

**History 4910, Section 002: The History of Urban America
Fall 2006**

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 – 4:15, Geology 105

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Office Hours: Tuesday/Thursday 10:30 – 12:00, or by appointment.

Course Readings Available for Purchase at U.S.U. Bookstore:

Howard P. Chudacoff and Peter C. Baldwin, Editors. *Major Problems in American Urban and Suburban History*, 2nd Edition.

Additional Course Readings Available on Electronic Reserve at Merrill – Cazier Library.

This course examines the history of communities, cities, and suburbs in American history, from the Colonial era to the present. Arranged both chronologically and thematically, the weekly readings examine the historical evolution of urban areas in the United States. We will examine how forces including immigration, economic growth, and technological change shaped American cities, and how the built environments of those cities interacted with the natural environments surrounding them. We will consider how cities have served as crucibles for American society, politics, and culture. We will also examine subjects connected to urban history, including architectural history, and the histories of landscape architecture and urban planning.

There are seven graded components in this class. You will write three papers. Two, 3 to 5 pages in length, will be based on the weekly readings. The third paper, which you will also present to the class, will be 10 to 12 pages in length. For this final paper, you may (1) analyze a substantial primary source or sources to examine some aspect of American urban history, (2) write a term paper utilizing a substantial number of scholarly sources to explore some aspect of U.S. urban history, or (3) write a historiographical essay comparing how 3 or 4 scholarly books examine a particular subject or topic in U.S. urban history. In addition to the papers, there will be a midterm and final based on class lectures. You will receive a participation grade based upon your attendance and participation in class discussion. You will also be responsible for turning in reading questions based on each week's reading assignment, and your questions will serve as part of class discussion.

Graded Components of Course:

<i>Major Problems</i> /Additional Readings Paper 1	15%
<i>Major Problems</i> /Additional Readings Paper 2	15%
Research/Historiography Paper	20%
Midterm Exam	10%
Final Exam	10%
Reading Questions (Due on Thursdays.)	15%
Class Participation	15%

Class Participation:

This course is not solely a lecture class, and will include in-class discussions. Your participation in discussion is essential, and will determine 15% of your final grade. Simply showing up to class does not constitute active participation. Your participation grade will depend upon your contributions to our discussions. Joining in these conversations demonstrates your understanding of the readings, and allows you to share your views of the topics we discuss.

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absences will lower your participation grade. You should make every effort to be present when we meet. The second absence will result in the lowering of your participation grade by a full letter grade. The third absence will result in a zero for your participation grade. To avoid these penalties, you must speak with me prior to any absence except in the case of an emergency. If an emergency occurs, contact me as soon as possible to be excused from class.

Reading Assignments:

You are expected to complete each week's reading on schedule. These assigned readings provide the core materials for the course, and will enable you to participate in discussion. Failure to complete reading assignments will endanger your participation grade and make it impossible to successfully complete reading questions, essays, and exams.

Grading:

All work received on time will be graded and returned as promptly as possible. If your paper is turned in late, it will receive a reduced grade (1/3 of a letter grade a day) unless you make arrangements with me well in advance. You are expected to proofread and revise your written assignments before turning them in. Please feel free to meet with me to discuss a topic, thesis statement, introductory paragraph or preliminary outline for your papers before they are due.

Academic Dishonesty:

The USU Honor Code prohibits academic dishonesty. Plagiarism includes knowingly "representing, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person as one's own in any academic exercise or activity without full and clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials" (*Code of Policies and Procedures for Students*, Article V, Section 3A.1). The penalties for plagiarism are severe. Plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an immediate F, and will be reported to the Dean of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences. Other penalties may also be imposed at the Dean's discretion. These include probation, suspension, expulsion, withholding of transcripts, denial or revocation of degrees, referral to psychological counseling, and other disciplinary actions.

