

Master Syllabus
Department of Geography

GEOG 321: Urban Geography

Course Description

This course examines the development and governance of contemporary cities in 'postindustrial' settings. We will explore the structure of cities in these contexts and look into the diverse set of processes and relationships that have shaped and continue to reshape cities. We will do this from a geographical perspective and will explicitly use geographic concepts in order to understand the processes in urban systems. Because cities are the settings where most of us experience our everyday lives, we will also consider the local urban geography of Muncie. Students will be expected to engage with local issues, such as housing abandonment, poverty, sustainability, and race and class relations as a way to learn about urban geography. Along the way, we will also become more aware of our own connections to the complex issues facing the city we all share. (3 credit hours).

Course Objectives

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Become familiar with contemporary socio-economic, political, and environmental processes in urban systems
- Use geographic concepts and perspectives to think analytically about the processes which shape and reshape contemporary cities
- Think critically about the local urban geography and to explore your role within it
- Identify what constitutes the urban
- Explain how cities are formed, how they function, and how they change
- Define characteristics of cities across space and time
- Interpret the processes of cities using core geographic concepts, such as place and scale

Course Texts

The recommended text is *Urban Social Geography: An Introduction*, 6th Edition by Paul Knox and Steven Pinch

Course Topics

- Cities and Geography
- Place, Scale, and the Socio-Spatial Dialectic
- Defining Cities and Urban Areas
- Capitalism and the Spatial Fix
- Cities and Culture

- Patterns of Urban Difference
- Housing Agents, Markets, and Segregation
- Urban Electoral Geography
- Communities and Neighborhoods
- Urban Politics and Conflicts
- Urban Environments and Behavior
- Cities and Gender

Course Format

This course will be primarily lecture-based. Lecture sessions will be group discussions intended to cover the majority of the conceptual material. There will be assigned readings, and part of students' assessments will be based on their contributions to in-class discussions.

Course Assignments

The following assignments will be required in GEOG 321. Other assignments may be added at the instructor's discretion.

- Exams: There will be two exams consisting of essay questions covering approximately ½ of the course material each. Essay questions will be provided and students will submit double-spaced, typed responses.
- Urban representation analysis: Students will reflect on how cities are represented and presented in popular entertainment media. Students will select and view a film that incorporates aspects of a city into the story and analyze how the film represents the essence of the city to the audience using specific geographic concepts. This assignment is not a summary of the plot of the film or a film review. Rather students will critically interpret how the concepts that we will discuss in class are reflected/treated in the film and how such representations may shape our understandings of the city.
- Urban spaces/places analysis: For this assignment, students will select a distinct space or place within Muncie (i.e., a neighborhood; a street corner or street block; a mall, farmers market, or shopping area) and conduct a study of that space/place and how it is used by different people. Students will examine your site's spatial layout and think about how understandings of gender, race, class, sexuality, and so on have been made part of this site and the ways in which these may be changing.
- Weekly response papers: To encourage your informed and engaged participation in class discussions, students will submit weekly reactions to the assigned readings. This will be a 1 page double-spaced typed paper that identifies key questions, themes, problems, or contradictions in the week's readings and relate the week's readings to an issue or topic discussed previously in the class.

- **Participation:** Active participation in class is essential to succeed in this course. In class we will actively engage with the ideas presented in assigned materials and you are expected to contribute with questions and thoughtful and informed reaction.

Course and Instructor Evaluation

Students will have an opportunity to participate in a formal evaluation of the course and the instructor's teaching performance at the end of the semester.

Special Needs

Please make an appointment to see the instructor as soon as possible if you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information that you wish to share, or if you need to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is taken seriously by the University and in this department. Academically dishonest behavior will be acted upon swiftly. For information about academic dishonest policies, please see the Ball State University Student Handbook and your instructor's syllabus.