U.S. Urban History Since 1920

This course examines the history of American cities, beginning in 1920. In that year, for the first time, the U.S. census indicated that a majority of Americans lived in cities.

The years around 1920 were a turning point in U.S. cities for other reasons. U.S. involvement in World War I (1917-1918) brought an end in many respects to the Progressive movement, which had brought ambitious social reforms to American cities for some 20 years. The nationalist sentiment inspired by the war helped create a wave of nativism that would cut off almost all immigration to the United States within ten years. And wartime labor shortages in northern cities encouraged some 400,000 African Americans from the rural South to migrate North, a “Great Migration” that permanently transformed the culture and demography of US cities.

Other innovations of the 1920s in cities included the increasing use of the automobile, and the rise of new manifestations of popular culture such as radio, talking motion pictures, and jazz.

This course will begin at this watershed moment, and trace the development of American cities through the present. Throughout the course we will focus on the interactions of economic, political, and social factors. In other words, we will look at how markets, the state, and ordinary people have shaped American cities. The course is national in scope, but emphasis is placed on the history of cities in the West, particularly in California.

The course does not have pre-requisites, and is open to students in all years and majors. No particular prior knowledge is assumed, although a basic knowledge of twentieth-century US history (such as through History 150C) would be helpful.

FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS: Class meetings will combine lecture and discussion. The lectures will enable the instructor to convey relevant background and context for the course readings, to relate information not available in the readings, and to model styles of research and argumentation. Discussions will allow students to actively engage with both readings and lectures, to question or defend the arguments presented, and to share the results of research undertaken in connection with class assignments. While the balance of discussion and lecture will vary from class to class, it is IMPERATIVE that you come to class having done the reading assigned for that day and that you are prepared to discuss it. The instructor reserves the right to administer quizzes and other in-class writing exercises, which will count toward the class participation component of your grade.
ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING: Grades will be calculated as follows:

1) Three short (500-750 word) essays: 10 percent each (30 percent total).
   These essays, on the readings for three class sessions of your choice (distributed throughout the quarter according to the guidelines listed below), are due by 10 AM on the day for which that reading was assigned. They may deal with any aspect of the day’s reading, provided that they incorporate at least one assigned reading for that day AND that day’s “supplementary” reading. You may find a theme with which to compare or contrast two readings, for example, or you may relate the readings for the day to material we have covered previously in the class or to something you have read or observed outside of our class. I will post weekly reading questions on Courseworks that may help you identify possible paper topics.

   However you decide to approach it, your essay should make an argument, which should be stated succinctly in a thesis statement early in the essay. This thesis should not merely echo the reading; it may include a brief summary of an author’s argument, but must go beyond that to state your own view about how an author’s point is new, old, convincing, unconvincing, similar to or different from the view of another source, etc. Your thesis should be supported with evidence from the readings, in the form of direct or indirect quotations. You should provide citations when you refer to an author’s work, preferably in footnote format. Your essay should be clearly organized and correctly and gracefully written. Please submit all work electronically as Microsoft Word documents.

   For guidance on footnote format, see http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/TeachingLib/Guides/Internet/Style.html, especially the section on Chicago / Turabian style.

   On a day that you submit a short essay, you will be called on to report briefly to the class on the supplementary reading and how it relates to the other reading(s) for that day. We will sign up at the second class for dates so that we do not have (too much) doubling up.

   The FIRST must be submitted by April 18.
   The SECOND must be submitted after April 18, and no later than May 9.
   The THIRD must be submitted after May 9, and no later than May 30.

2) Final Project: A history of a neighborhood in San Francisco. This project will be based on research in primary and secondary sources. A detailed assignment sheet, to be distributed early in the quarter, will provide guidance. Please note that some parts of the project will be carried out in collaboration with a partner. Both partners will typically receive a single grade for those aspects of the work; the instructor and students will work together to ensure that both partners contribute equally.
Part I. Individual 5-page essay. Due Monday, April 30: 15 percent of your final grade.

Part II. Collaborative presentation. Monday June 4 or Wednesday, June 6, in class. 10 percent of your final grade.

Part III. Collaborative essay, including bibliography. Due June 11, 10 am. 30 percent of your final grade.

3) Class participation and participation in online forum: 15 percent.
   Students are expected to be in class on time (attendance will be taken) and prepared to participate. Participation in class discussion and performance on in-class writing assignments are among the methods the instructor may use to assess participation.

   Students are also expected to participate in the Coursework Forum at least once a week. By 10 am on either Monday or Wednesday, you must post a paragraph-length comment or question about the reading for that day. The topic of your paragraph may come from the posted reading questions, from a paragraph posted by another student, or from your own interest or curiosity. You may either start a new thread or add your comment or question to an established thread. Note that you do NOT need to submit to the forum in a week when you are writing a short essay (assignment 1), and no forum submissions are due the week of June 4. Also, you may choose one week during the quarter when you turn in no paragraph and no short essay; please notify the instructor when you are taking your week “off.”

COMMUNICATIONS: This course is registered in Coursework (http://coursework.Stanford.edu). In Coursework you can see the syllabus, announcements, copies of assignments, and all readings other than the required book. The instructor will also use e-mail to communicate with students; please check your mail regularly.

HONOR CODE: Students are expected to adhere as a matter of course to Stanford’s honor code, which explicitly prohibits plagiarism. According to the Office of Judicial Affairs (OJA) website, “For purposes of the Stanford University Honor Code, plagiarism is defined as the use, without giving reasonable and appropriate credit to or acknowledging the author or source, of another person’s original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies, writing or other form(s).” For further information on what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, please consult the OJA website at: http://www.stanford.edu/dept/vpsa/judicialaffairs/students/plagiarism.sources.htm

STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES: Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate the request with
required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the OAE as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk; phone: 723-1066; web site http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/oae.


Additional readings for the course are available on the Materials section of the Coursework site.

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

**Monday April 2:** Course introduction, review of syllabus.

**Wednesday April 4:** City of Neighborhoods: Urban Space in the 1920s and 1930s.


**Monday April 9:** Urban Culture and Politics in the 1920s and 1930s.

Wednesday April 11: Cities in Wartime.

Monday April 16: Demographic Transformation: Northward Migrations.

Wednesday April 18: Demographic Transformation: Suburbanization. FINAL DATE for submission of FIRST short essay assignment.


DUE DATE for part I of final project.
Self, American Babylon, chapter 5, “Opportunity Politics.”


Wednesday May 2: Political Transformation II: The Great Society and Urban Politics.


Class trip to Special Collections in Green Library.

Wednesday May 9: Government Retrenchment and New Inequalities.
FINAL DATE for submission of SECOND short essay assignment.


Monday May 14: Sunbelt Growth.


Wednesday May 16: New Suburbia: Sprawl and the Multi-Centered Metropolis.


Wednesday May 23: An Urban Revival(?)


Monday May 28: Memorial Day; No Class.

FINAL DATE for submission of THIRD short essay assignment.


Monday June 4: Final Presentations

Wednesday June 6: Final Presentations

Monday June 11: Final Papers due, 10 am.

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