

Syllabus – USP 385U/ HIS 337U History of American Cities

Instructor Information

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Office Hours: M/W 10:30 - 1 pm or by appointment, please email

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Urban Center Room 370N

Course Description

This course uses a thematic approach to examine the evolution of urban centers from indigenous settlements through industrialization to present suburbia. Through a multidisciplinary lens we look at the historical, social, economic, political, technological, and cultural forces that have shaped the development of American cities.

Learning Outcomes

Students will gain a detailed awareness of the major topics, debates, and historiography of American urban history and, through thoughtful writing, contribute their own informed analysis to this discourse. A student who successfully completes this course will:

- Demonstrate sensitivity to historical complexity by recognizing multiple perspectives, social groups and the context of when decisions were made.
- Evaluate arguments with multiple and diverse pieces of historical evidence, including primary and secondary sources when available.
- Analyze how the transformation of cities in the 1800s & 1900s impacted how those communities function today. Specifically, looking at systems of prejudice, segregation, displacement, demographic changes and inequity impacted the built environment.
- Engage in collaborative critical thinking to improve skills in understanding, deconstructing, and synthesizing multi-disciplinary scholarship.
- This is a UNST Cluster course - this means we integrate the 4 program learning goals from University Studies: [Communication; Inquiry & Critical Thinking; Diversity, Equity & Social Justice, and Ethics Agency & Community](#).

Class Materials

Our main text this term will be **America's Urban History** by Lisa Krissoff Boehm, Steven H. Core. This is available as both an online reading and download from the PSU library at no cost.

This class has no required texts to purchase. We will rely on articles, websites, and videos that will be posed to Canvas. In addition to the main text, we will use other resources, readings, and videos to supplement the course. All of the materials will be presented on Canvas, so you need to have regular access to the internet and computer/ laptop/ chromebook for this course.

Class Format

This course will meet in person & attendance for this course is key. There is no way to pass this course if you do not attend regularly. The course is organized thematically and will use lectures; class activities & discussions; videos; case studies, & small group discussion formats. This course asks you to practice the skills used by professionals every day in the community.

Expectations for Inclusivity:

Building an inclusive learning environment requires us to work together to listen (reading carefully and reflecting in the online environment), and make room for all to have a say (asking questions and interacting in an encouraging way); to support each other to find our voice; and to recognize and anticipate a wide range of perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, identities, and ways of being in the world.

We can all promote safe and inclusive learning by listening deeply (including reading carefully and reflecting) and being ready to learn from those around us. In an online learning environment, it is important to work to write clearly, thoughtfully, and respectfully (take your time and consider the impact of your words). Please learn and use the correct pronouns for your classmates, please do not make assumptions. I hope that we can begin from a place of mutual respect and gentle personalism – taking each other where we are at each day, offering the benefit of the doubt, and being aware that the workings of power and privilege impact different communities and individuals in different ways.

Grading Policies

This course is based on total points. Specific directions for each assignment are provided in the course including rubrics and grading information. I use the university grade percentages based on these points. So final grades would be A (100-84%); A- (93%-90%); B+ (89%-87%), etc.

No Incomplete grades (“I” grades) will not be offered in USP 385. If you are experiencing difficulty, please seek help from the instructor or other campus supports as soon as possible. For more information, please consult the university “I-to-F” grade policy.

Late Work Policies

Classes move very fast. Late work makes it hard to keep up and engage with your peers. As a result, late work will be accepted for up to 1 week after the due date with a 10% penalty (no questions asked/ no extension needed). After one week, I will not accept late work in this course unless it was agreed upon in email as part of a work plan.

I know many unexpected things may happen, if you are behind in the course or something happens that puts you behind/ you need an extension, please contact the instructor immediately. Extensions require emailing the instructor and creating a new work plan.

Assignments

The description below summarizes the grades and assignments for this course. Further guidance and detailed instructions about each assignment will be provided in each module and via Canvas. The class has a total of 1,000 possible points.

