

**Urban Anthropology and Ethnography**  
Spring 2011

**ANT 324L \* URB 354 \* AMS 321**  
Unique #s: 30370, 37890, 31330

**SAC 4.174**  
T, TH 9:30am-11:00am

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**I. Course description:**

Over the thirty years in which urban anthropology has developed into an identifiable subfield, it has moved towards a cohesive paradigm, linking together anthropology's interests in meaning and agency to political and economic models of urban structure. The goal of this course is to look at the ways in which urban anthropologists work--theoretically and methodologically--in order to uncover the interaction between significant structural forces and culturally produced meaning and action on the ground in a variety of cities across the globe. With these goals in mind, the course is organized around exploring the following: 1) structural frameworks for contextualizing cities; 2) strategies for analysis of cities and urban populations: top-down (looking at the powerful) and bottom-up (looking at the less powerful), considering the role ethnographic fieldwork can play in revealing this; 3) current themes of the sub-field including: neighborhoods, space as structured by the state and the market, urban social movements, poverty and class as mapped onto the city; global cities and processes of globalization; theories of place and public space, the circulation of media forms in urban space, and trends in urban planning, landscape design and architecture as an anthropological concern. The course also enables students to design and conduct an original, small-scale project using the Austin area as an urban field site to illuminate these themes. To this end, there will be a series of intensive, in-class ethnographic workshops for students to sample specialized methodologies, present their works-in-progress and receive constructive feedback from fellow course-members and the instructor.

**II. Course objectives:**

Upon completion of the course, students will have developed the skills to be able to:

- Articulate central themes of urban anthropology and the structural frameworks that have been used for contextualizing cities
- Place course themes within in a wider context of anthropological theory
- Consider the contribution that anthropology has made to the understanding of urban culture, nationally and internationally
- Converse, with historical and ethnographic sensitivity, about a range of contemporary urban issues
- Develop basic skills to conduct ethnographic research in an urban setting and write ethnographic vignettes

### III. Course Design and Format

This course, which will be run in a seminar-style format, is recommended for motivated upper-division undergraduate who are developing an intellectual interest cities and urban cultures. While there are writing assignments throughout the semester to encourage students analyze and synthesize information and ideas in a rigorous way, there are no in-class quizzes or tests. The classes are designed to be a series of interactive weekly meetings, generally following this format:

*Tuesdays*-An instructor-led discussion establishes the context and background for the readings and outlines their key data, arguments and ideas in the reading.

*Thursdays*-A small team of students, delegated in advance, will facilitate the discussion along with the instructor, raising questions, stimulating debate, and integrating ideas from the readings into the collective analysis of multicultural Israel.

### IV. Course requirements and weighted grading at-a-glance:

- Attendance, active intellectually rigorous engagement in class discussions and reading response papers (see below): 20%
- Three short (3-5 page) analytic papers related to course readings: 30%
- Two short (1-3 page) methodological workshop papers: 10%
- Final (10-15 page) research paper which integrates readings and local fieldwork component: 40%

### V. Writing Assignments:

- Reading response papers (ungraded, **6 total**): Over the course of the semester, all members of the class will write a total of six, two-page (12 pt. font, double spaced) response to the reading. The two-page typed responses will be turned in class on Thursdays. These short writing can be reflections, reactions, critical commentaries or overviews that in some way *place in conversation the ethnography and theoretical/methodological pieces* we have read in the prior week. These written assignments are informal, but are required, and are an important part of the participation grade. They will be marked with a  $\surd$ ,  $\surd+$  or  $\surd-$  based on their quality. Note: Reading response papers must be turned in on time cannot be made up at the end of the course.
- 3 short analysis papers: Three short analysis papers 3-5 pages in length, preparing for your final project analyzing our reading in more depth are due at various points in the semester, typed, carefully edited, and including a bibliography. A prompt and rubric will be provided two weeks in advance.
- 1 methodological workshop paper: A brief (1-3 page) description of the project and its methodology for feedback and instructor approval (*This will be due to be distributed in advance of the workshop, so all participants have an opportunity to comment on them thoughtfully*).
- Final paper: a 10-15 page (12 pt. font, double spaced) ethnographic analysis based on your local fieldwork project that combines theory, analysis and ethnography. Students will be asked to use theoretical materials from the course to think through their research projects for their final papers. A bibliography of literature cited (should have at least 6-10 references total, 3-5 from scholarly sources outside the course, 3-5 from the course).

