Geog 373

Seminar in Urban Geography - Spring 2012

Prof. Mark Davidson (mdavidson@clarku.edu)  
Office Hours: Weds 9:00-11:00

Class Meeting: Mon 2:50-5:50 / TC107
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.

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 (20%)**: 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 (20%)**: 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
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 – No class (AAG)
Week Seven – No class (spring break)
Week Eight – Place
Week Nine – Nature of cities
Week Ten – Neoclassical
Week Eleven – Behavioral
Week Twelve – Structural
Week Thirteen – Postmodern
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
Monday, January 30, 2012

Classics


Intellectual context
Durkheim, E. 1893. The Division of Labor in Society 11-67 P
Durkheim, E. 1957. Professional Ethics and Civic Morals 1-41 P
Kropotkin, P. 1902. Mutual Aid - A Factor of Evolution 84-118 P
Kropotkin, P. 1913. Fields, factories and workshops: or, Industry combined with agriculture and brain work with manual work. Chapters: “Brain Work and Manual Work” and “Conclusion” P

Commentaries
Contemporary Approaches to the Urban Question
Monday, February 06, 2012

Sassen, S. 2010. The city: Its return as a lens for social theory, City, Culture and Society, 1, 3-11

**Assemblage**
Amin, A. 2007. Rethinking the urban social, City, 11(1), 100-114
McFarlane, C. 2011. Assemblage and critical urbanism, City, 15(2): 204-224

**Ecology**

**Marxian**

**Postmodern**

**Mobilities**
Bissell, D. 2010 Passenger mobilities: affective atmospheres and the sociality of public transport, Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 28(2), 270-289
Middleton, J. 2010. Sense and the city: exploring the embodied geographies of urban walking, Social and Cultural Geography, 11(6), 575-596

**Post-colonial**
Chicago School and its Legacy

Monday, February 13, 2012

From Chicago and alike…


Cressey, P. (1932). *The Taxi-Dance Hall: A Sociological Study in Commercialized Recreation and City Life*


After Chicago…


Recommended Further Reading


The Urban System/Globalization and Global Cities

Monday, February 20, 2012


Globalization theorists


Recommended Further Reading

Urban System


International Cities, Globalization, and Development


Localities/Politics of Place  
*Monday, March 12, 2012*


**Recommended Further Reading**

The Nature of Cities  
Monday, March 19, 2012

Von Thunen  

Economic theorists…  

Harris and Ullman  

Social Area Analysis and Factorial Ecology  

Philosophical roots…  
Comte, A. 1856. *A general view of positivism*, chapter 1

Recent defense of factorial ecology…  
Neoclassical: Accessibility and Land Rent

Monday, March 26, 2012

Ahfeldt, G. 2010. If Alonso was right: Modeling accessibility and explaining the residential land gradient, *Journal of Regional Science*, 51(2), 318-338


Marx, K. Capital: Volume III: Part VII. Revenues and their Sources, Chapter 48. The Trinity Formula


New accessibilities???


Recommended Further Reading


Behavioral and Institutional
Monday, April 02, 2012

Behavioral

Philosophical underpinnings…

Philosophizing on place…
Heidegger, M. 1951. Building, Dwelling, Thinking
Tuan, Y. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) 3-50

Further reading

Institutional


**Recommended Further Reading**


**Structural**

Monday, April 09, 2012


*Nice collection of structural discussions…*


*Theoretical context…*


The Production of Space: Shifting Structural Perspectives


*Recommended Further Reading*


Postmodern, Post-structural, and Cultural Studies

Monday, April 16, 2012

The Postmodern City


Recommended Further Reading


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


Recommended Further Reading


Cultural Studies/Difference
Monday, April 23, 2012

Urban cultural geographies…
Pratt, G. and Hanson, S. 1994. Geography and the construction of difference. Gender, Place, and Culture 1:5-29 P

Non-representational geographies…
Bissell, D. 2010 Vibrating materialities: mobility-body-technology relations, Area, 42(4), 479-486

Theoretical discussions

Recommended Further Reading
Theory at work: Gentrification  

Monday, April 30, 2012


Davidson, M. 2009. Displacement, Space/Place and Dwelling: placing gentrification debate, *Ethics, Place and Environment*, 12(2), 219-234