This syllabus and class schedule may be revised if needed. An updated version will be available on my faculty website: <http://www.usu.edu/history/faculty/culver/classesculver.htm>

Course Schedule

Week 1

August 29 Introduction to Course

August 31 The Precolumbian and European Origins of American Cities

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 1

Week 2

September 5 Colonial Cities

September 7 Building the Nation and the National Capital in the Early Republic

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapters 2 and 3

Week 3

September 12 Cradles of the Industrial Revolution: New England Mill Cities

September 14 The New Middle Class and the “Refinement” of Houses and Cities

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 4

“The Comforts of Home,” pages 238-279. Chapter in Richard Bushman’s *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*.

Week 4

September 19 The Gold Rush and the “Instant Cities” of the West

Paper # 1 Due

September 21 Joseph Smith and L.D.S. City-Building in America – Guest Lecture and Discussion by Dr. Richard Bushman, Columbia University

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 5

“Piedmont Heartland, 1860-1920,” pages 101-153. Chapter in William Wyckoff’s *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape*.

Week 5

September 26 The Urban History of the Civil War

September 28 Cities of Industry

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 6

“The Haunted House, 1824,” and “The Haunted House, 1874,” pages 31-46 and 214-226.

Chapters in Christopher Benfey’s *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable*.

Week 6

October 3 Technology and Urban Transformation in the Later 19th Century

October 5 Cities of Immigrants: Tenements, Chinatowns, and Barrios

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 7

“Urbanism and the Search for Order: 1885-1915,” pages 172-189. Chapter Excerpt in Leland Roth’s *A Concise History of American Architecture*.

“Newcomers in the City of Angels,” pages 63-83. Chapter in George Sánchez’s *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*.

Week 7

October 10 Frederick Law Olmstead, Central Park, and the American Landscape

October 12 Video

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 8

“Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmstead,” by Anne Whiston Spirn, pages 91-113. Essay in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, Edited by William Cronon.

Week 8

October 17 Urban Reform, Renewal, and the City Beautiful

October 19 **Midterm Exam**

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 9

Week 9

October 24 The Origins of Suburbia, East and West

October 26 The Great Migration and Black Urban America

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapters 10 and 11

“The Black Metropolis,” pages 113-152. Chapter in James N. Gregory’s *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*.

Week 10

October 31 World War II and Urban America

November 2 Postwar Suburbia: Ranch Houses on the Crabgrass Frontier

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 12

“The Baby Boom and the Age of the Subdivision,” and “The Drive-in Culture of Contemporary America,” pages 231-271. Chapters in Kenneth T. Jackson’s *The Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*.

Week 11

November 7 Cities of Leisure: Disneyland, Sun City, and Las Vegas

November 9 The Unnatural History of Urban Natural Disasters

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapter 13

“The Case for Letting Malibu Burn,” pages 93-147. Chapter in Mike Davis’s *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*.

“Do-It-Yourself Deathscape,” pages 47-68. Chapter in Ted Steinberg’s *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America*.

Description of the Loma Prieta 1989 San Francisco Earthquake, pages 608-621. Excerpt in John McPhee’s *Annals of the Former World*.

Week 12

November 14 Urban Decay and Debates over Urban Renewal

Paper # 2 Due

November 16 Sprawl Versus the “New Urbanism”

Reading: *Major Problems*, Chapters 14 and 15

“Introduction,” pages 3-25. Chapter in Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Week 13

November 21 Immigration and Urban Change in Contemporary America

November 23 Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class

Reading: “El Nuevo West,” pages 285-290. Article by Lisa Jones from *High Country News*. Excerpt in *The West in the History of the Nation: A Reader*, Edited by William F. Devereil and Anne F. Hyde.

Week 14

November 28 Research/Historiography Paper Presentations

November 30 Paper Presentations

Week 15

December 5 Paper Presentations

December 7 Final Exam Review

Research/Historiography Papers Due

Week 16

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 12, 1:30 pm – 3:20 pm