Instructor: W. H. Howell  
Office Hours: W 12:00-2:00, Th 1:00-3:00 and by appointment  
Office: English Department, 236 Bay State Road, Room #231  
Office contact: 617.358.2523  
e-mail: whhowell@bu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will focus on the literary and cultural geography of the city of Boston and its immediate suburbs. For nearly four hundred years, Boston has been a critical stage for the American experiment: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it served as an exemplary “City on a Hill” for emigrating English Protestants and as a crucible for Colonial independence; in the nineteenth century, it was both an internationalist “hub of the universe” and a site for the development of an American “national” literature; in the twentieth century, it was a center of immigration and an important battleground in the struggle for civil rights. Each of these moments gives rise to its own varieties of expression; our job, in this course, will be to track and analyze these expressions and to understand our own role as participants in the city’s ongoing project. To do so, we will read and analyze a wide variety of historical and contemporary sources—from John Winthrop’s sermons to Dennis Lehane’s Mystic River; from Phillis Wheatley’s poems to Malcolm X’s Autobiography—and will undertake significant field work in the city itself. Required class trips will find participants wandering the galleries at the Museum of Fine Arts, walking the Freedom Trail, and basking in the majesty of Fenway Park. Exploratory diaries will be required in addition to more formal analyses of texts; final papers will require archival research.

EVALUATION METHOD:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of midterm and final examinations (15% each), a revised compendium of diary entries (5 pp; 15%), a prospectus/annotated bibliography (5 pp; 15%), a longer final paper (8-10 pp; 30%) and class participation (10%).

Plagiarism and other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated. We will talk about what this means and how to avoid it as the class progresses. Violations of this policy may result in a failing grade for the given assignment or for the course, as well as disciplinary action at the University level. For more information on BU’s policies about academic integrity, http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/undergrad-resources/code/

ASSIGNMENTS:

City Diary (Ongoing, eventuating in 6-8 polished pp): Throughout the course, students will be asked to record observations and impressions of their experiences of the City of Boston—based on their reading, their fieldwork and their own extracurricular activities. They will turn in fragments from these diaries at “checkpoints” throughout the course. Instructor will respond with comments and suggestions for further reading or investigation. Near the end of the
semester, students will select an entry or two for revision and expansion into a single, five-page personal essay.

**Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography/Oral Presentation (4 pp):** The prospectus will sketch a research problem or set of issues worthy of extended attention, speculate on what might be some good texts/moments/objects for working through such a problem, and offer a hint or two about the intellectual or cultural stakes of the investigation. The annotated bibliography will briefly survey the critical or historical landscape in which this investigation will unfold. Taken together, these will serve as the basis of a brief oral presentation (around 5 minutes; nothing terribly formal) of your work-in-progress.

**Final paper (8-10 pp):** The final paper will expand on the prospectus, integrating material from both primary and secondary (i.e.: critical or historical) sources.

**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

Students are expected to attend every class meeting with their assigned materials and should be prepared to participate in all class discussions. Students will also be strongly encouraged to join the class on its scheduled weekend rambles about the city—if a student cannot, for whatever reason, make the trip with the group, she must make it on her own. Students who miss more than two meetings without prior consultation with the instructor put themselves in danger of failing the course. All cellphone ringers must be turned off for the duration of class meetings; text messaging is impolite (and potentially dishonest) and is therefore strictly forbidden. Unless extensions are granted by the instructor in advance, all due dates are firm. Late work will be penalized by 4 points (out of 100) per day. This includes weekends. If something is due on Thursday the first and not turned in until the morning of Tuesday the sixth, the highest grade that it could possibly receive would be 80 (ie: 100-20). In that the instructor has never in his life given a paper a 100, the actual grade would almost certainly be much lower.

**COMMUNICATION:**

It’s typically easiest to reach me by email: whhowell@bu.edu. You might also stop by 236 Bay State Rd., Room 231; I’m often in my office.

**COURSE TEXTS:**

These are available at the BU Bookstore (a.k.a. Barnes and Noble) in Kenmore Square. You may also acquire them online (through amazon.com, for example), but you must make sure that you are buying the appropriate edition.

**Required:**


**Recommended:**

N.B.: There will also be a great many readings and other course materials on the course’s Blackboard website. These will be indicated in the syllabus by an asterisk (*). In most cases, students should bring these texts with them to class sessions. Laptops and tablets are therefore permitted, but they should only be used for course-related purposes during classtime.

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**I. From Shawmut to Boston: The City in the Seventeenth Century**

**T 9/2** — Course Introduction: The Space of the City

**R 9/4** — **Required:** Penobscot Corn Mother story*; Francis Higginson, “A Catalogue of Such Needful Things…”*; John Cotton, “God’s Promise to His Plantations”*  
— **Recommended:** Allison, Chapter 1

**T 9/9** — **Required:** John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity”* and selections from the *Journal of John Winthrop*; John Pond’s Letter from Massachusetts, 1631*

— **Due:** City Diary Checkpoint #1

**II. “Cradle of Liberty”: The City in the Eighteenth Century**

**T 9/16** — **Required:** Paul Revere, “The Bloody Massacre perpetrated in King Street…”*; Paul Revere, “Memorandum on Events of April 18, 1775”; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, “The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere”  
— **Recommended:** Allison, Chapters 2-3

**R 9/18** — **Required:** Boston Committee of Correspondence, “We the Subscribers…”*; Anonymous, “Addresses to the Late Governor Hutchinson”*; Anonymous, “The Following is a True List…”*; Salem Committee of Safety, “The Recantations of Robert Hooper, John Pedrick,…”*


— **Due:** City Diary Checkpoint #2
Sat. 9/27—Freedom Trail Visit


R 10/2—Required: Selected letters of John Singleton Copley*; selected Copley paintings*
—Due: City Diary Checkpoint #3

Sat. 10/4—Museum of Fine Arts Visit

III. Common Cause: The City in the Nineteenth Century

—Recommended: Allison, chap. 4.

—Due: City Diary Checkpoint #4

T 10/14—No Class (Monday Schedule)

R 10/16—Midterm Examination

T 10/21—Required: Mary Antin, The Promised Land, chaps. 1-10

R 10/23—Required: Antin, The Promised Land, chaps. 11-20
—Due: City Diary checkpoint #5

T 10/28—Required: Pauline Hopkins, Contending Forces, chaps. 1-7

R 10/30—Required: Contending Forces, chaps. 8-11

T 11/4—Required: Contending Forces, chaps. 12-22

R 11/6—Required: Selected Sacco and Vanzetti documents*
—Due: City Diary Exposition
IV. The Ground Beneath Our Feet: The City Today


Sat. 11/15—Back Bay/Fenway Park Visit


   —Recommended: Allison, chap. 5

   —Due: Prospectus/Annotated Bibliography

R 11/20—Final Paper presentations Day One

T 11/25—Final Paper Presentations Day Two

R 11/27—Thanksgiving; NO CLASS


T 12/9—Required: Lehane, *Mystic River*, chaps. 19-28; course wrap and evaluations

   —Due: Final Paper

   —Final Examination, TIME TBD, ROOM TBD