**To receive a grade, all submissions must include at least 10 pages of field notes (typed or hand written, though I recommend typed) upon which the paper was based.**

### VI. Grading Scale

- A 95-100% Excellent grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear and interesting connections, exceptionally original, coherent and well-organized; ideas clearly written/stated, outstanding classroom participation.

- A- 90-94% Very good grasp of subject matter; explains concepts clearly; provides relevant details and examples; draws clear connections; ideas clearly written/stated
- B+ 86-89% Good grasp of some elements above, others need work
- B 83-85% Satisfactory grasp of some elements above
- B- 80-82% Uneven, spotty grasp of the elements above
- C+ 76-79 % Limited grasp of the above
- C 73-75% Poor grasp of the above
- C- 70-72% Very poor grasp of the above
- D 60-69% Little evidence of grasp of material, having done readings, attended class, or completed assignments
- F 0-59% Insignificant evidence of having done readings, attended class, or completing assignments

### VII. Important notes on grading and participation:

*Complete written assignments on time:* I am committed to returning assignments to you promptly so you can benefit from my feedback while material is fresh in your mind. I do not grade papers or exams until I have the entire printed set in front of me. For these reasons, **I do not accept late assignments.** Bring a hard copy at the beginning of class on the day it is due. If you anticipate a problem, or have a history of deadline problems, meet with a consultant at the learning or writing center to help you plan ahead.

The UT Learning Center: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/utlc/>

Undergraduate Writing Center:

<http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

*Grading policy:* I am very happy to discuss how you may improve your work, and will read early drafts, but **I will not reconsider grades on papers or quizzes.** I grade all the papers in a set at the same time to ensure that I am applying the same standards, and I make every effort to be fair.

*Plagiarism and copying:* Although this course is designed for creative, individual work and synthesis of ideas from various sources (it would be hard to cheat in the conventional sense of the word), any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit must be the student's own work. Should copying occur from another student, both the student who copied work and the student who gave material to be copied will both automatically receive a zero for the assignment.

Penalty for violation of this Code can also be extended to include failure of the course and University disciplinary action.

Here are University statements about plagiarism and the consequences of plagiarizing:

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/faculty/plagiarism/preventing.html>

<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/services/instruction/learningmodules/plagiarism/>

*Using office hours, getting help:* I check email regularly, and will usually reply to emails within 24 hours for basic questions, and no longer than three days for more complicated ones. My door is open from 10am-11am on Mondays and Wednesdays. Ask for an appointment if you can't come in during my regular hours.

*Attendance, contribution, and classroom vibe:* Regular attendance is not only the key to your own success as a student in this course, but also for the quality of the course as a dynamic whole. Arriving late and leaving early disrupts class flow, so make every effort to arrive to class on time with your materials prepared and phones and computers, etc. off. This is a low-tech, highly

interpersonal seminar. Attendance and the quality of your participation are factored into your final grade.

**NOTE: More than four unexcused absences will automatically lower your final grade by one letter grade.**

### **VIII. University Notices and Policies**

#### **University of Texas Honor Code**

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

In this course, that means we will all work to ensure that the discussion space is shared relatively equally among the participants, and to maintain an atmosphere of respect for each other's perspectives and arguments, especially when there are strong disagreements.

#### **Students with disabilities**

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Please contact me as early in the semester as possible to let me know if you need anything to participate fully.

