Geog 373

Seminar in Urban Geography - Spring 2010

Prof. Mark Davidson (mdavidson@clarku.edu)

Office Hours: Thur 3:00-4:30

Class Meeting: Wed 9-11:50 / G104

Office: JAC 103 (793-7291)
Purpose and scope

This seminar explores some of the fundamental paradigms and developments in urban theory. Roughly structured along temporal lines, the seminar progresses to examine how theoretical imports and formulations have continually shaped the questions and concerns of urban geography. We will therefore discuss how theoretical movements such as positivism and postmodernism have shaped geographical thinking and, consequently, impacted upon how geographers have thought about cities and urban development.

The main objectives of the course are therefore (i) to understand how various theoretical perspectives have shaped the study of cities and (ii) develop a critical and comparative understanding of different approaches to urban questions. As such, during our discussions we will be required to be aware of, and examine, how different ontological and epistemological positions intertwine within urban theor(ies).

Delivery

The seminar will take the form of a reading group, where each of the students will select a reading which they would like to introduce and discuss with the group. For selected readings, students should identify themes and/or issues that arise from their study. For example, the methodological basis of a set of theories may be raised and discussed or, alternatively, the positionality of a set of theorists – e.g. the LA School – might be a theme raised in the seminar. We will aim to give approximately 30 minutes to each selected reading, however productive discussions will be given preference over strict timekeeping.

Importantly, the seminar is designed as a forum to discuss and explore the issues raised in the readings. Whilst you will be knowledgeable about many aspects of urban theory, it is simply impossible to have a precise working understanding of each. Our emphasis is therefore upon shared and co-operative explorations, using the advantages of a group seminar to examine the readings from each of our own perspectives.

As with all seminar groups, you will get out what you put in; preparing is key. You should carefully read all of the selected readings and have an understanding of their theoretical foundations.

Class Meetings

We meet every Wednesday at 9am, and our seminar will last until 11:50am. As such, we will intersperse our discussions with one or two breaks.

Assessment

The course uses a variety of assessment methods. These are:

- Reading preparation (20%): At the end of each seminar, you will be asked to provide (i) a short summary (200 words) of each assigned reading and (ii) a list of questions/discussion topics for your particular assigned reading. This submission can be annotated during the seminar discussion, but it should demonstrate evidence of your preparation, comprehension of the readings and intellectual engagement.
- **Class participation** (25%): In-class discussions are pivotal to the learning outcomes of this course. It is intended to both introduce you the subject matter and begin your intellectual engagement. As such, discussing the readings during class is a learning priority. You will be graded on your participation, listening and engagement with others.

- **Reaction paper** (15%): You will be required to write a short (2000 words) reaction paper midway through the course. You will be asked to respond to a statement. This statement will relate to one aspect of the first part of the course.

- **Final paper** (40%): In the latter half of the semester, you will be required to write an extend paper (4000 words) that debates/discusses various aspects of the urban geography literature. This paper will give you the opportunity to explore elements of the course that have particularly interested you.

**Access to readings and books**

Most of the assigned readings are available on the course webpage in pdf format. Where it is not possible to put the readings online, they will be distributed in hardcopy during the classes. Some of the supplementary and recommended reading materials will not be made available in pdf, however they are available in the library.

**Topics**

**Week One** – **Introduction and Discussion**

**Week Two** – **The Urban Question**

**Week Three** – **Contemporary Urban Question(s)**

**Week Four** – **The Chicago School and its Legacies**

**Week Five** – **Urban Systems**

**Week Six** – **Place**

**Week Seven** – **Nature of Cities**

**Week Eight** – Spring Break

**Week Nine** – **Neoclassical**

**Week Ten** – **Behavioural**

**Week Eleven** – **Structural**

**Week Twelve** – **Postmodern**

**Week Thirteen** – No class [reading week: the ‘post’ question]

**Week Fourteen** – **Cultural**

**Week Fifteen** – Theory at work: Gentrification
Website
The syllabus, grades, readings, and other assignments will be posted on the course website (Cicada: https://cicada.clarku.edu), and/or distributed in hardcopy.

Honor Code
Clark University’s policies of academic integrity apply to every aspect of this course. Please see www.clarku.edu/offices/aac/integrity.cfm if you have any questions about what this entails.

Special Needs
Persons with disabilities or in need of special accommodations to meet the expectations of this course and take full advantage of learning opportunities are encouraged to contact the office of Disability Services as soon as possible to request such accommodations. Disability Services is located in the Academic Advising Center, 142 Woodland Street, second floor, 508-793-7468. In addition, it would be helpful to bring this to the instructor’s attention as early as possible.
The Urban Question


You should also explore Emile Durkheim’s views on society and solidarity in The Division of Labour in Society.

Contemporary Approaches to the Urban Question

- Debord, G. 1955. Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography P
Chicago School and its Legacy


Recommended Further Reading


The Urban System/Globalization and Global Cities


Recommended Further Reading

Urban System


• Hoch, I. 1972. Income and City Size, Urban Studies, 9(3), 299-328

A good overview of globalization processes


International Cities, Globalization, and Development


Localities/Politics of Place


**Recommended Further Reading**


**The Nature of Cities**

**Von Thünen**


  Annals (AAG), 57(4), Dec 1967, pp. 810-5]

*Nice historical overview of land rent issues…*


**Harris and Ullman**


**Social Area Analysis and Factorial Ecology**


• Bell, W. 1958. The utility of the Shevky typology for the design of urban sub-area field studies. *Journal of Social Psychology* 47, 73-83.


**Recent defense of factorial ecology…**


**Recommended Further Reading**


**Neoclassical: Accessibility and Land Rent**


**New accessibilities???**


**Recommended Further Reading**


**Behavioral**


**Institutional**


• Boddy, M. 1976. The structure of mortgage finance: building societies and the British social formation’, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, N.S.* 1, 58-71 P


**Recommended Further Reading**

**Behavioural**


**Institutional**


**Structural**


*Nice collection of structural discussions…*

The Production of Space: Shifting Structural Perspectives


Recommended Further Reading


Postmodern, Post-structural, and Cultural Studies

The Postmodern City


**Post-modern and post-structuralist perspectives: emerging cultural studies**


**Recommended Further Reading**


**Cultural Studies/Difference**

• Pratt, G. and Hanson, S. 1994. Geography and the construction of difference. *Gender, Place, and Culture* 1:5-29

**Recommended Further Reading**


**Gentrification**