Attendance & Participation, In-Class Activities (250 points) – Participation in this course is key. Your attendance and participation in class discussions & activities will be noted. You are expected to engage on Canvas (engagement with readings & posted materials); in Google Surveys, and attend and participate in class each week. Regularly in class you will be tasked with working in small groups and produce group tasks as part of this participation. Your participation over the course of the term will be used to determine your participation grade. Throughout the term, there will be leadership and writing activities as part of the class activities.

Week 1 Assignment Urban History Overview & Timeline (50 points) – Each student will complete a set of inquiry questions and an urban history timeline by the end of week 1. We will be using these questions and a shared timeline to frame our class discussions and case studies for the remainder of the term. *Due 1/12 by midnight.*

Larger Assignments (700 points) – This course gives you the choice on how you want to demonstrate your learning. Each student may choose the assignments that best fit their learning style, schedule, and needs. Further details, directions, and expectations for the tasks listed below can be found on Canvas.

- **CRE & Inquiry Questions** – 50 points each – available weeks 2-10, due Sunday by midnight. Make a single **C**laim about the history of cities from the reading, then back it up with **R**eason & **E**vidence in outline format + write inquiry questions for further study.
- **Response Papers** – 150 points each – available weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, & 10, due Sunday by midnight. These short papers ask you to examine an additional primary source (provided by the instructor), evaluate this source and information, and then respond to how this supports or does not support the topics covered in that week.
- **Film Response** – 150 points each – due Sunday in weeks 5, 7, or 10. Watch time period documentaries or films (selected from the list provided by the instructor). Write a short paper that analyzes this film in relationship to the themes and topics covered in this course.
- **Book Review** – 300 points each – due Sunday in weeks 5 or 10. Read one of the historical texts on the list provided by the instructor. Then write a book review based on your understanding of the wider historiography of the topic covered in this book. These should be similar to those found in scholarly journals (like the American Historical Review) and total about 4-pages.
- **Historical Op-Ed** – 100 points each – available weeks 3, 5, 7, & 9, due Sunday by midnight. Each presidential administration has different urban policies that impact transportation, sustainability, economic development and land use. These are widely debated and discussed in the popular press. You will research one policy from that time period and write an op-ed arguing for or against that policy.

This class has no final exam.

Class Schedule

Week/Dates		Theme/ Topics this Week	Readings/ Videos/ Required Assignments
1	1/6 – 1/12	Introduction to American Cities What is a city? How do we study cities in history	Introduction: Discovering & Defining the “City Upon a Hill” (15 pages) Why did Humans Invent Cities? By City Beautiful (10 min 20 sec) Long Hidden Ruins of Vast Networks of Mayan Cities could recast History (5 pages) Course Syllabus Assignment Directions Week 1 & Overview Intro Google Survey – due by Jan 12th Week 1: Urban History Overview & Timeline– Due by Jan 12th EVERYONE must complete
2	1/13 – 1/19	Foundations of American Cities Native/ Indigenous Cities Colonial Settler Founding Philosophies <i>Case Study: Pueblo Cities vs Philly vs New Orleans</i>	Ch. 1: Pre-Colonial & Seventeenth-Century Native American Settlements (21 pages) The Language Lacuna in North America (5 min) Auguste Chouteau Remembers the Founding of St. Louis, 1763 (1 pages) A Philadelphian Worries About Competition from Baltimore, 1767 (1 page) How conquistadors designed cities in the Americas by City Beautiful (8:20) Savannah’s Mysterious Historic Plan by City Beautiful (6:21) Submit your Proposed Work Plan for the Class
3	1/20 – 1/26	Migration in American Cities Westward Expansion Immigration / Migration/ Great Migration Slavery/ Displacement Great Migration/ Industrial Revolution <i>Case Study: Chicago 1836</i>	Ch. 2 Transplanting Cities & Urban Networks: Spain, France, & The Netherlands in Colonial American 1565-1821 (21 pages) Growth, Cities, and Immigration by Crash Course (12:44) What’s Happening in Harlem? 1949 Effects of Great Migration in New York (9:54) The African American Great Migration by Jane S Mathieu (5 pages) How America tried & failed to stay White (10 min read)
4	1/27 – 2/2	Transportation in American Cities Fall line cities Waterways Trains/ Industrial Revolution Cars/ Highways <i>Case Study: LA Transit</i>	Ch. 4 An Urban Frontier: The American West, 1800 – 1869 (33 pages) Why did railroad companies mass produce cities? By City Beautiful (9:55) CA History of Transportation (6 pages) From Bus Riders Union to Bus Rapid Transit (7 p) 1930 Conference Report on LA Rapid Transit (60 total with 9 key pages)
5	2/3 – 2/9	Infrastructure in American Cities Fire, Building Codes & Regulation Public Health Movements Electricity, Gas, Water, Sewer Roads, RR, & Interstate <i>Case Study: Portland vs. New York</i>	Ch. 5 The Urban Cauldron: City Growth & the Rise of Social Reform, 1820 – 1920 (35 pages) American Artifacts Preview: Lower East Side Tenement Museum (3 mins) 26 Haunting Photos Of Life Inside New York's Tenements (3 min) The Simple Genius of the Interstate Highway System (19 min) Mid-Term Check In

