

The University of Calgary
Faculty of Social Sciences

Urban Studies 313 The City in Film

Spring 2006-Provisional Course Outline

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Course Description

The social and spatial organization of cities shapes the lives of the majority of the world's inhabitants. While urban scholars understand a great deal about the socio-spatial processes that create and organize cities, the ways in which these processes shape human beings' lived experience is often overlooked. A number of film directors have thoughtfully portrayed a wide variety of urban processes, allowing us to connect our theoretical understandings of these processes to the (portrayed) lived experiences of film characters (individuals as well as groups). This course utilizes one of contemporary society's primary communications media, film, to link our theoretical understandings of urban processes with the meaningful world of lived experience.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to explore the relationship between a number of the processes shaping cities--changing urban morphology, immigration and assimilation, community formation, economic restructuring, segregation, race and class conflict, social exclusion, suburban alienation, the commercial colonization of public space, and the structuring of social relationships in post-colonial cities--and the experiences of people living in those cities. We will strive to gain a basic understanding of several processes shaping city life, drawing from select theoretical and empirical readings, and then analyze films that deal with the same topics, paying special attention to the ways in which different groups and individuals react to and shape these processes. We will consider the ways in which the film directors' own perspectives and understandings shape their portrayals of urban life, and the ways in which these portrayals reinforce, elaborate upon, or contradict our theoretical understandings. By the end of the course, you should have a better understanding of some of the central processes shaping cities, how urban experience is shaped by broader processes, and how our understandings of urban life are shaped by context, perspective, and ideology.

Required Readings

On Blackboard

Assignments and Marking

This course revolves around twelve films and the assigned readings that correspond to them. Each week you will be asked to view a specific film (either through the screenings arranged at the Com/Media Screening Room, or by renting the film on your own), read the corresponding readings, and write a short (2 page maximum) reaction paper that analyzes the film in light of the readings. You are required to submit reaction papers for 10 of the twelve films. Each reaction

paper should focus on the processes portrayed in the film and the readings, how the characters in the film deal with and affect those processes, and your own take on strengths and weaknesses of both the film and the readings. Obviously you can't go into a lot of detail in two pages, so you will need to concentrate on the most important points. In a spring session course everything is condensed including time and handing assignments in late is strongly discouraged.

Every other week you will turn in one of your previous two reaction papers to be graded in more detail—you choose which paper. Each reaction paper that is graded in detail will be worth 20 points, 16 of which will be based on the quality of your analysis, and 4 will be based on the quality of your writing. Reaction papers must be typed, double-spaced, and are due at the beginning of class each Wednesday and Friday. Relevant course readings should be cited, but a bibliography is not required. Your lowest reaction paper score will be dropped, but all reaction papers must be completed. Failure to complete a reaction paper will result in a deduction of 10 points from your overall mark.

In addition to reaction papers, you will be asked to give an oral presentation on one of the ten films. Your presentation should be coordinated with other students presenting on the same film and last about 5 minutes each. Two or three students will work on each film. Your oral presentation will count as part of your class participation mark (50 points possible). The class participation mark is based on the quality of your analysis of the film and corresponding readings, as well as the frequency of your participation.

The final component of your mark will be a ten page term paper (plus bibliography), presenting an in-depth analysis of at least two of the eleven films, plus at least one other film dealing with related themes (a list of related films will be provided). This paper is worth 100 points, 80 points for the quality of the analysis and 20 points for the quality of the writing. As with the reaction papers films are to be analyzed in light of the relevant readings. To facilitate comparison of the films, it will be helpful to focus on one to three major themes, rather than attempt to cover all themes presented. Papers must be typed and double-spaced.

All assignments must be completed. Late reaction papers will be penalized one point per day late. Late term papers will be penalized three points per day late. On written projects, writing competency (organization, grammar, spelling, word choice, etc.) counts for 20% of the mark. The Writing Centre in the Social Sciences building can help you with any writing difficulties you might have.

Marks will be based on:

Ten reaction papers (five marked in detail, lowest one dropped)	80 points
Oral presentation	20 points
Class Participation	50 points
Term paper	<u>100 points</u>
	250 points

The following grading scale will be used:

Grading System

A+	98-100%	B	80-83.9%	C-	64-67.9%
A	92-97.9%	B-	76-79.9%	D+	60-63.9%
A-	88-91.9%	C+	72-75.9%	D	56-59.9%
B+	84-87.9%	C	68-71.9%	F	Below 56%

Class Schedule (subject to revision)

Week 0 Films begin showing on Friday May 12 as detailed below
Week 1: May 15-19
Tuesday: Course Introduction; Fear of the city, suburban/urban conflict
Wednesday: Discussion of Adventures in Babysitting (A) Director:
Thursday: Urban structure, social structure, identity, conflict
Friday: Discussion of Avalon (B) Director: Barry Levinson USA
Week 2: May 22 -26
Tuesday: Place-based communities
Wednesday: Discussion of Blue in the Face (A) Directors: Paul Auster, Wayne Wang USA
Thursday: Social Exclusion
Friday: Discussion of La Haine (B) Director: Mathieu Kassovitz France
Week 3: May 29-June 2
Tuesday: Economic restructuring and class conflict
Wednesday: Discussion of Roger and Me (A) Director Michael Moore USA
Thursday: Consumerism and urbanism
Friday: Discussion of Playtime (B) Director: Jacque Tati France
Week 4: June 5-June 9
Tuesday: Commercial colonization of public space
Wednesday: Discussion of WayDownTown (A) Director: Gary Burns Canada
Thursday: New Urbanism and Social Order
Friday: Discussion of The Truman Show (B) Director: Peter Weir USA
Week 5: June 12-16
Tuesday: Post colonial Asian cities
Wednesday: Discussion of Three Seasons (A) Director: Tony Bui Vietnam, USA
Thursday: Place based identity
Friday: Discussion of Eight Mile (B) Director: Curtis Hanson USA
Week 6: June 19-23
Tuesday: Urban dystopias, surveillance, urban terrorism
Wednesday: Discussion of Brazil (A) Director: Terry Gilliam UK
Thursday:

Friday: Discussion of (B)

Screening Times

Films will be screened at the Com/Media Screening Room (adjacent to McKimmie Library) at the following times (Friday to Thursday cycle):

Friday: Movie A 10:00 a.m., Movie B 2:15 p.m.
Monday: Movie A 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
 Movie B 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.
Tuesday: Movie A, 2:30 p.m.
Thursday: Movie B, 2:30 p.m.

The screening room has a capacity of 25. Each student will sign up for a specific screening time so that we do not exceed the screening room capacity.

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. (For details see 2003-04 Calendar P. 51,

http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/How/HOW_LB.htm) Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. Readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. This includes assignments submitted in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media, and material taken from such formats. Please consult me if you have any questions regarding how to document sources.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to:

- register with the Disability Resource Centre (220-8237), and
- discuss your needs with me no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.