Fernand Leger, The City, 1919

UNIVERSITY OF LA VERNE

PADM 313 Urban Environments

Term: Fall Term 2012

Instructor: Matthew T. Witt, Ph.D. Associate Professor, Public Administration.

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Class Dates: August 27 – November 4, 2012
COURSE DESCRIPTION

To one degree or another, most of us live in cities, or metropolitan regions. This course is about treating our living environments as laboratories of sorts: spaces and places to explore, as if for the first time. Together in this class we will examine the political, economic, historic and social factors shaping urban/suburban areas, and the complex ways in which these factors unfold. Central questions we shall explore together include: How is power wielded in cities, and by whom? How do people form and maintain a sense of community within metropolitan (urban/suburban) settings, and how do people adapt to “life amongst strangers”? How dominant are economic forces in determining how cities change and adapt over time? How does race and ethnicity shape our experiences living together in a multicultural society?

This course will pay special attention to the ways in which the various social sciences have posed and addressed various “urban dilemmas”. At the same time, we will examine and distinguish the ways that people form their impressions about city life.

Course Objectives

- Create an awareness for how metropolitan areas evolve over time.
- Come to understand the role cities play in fostering economic and cultural development.
- Systematically examine the root forces that shape urban/suburban areas.
- Gain an appreciation for how cities can be examined from within different frameworks, including the visual arts (including film), literature, and social science.
- Learn to manage one’s perception of cities in a way that empowers students to view themselves as active participants in their community life.

Expected Course Outcomes

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Function with greater self- and social- awareness of the metropolitan world around them.
- Understand the various dynamic components that make up urban/suburban growth and change.
- Gain a deeper appreciation for the opportunities and challenges contemporary metropolitan life poses for them.
- Learn to appreciate the contributions different cultures make to contemporary metropolitan life.

COURSE TEXT AND MATERIALS—REQUIRED

This course requires a variety of reading and viewing materials (film, and online artwork).

Reading materials include:

This is the textbook for this course. It is used extensively in introductory urban studies courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. This book serves as an excellent source text for general understanding and background reading. Students curious about city life and culture will want to retain this book for further reference and study.


Written in 1950 by lifelong L.A. resident, Ray Bradbury, this book has become one of the most famous science fiction novels of all time. Students will recognize many of this story’s plot points as remarkably true of our world today: televised police chases, and the quest for personal freedom of thought and expression against pressures to conform to societal expectations dictated by powerful forces. Students will read this book and an analysis provided under Course Materials in Blackboard in preparation for one of this course’s Discussion Board topics (file is titled “Considering Fahrenheit 451”) and the final exam.


This book was a New York Times Bestseller and has been made into a critically acclaimed Broadway play. The author tells the story of blue collar work in America, herself diving into this work under assumed names as she goes undercover to experience what millions of underpaid Americans experience daily. This book offers students of this class a classic example of the research method “participant observation”, and touches on many themes explored in the textbook for this course, City Lights, including feminist economics.

Film materials REQUIRED for this course include:

Crash (2005). A powerful film story about race and American life set in Los Angeles, built on the allegory of collisions on the road and in life. Read more about this film and how we shall use it under your Discussion Board section in Blackboard. This film is available in video stores.

Local Hero (1983). Set real time in the 1980s and wave of American corporate expansion globally, this light-hearted and fanciful film tells its story at many different levels, but the central plot is the attempted acquisition of a Scottish fishing village by a Texas based oil company. Read more about this film and how we shall use it under your Discussion Board section in Blackboard. If not available in video store near you, this film can be obtained cheaply as a used copy from Amazon or obtained through Netflix or any other online DVD rental service.

Crazy Beautiful (2001). Set in Los Angeles real time in 2000, this story depicts a coming-of-age love story between a working class Latino youth and the white daughter of a wealthy congressman. Read more about this film and how we shall use it under your Discussion Board section in Blackboard. This film is available in video stores. If not available in video store near you, this film can be obtained cheaply as a used copy from Amazon or obtained through Netflix or any other online DVD rental service.
The Milagro Beanfield War (1988). This film story is a fanciful tale of small town New Mexico politics up against powerful development interests. Read more about this film and how we shall use it under your Discussion Board section in Blackboard. This film is available in video stores. If not available in video store near you, this film can be obtained cheaply as a used copy from Amazon or obtained through Netflix or any other online DVD rental service.

PLEASE NOTE: It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you acquire an account with Netflix or some comparable online DVD subscriber service. If you are unable to do so, then be sure to CHECK EARLY with your video store for availability of films used for this course. You may wish to purchase them from Amazon or other web source at reasonable prices (especially for used VHS and DVD).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
(Assignment Descriptions follow)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discussion Boards Participation</th>
<th>40%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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There will be six Discussion Board Sessions. Discussion Boards 1 – 5 will each be open two weeks for posting responses. Please note this means there will be overlap between some discussion board assignments. Please also note some DBs are worth 5 points, some are worth 10 points. See the Course Schedule below for when each Discussion Board opens. Follow instructions provided under the Discussions section on your Blackboard sidebar menu. General Rule: In addition to making your own post response to the DB items, you must respond to at least 2 other student postings responding to the topic. The intention is discussion, not short responses to one another. At least three postings per student are necessary in order to enable this process to work as designed. The last weekend of the posting period is intended for discussion. Initial postings by students to the DB topic in the last weekend will not receive full points because late posts don’t permit full discussion time.

Details for the Formal assignment and Final Exam Study Guide are available under the Assignments section of Blackboard.

