec. 10: Summing up: five page essay due (summing up what you’ve learned in this course) to discuss in class

Dec. 12: Final examination