

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

Instructor Information

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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](#).
- This course is part of the [American Identities](#) & [Understanding Communities](#) clusters and the assignments, discussions, and activities will further those cluster learning outcomes.

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, book chapters, 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/ HST 337. 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 (240 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, term check-ins, and attend and participate in class each week. Regularly in class you will be tasked with working in small groups and producing group tasks as part of this participation. If you are not in attendance, you cannot participate and these assignments cannot be made-up. Your participation over the course of the term will be used to determine your participation grade.

Sanborn Map Analysis Evaluation of a Block (30 points) – Each student will prepare a comparison of Sanborn maps for a US city. You will turn in your analysis before class on Jan 29th and participate in a class activity using your findings. **Due 1/29 by 3:30 pm.**

Photo Analysis of Progressive Era Image (30 points) – Each student will select and examine a photo from the Progressive Era of housing, labor, etc. Then provide a close reading of the images, identifying the audience and message. This analysis will be turned in before class on Feb 17th and participate in an in class activity using your findings. **Due 2/17 by 3:30 pm.**

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 1-10, due Sunday by midnight. Make a single **Claim** about the history of cities from the reading, then back it up with **Reason & Evidence** 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 Letter to your Representative** – 100 points each – available weeks 3, 5, 7, & 9, due Sunday by midnight. Each point in history 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 a letter to the state or federal representative for or against that policy.

This class has no final exam.

Class Schedule

Week/Dates	Theme/ Topics this Week	Readings/ Videos/ Required Assignments
1 1/5 - 1/11	Introduction to American Cities How this class will work What is a city? How do we study cities in history	Ch. 1: Pre-Colonial & Seventeenth-Century Native American Settlements (21 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 - <i>due by Jan 11th</i>
2 1/12 - 1/18	Foundations of American Cities Native/ Indigenous Cities Colonial Settler Founding Philosophies <i>Case Study: Pueblo Cities vs Philly vs New Orleans</i>	Ch. 2 Transplanting Cities & Urban Networks: Spain, France, & The Netherlands in Colonial American 1565-1821 (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) <i>Submit your Proposed Work Plan for the Class due Jan 18th</i>
3 1/19 - 1/25	Migration in American Cities Slavery/ Displacement Westward Expansion Immigration / Migration Great Migration Industrial Revolution <i>Case Study: Chicago 1836</i>	Ch. 4 An Urban Frontier: The American West, 1800 - 1869 (33 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 Reconsidered by Jane S Mathieu (5 pages) How America tried & failed to stay White (10 min read)
4 1/26 - 2/1	Governments in American Cities Incorporation, Annexation Unincorporated/ HOA Urban Reform/ City Politics Public vs. Private <i>Case Study: Arlington, VA</i>	Ch. 5 The Urban Cauldron: City Growth & the Rise of Social Reform, 1820 - 1920 (35 pages) The Growth of Local Government in the United States from 1820 to 1870 (6 pages) American Local Government (16 pages) <i>Sanborn Map Analysis Assignment due before class on Jan 29th</i>
5 2/2 - 2/8	Housing in American Cities Home Owners Society Redlining & FHA & GI Bill Urban Renewal <i>Case Study: NYC</i>	Ch. 6 The Urban Nation: Middletown & Metropolis, 1920 - 1932 (31 pages) “The House I Live In”: Race, Class, and African American suburban dreams in the Postwar US (20 pages) Community Growth: Crisis & Challenge from 1959 (16 min) Cleveland: City on Schedule, 1962 Cleveland, Ohio Urban Renewal & Development (34 min) <i>Mid-Term Check In due Feb 8th</i>