GRADING SCALE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>Has unusually sharp insights into material; initiates thoughtful questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93.99</td>
<td>Sees many sides of an issue.</td>
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Articulates well; writes clearly and logically.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89.99</td>
<td>Grasps subject matter at a level considered &quot;good to very good.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84-86.99</td>
<td>Is an active listener and participates in class discussions. Speaks and writes well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83.99</td>
<td>Accomplishes more than the minimum requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79.99</td>
<td>Demonstrates a satisfactory comprehension of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74-76.99</td>
<td>Accomplishes the minimum requirements. Communicates orally and in writing at an acceptable level for college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-73.99</td>
<td>Has a good understanding of all materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69.99</td>
<td>Quality and quantity of work in and out of class is below average.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66.99</td>
<td>Quality and quantity of work in and out of class is below average.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt; 63</td>
<td>Quality and quantity of work in and out of the class is unacceptable.</td>
</tr>
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**Late Submissions:**

Discussion Board forums are time sensitive. Late posts will receive partial credit.

**Academic Honesty:**

Each student is responsible for performing academic tasks in such a way that honesty is not in question. Unless an exception is specifically defined by the instructor, students are expected to maintain the following standards of integrity:

- All examinations, term papers, oral and written assignment and recitations are to be the work of the student presenting the material.
- Any use of wording, ideas or findings of other persons, writers, or researchers require the explicit citation of the source; use of the exact wording requires a "quotation" format. (University of La Verne Catalog, Student Rights and Responsibilities)
- **FAIR WARNING:** Plagiarism is very easy to spot and confirm using web resources. Resist the temptation to use online or other material that is not your own work.
Changes:

Please note that modifications of this syllabus may be made at any time at the professor’s discretion, for which full and sufficient notification will be given to the students as deemed necessary by the professor.

COURSE SCHEDULE: PADM 313 Online, Fall Term 2012

Week 1: August 27 – September 2

Readings completed: City Lights, Preface and Chapters 1-2.

Urban studies is a multi-disciplinary field. These introductory chapters are intended to help gear students for thinking creatively about the material presented within the text.

Discussion Forum 1: See Discussion Board in Blackboard for instructions.

Friendly reminder: Be sure to contact your local video store to MAKE SURE that they have in stock the following films: Crash(Your video store still has MANY copies of this film. Discussion forum for this film is next week!!), Local Hero, Crazy Beautiful, and The Milagro Beanfield War. If your store does not have these films shelved, ask them if they will order them (Blockbuster and Hollywood Video will often do so if asked.). If you encounter difficulties, you can purchase each of these films online (e.g. Amazon) for a minimal amount (buy all three and pay one postage).

Week 2: September 3 – 9

Readings completed: City Lights. Chapters 3-4.

Chapter 3 introduces social science reasoning and concludes Part One (An Invitation to the City).

Chapter 4 provides broad survey of urban history, ancient to modern.

Discussion Forum 2: See Discussion Board in Blackboard for instructions.

Have you viewed Local Hero yet? Check Discussion Board 3 for the exciting details!

Week 3: September 10 – 16
Readings completed: *City Lights*, Chapters 5-6.
- Chapter 5 examines urbanization within a global context.
- Chapter 6 examines “classic” theories about how communities take shape.

Yo! You might start reading *Fahrenheit 451* if you haven’t done so already. It’s a great story. You’ll be discussing it Week 7. Might as well crack open *Nickel and Dimed* while you’re at it.

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**Week 4: September 17 – 23**

Readings completed: *City Lights*, Chapters 7-8.
- Chapter 7 concludes the discussion on community, applying the frameworks of Urban ecology and the New Urban Theory.
- Chapter 8 examines the growth and meaning of “suburbia”.

**Discussion Forum 3: See Discussion Board in Blackboard for instructions.**

Hey You, *Beautiful!* Have you watched *Crazy Beautiful* yet? See Discussion Forum 5 for details.

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**Week 5: September 24 – 30**

Readings completed: *City Lights*, Chapters 9-10.
- Chapter 9 examines the immigrant experience to the United States.
- Chapter 10 examines issues race and ethnic identity.

**MIDTERM EXAM DUE 11:59 p.m., Sunday, this week, submitted through online assessment.**

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**Week 6: October 1 – 7**

Readings completed: *City Lights*, Chapters 11-12.
- Chapter 11 examines how to understand the formation of social class.
- Chapter 12 applies social psychology to everyday life in cities.

**BTW: Now’s as good a time as any to start thinking about your Formal Assignment. See details under Assignments on Blackboard.**

**Discussion Forum 4: See Discussion Board in Blackboard for instructions.**

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**Week 7: October 8 – 14**

PADM 313
Fall 2012
Readings completed: *Fahrenheit 451*.
See Course Materials for file attachment with run-down of this story and things to consider as you participate in Discussion Forum 5.

**Week 8: October 15 – 21**


- Chapter 13 examines the local governmental structure of American cities.
- Chapter 14 examines early American local government.

**Discussion Forum 5: See Discussion Board in Blackboard for instructions.**

**Week 9: October 22 – 28**

Readings completed: *City Lights*, Chapter 15-16.

- Chapter 15 examines ways of understanding local politics today.
- Chapter 16 examines what determines the geography of cities.

**DUE: Formal Assignment, Sunday this week, 11:59 p.m. in Digital Dropbox.**

Great time to view *The Milagro Beanfield War* this week. Check out Course Materials for the exciting details and things to think on for Discussion Forum 6.

**Week 10: October 29 – November 4**


- Chapter 17 examines the social psychology of city life.
- Chapter 18 introduces and explain the idea of “political economy” as this applies to metropolitan areas.

**Discussion Forum 6: See Discussion Board in Blackboard for instructions.**