Week/ Dates		Theme/ Topics this Week	Readings/ Videos/ Required Assignments
6	2/10 –2/16	Transgression in American Cities Prostitution, Vice & Crime Controlling Others – Social Movements of Late 19th century “Urban Crisis”/ Suburban Crisis <i>Case Study: Seattle</i>	Ch. 6 The Urban Nation: Middletown & Metropolis, 1920 – 1932 (31 pages) Estwick Egvans Describes the Exotic but Immoral City of new Orleans, 1818 (1 page) Colorado Experience: Indulgences of the West (26 min)
7	2/17 –2/23	Housing in American Cities Jacob Riss/ How the Other Half Lives Home Owners Society Redlining & FHA & GI Bill Urban Renewal Missing Middle/ Lack of Housing <i>Case Study: NYC</i>	Ch. 8 War & Postwar Metropolis: Cities, Suburbs, & Exurbs, 1940s–1950s (18 pages) & Ch 1 & Ch 2 from A History of Housing in New York City (48 pages) Community Growth: Crisis & Challenge from 1959 (16 min) Cleveland: City on Schedule, 1962 Cleveland, Ohio Urban Renewal & Development (34 min)
8	2/24 – 3/2	Suburbanization of American Cities Voting Block/ Majority Urban Flight/ White flight/ Blockbusting Suburban Decay/ Suburban Crisis <i>Case Study: Levittowns & Lakewood, CA</i> <i>Case Study: Atlanta</i>	Ch. 10 Attempting Revival & Renaissance: The 1970s – 1980s (26 pages) America On the Move – Online Explore from Smithsonian (16 pages) Historical Videos on Levittown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levittown 1947 – (15 min 33 sec) • A City is Born – Levittown 1952 (22 min 46 sec) • Race Relations “Crisis in Levittown” 1957 (31 min 44 sec) • Levittown: Separate and Unequal 2020 (10 min 43 sec)
9	3/3 – 3/9	Government in American Cities Incorporation, Annexation Unincorporated/ HOA Origins of Urban Planning Urban Reform/ City Politics MSA/ Regional Cities <i>Case Study: Arlington, VA</i>	Ch. 11 The Modern City: Fear, Technology, & Inequality, 1990 – present (28 pages) The Growth of Local Government in the United States from 1820 to 1870 (6 pages) American Local Government (16 pages)
10	3/10 – 3/16	Deindustrialization/ Rust Belt Cities <i>Case Study: Detroit</i>	Deindustrialization & its Consequences (11 pages) The Social Costs of Deindustrialization (25 pages) What Happened to Erie, Pennsylvania? (5 min 15 sec) Why Millions of People Left the Rust Belt – American Migration (38 min) Google Exit Survey – due 3/16 by midnight
	Finals	Last day for all assignments – 3/18	NO Exam – we will not meet this day.