Week/Dates	Theme/ Topics this Week	Readings/ Videos/ Required Assignments
6 2/9 - 2/15	Suburbanization of American Cities Voting Block/ Majority Suburbanites Sundown Towns White Flight/ Blockbusting Suburban Decay/ Suburban Crisis <i>Case Study: Atlanta</i>	Ch. 8 War & Postwar Metropolis: Cities, Suburbs, & Exurbs, 1940s-1950s (18 pages) America On the Move - Online Explore from Smithsonian (16 pages) What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban, and Rural Communities (11 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)
7 2/16 - 2/22	Infrastructure in American Cities Jacob Riss/ How the Other Half Lives Fire, Building Codes & Regulation Public Health Movements Electricity, Gas, Water, Sewer Roads, RR, & Interstate <i>Case Studies: Portland Water & Chicago Fire</i>	Ch. 9 The Frontier of Imagination: American Cities in the 1960s (19 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) <i>Photo Analysis Progressive Era due before class on Feb 17th</i>
8 2/23 - 3/1	Transportation in American Cities Fall line cities Waterways Trains/ Industrial Revolution Cars/ Highways <i>Case Study: LA Transit</i>	Ch. 10 Attempting Revival & Renaissance: The 1970s - 1980s (26 pages) Why did railroad companies mass produce cities? By City Beautiful (10 min) CA History of Transportation (6 pages) From Bus Riders Union to Bus Rapid Transit (7 pages) 1930 Conference Report on LA Rapid Transit (60 total with 9 key pages)
9 3/2 - 3/8	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)
10 3/9 - 3/15	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. 11 The Modern City: Fear, Technology, & Inequality, 1990 - present (28 pages) Estwick Egvens Describes the Exotic but Immoral City of New Orleans, 1818 (1 page) Colorado Experience: Indulgences of the West (26 min) Harvesting the Crisis: The Newark Uprising, the Kerner Commission and Writings on Riots (16 pages) <i>Google Exit Survey - due 3/15 by midnight</i>
Finals	Last day for all assignments - 3/19	NO Exam - We will decide if the class meets on March 17th - TBD

Resources & Information

Student Resources: Includes a wide range of resources, including various centers for students with different identities- e.g. [Cultural Resource Center](#), [Disability Resource Center](#), [Queer Resource Center](#), [Students with Children Resource Center](#), [Women's Resource Center](#), and [Veterans Resource Center](#); lots of academic resources like the Library, tutoring, and technical support (Office of Information Technology); and various counseling, financial, health and wellness services- including some that are culturally specific.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities/ DRC: 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.

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, 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.**

Multicultural Student Services: Includes links to Multicultural Retention Services, Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) Initiative, the Native American Cultural Center, and more, including some duplications from the above and some additional resources.

University Career Center: Job Search Resources, Networking, Resume Help, Interviewing Practice, and workshops with employers.

PSU is a Sanctuary Campus: Please note, I will protect the confidentiality of students and will not voluntarily participate or facilitate immigration actions.

Basic Needs at Portland State: It can be challenging to do your best in class if you have trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. Resource centers across campus are here to provide assistance, referrals, and support. Please contact anyone on this list for assistance:

- [Basic Needs Hub:](#)
 - basicneedshub@pdx.edu
- [Portland State Food Pantry:](#)
 - SMSU 325 pantry@pdx.edu
- [Emergency/ Hardship Fund](#) - emergency financial assistance
- [C.A.R.E. Team:](#)
 - askdos@pdx.edu (503) 725-4422
- [Student Health and Counseling:](#)
 - askshac@pdx.edu (503) 725-2800
- [Housing Service](#)

Resources & Information, page 2

Writing Resources

This course does require you to stretch yourself as a writer. In order 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 proof-read 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. **This is a writing class and this is a great free resource for everyone to use.** Please use this resource.

Discrimination, Violence, & Mandated Reporter/ Title IX Reporting Obligations

PSU 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. 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.

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. Factually correct (or incorrect) AI answers will not substitute for reflective answers in this course and you will not receive a passing grade.

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.** As this is fast changing, please review the [University's Policy](#).

Resources, Policies, & Information, page 3

Free Speech Policies & Guidelines

Portland State University has [free speech policies and guidelines](#) for the classroom environment. I will use the PSU Conduct policy: disruptive behavior will be asked to leave and discriminatory or harassing behavior will be reported.

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)

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.

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