Resources & Information

Food Security Information

The PSU Food Pantry offers services to currently enrolled Portland State University students, by providing a free, welcoming, and inclusive environment to acquire supplemental food items on a regular basis. The pantry is located in SMSU 325. For more information email foodhelp@pdx.edu

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, usable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, <https://www.pdx.edu/drc>. **If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.**

PSU Cultural Resource Centers

The Cultural Resource Centers (CRCs) create a student-centered inclusive environment that enriches the university experience. We honor diversity, explore social justice issues, celebrate cultural traditions, and foster student identities, success, and leadership. We provide students with employment, volunteer, and leadership opportunities. All are welcome!
(www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers) cultures@pdx.edu

Infants/ Children in Class Policy

Parents who are breastfeeding an infant, or expressing milk, may do so in class without the permission of the instructor. Or if you prefer to breastfeed or breast-pump outside of class, you may take time out of class to use a lactation room. If you need to bring a child/children to class, please notify the instructor ahead of time. (There are backpacks that can be checked out from the [Resource Center for Students with Children](#), SMSU 462, that have toys and games for children up to age 12). Note that you are responsible for seeing that the child or children are not disruptive to the class and for ensuring that all additional University policies and rules are followed by those that you bring (and be prepared to step outside should disruption become an issue). Please let me know what accommodations you need to make this work.

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Writing Resources

This course does require you to stretch yourself as a writer. To be an effective communicator your writing needs to 1) meet the assigned task; 2) be designed for the intended audience; 3) convey all important information. Every writer needs to proofread and revise their work to obtain the best finished product. If you need help with this process, PSU's Writing Center (www.writingcenter.pdx.edu) has a variety of free services.

Mandated Reporter/ Title IX Reporting Obligations

Portland State is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We expect a culture of professionalism and mutual respect in our department and class. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to PSU's Title IX Coordinator, the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Dean of Student Life and cannot keep information confidential. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment or sexual violence to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact a confidential advocate at 503-725-5672 or by scheduling on-line (psuwrc.youcanbook.me) or another confidential employee found on the sexual misconduct resource webpage. For more information about your obligations and resources for sex/gender discrimination and sexual violence (Title IX), please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your Canvas.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: engages in any form of academic deceit; refers to materials or sources or uses devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; engages in Plagiarism. Cheating and or plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment which may result in a failing grade for the course as well. For more information, please look at the PSU Student Code of Conduct (www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct)

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Resources & Reporting - Diversity, Equity, & Belonging

The Toulan School and PSU strive to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Sometimes there are conflicts between students or between students and instructors. We want to hear your concerns and respond in a timely manner. Please see the [Conduct and Community Standards Reporting Page](#) and look at our larger [Resources](#).

[Portland State University Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) - addresses the definition of discrimination and harassment and provides appropriate contacts for reporting cases.

The Office of the Dean of Student Life houses the Academic Appeals process. Students who feel they have received a prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation may submit an [Academic Appeal Request](#). Before students submit this request, students must have appealed to the instructor, department chair and appropriate dean. Students should then read the [Academic Appeals Guidelines](#) to see if their grade dispute fits the purview of the Academic Appeal. For more information please visit the [Academic Appeals website](#), email askdos@pdx.edu, or call 503-725-4422.

Generative AI

The assignments in this course are designed to be completed **WITHOUT** the use of generative AI and in most cases, using generative AI will not give you the “correct” answer. If you feel that generative AI is helpful to you, please be sure to clearly attribute what text was generated by the AI tool (e.g., AI-generated text appears in a different colored font, quoted directly in the text, or use an in-text parenthetical citation).

It is important to note that if AI tools like chatGPT/ similar tools are permitted to be used for an assignment, then they should be used with caution and proper citation. **AI is not a replacement for your own thinking and research.** This is an area that is fast changing, so please review the [University's Policy on AI](#).

Many of the sections of the syllabus were adapted from other professors and a variety of university sources.