#### **Religious Holy Days**

By UT Austin policy, students are required to notify me of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, I will certainly give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **IX. Required Texts (for purchase at the Co-op Bookstore)**

*Theorizing the City* edited by Setha Low

*Righteous Dopefiend* by Phillipe Bourgois

*On the Plaza* by Setha Low

*The Intimate Economies of Bangkok* by Ara Wilson

*The Naked City* by Sharon Zukin

**Note: A required course pack is available for purchase at Abel's Copies, located at University Towers (715D West 23rd St.)**

### **X. Key due dates at-a-glance:**

#### **Plan ahead!**

T 2/15: Short paper #1

T 3/1: Project Proposal

T 3/22: Short paper #2

T 4/5: Short paper #3

T 5/3: FINAL PAPER

**XI. Tentative Course Schedule:** *\*\*This syllabus represents current course plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.*

Date	Main Topic(s)	Work to do at home Readings – to be completed before class	Evaluation
T 1/18	Introduction to the course		
Th 1/20	Theorizing the City	Read over syllabus, Read “Introduction” in Low Reader pp. 1-37.	type me a note about the syllabus: a) what surprises you; b) what you look forward to; c) what you most dread
T 1/25	Some classic Marxist statements on the city	Katznelson Ch. 1. "Marxism and the City?" pp. 1-42; Engels “Working Class Manchester” (579-585)	
Th 1/27	Classic (and refuted) statements, Student Led	In course pack: Wirth, “Urbanism as a way of life” pp. 97-118; Lewis, Engle Merry, “Urban Danger” Lewis, “The Culture of Poverty” pp; 119-130 with Goode, “How Urban Ethnography Counters myths about the poor”pp.185-201;  Eames and Goode <i>Anthropology of the City</i> for further foundational background pp 13-39	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 2/1	The Divided City	Part 1 Low Reader pp. 37-105	
Th 2/3	<i>Ethnography: Righteous Dopefiend</i>	Introduction-ch.3	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 2/8	<i>Righteous Dopefiend</i>	Ch. 4-6	
Th 2/10	<i>Righteous Dopefiend</i>	7-Conclusion	Student discussion leaders hand in

			2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 2/15	<b>Workshop:</b> “Feelings Map” experiment		<b>Due: Short Paper #1</b>
Th 2/17	Urban planning and design	Bosselman, MacDonald and Kronemeyer "Livable Streets Revisited" 168-180 and Owens, "Pedestrian Life and Neighborhood Form" 115-135; “Looking At Cities” 1-83.	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 2/22	Urban ethnography research and methodology	In course pack “Anthropological Fieldwork in Cities” pp. 5-18 from <i>The Craft of Research</i> 35-81; “The anthropology of Cities: Some Methodological Issues” 233-247	
Th 2/24	<b>Workshop:</b> Fieldnotes practicum, meet in SAC lobby, Discussing Field notes: Tricks of the Trade; sharing/critiquing vignettes	<i>Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes</i> , Ch 1-4	
T 3/1	<b>Workshop:</b> Discussing student projects for development and improvement	Read all projects descriptions posted on blog, write comments	<b>Due:</b> a) Type up fieldnotes, write brief vignette; <b>*Project Proposal:</b> 1-3 page description of the project and its methodology
Th 3/3	The Contested City, On The Plaza	Low Reader Part II: “The Contested City” p. 111-138	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 3/8	<i>On the Plaza</i>	Part I-II	
Th 3/10	<i>On the Plaza</i>	Part III-IV	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 3/15	Spring Break NO CLASS		
Th 3/17	Spring Break NO CLASS		
T 3/22	Bring in news article featuring on anything urban to discuss		<b>Due: Short paper #2</b>
Th 3/24	The global city/ intimate economies	<i>Low Reader Part III: The Global City in Low p. 169-</i>	Student discussion

		<i>201; Intimate Economies, Intro-Ch. 2</i>	leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 3/29		<i>Intimate Economies Ch. 3-6</i>	
Th 3/31		<i>Intimate Economies Ch. 5-Conclusion</i>	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 4/5	<b>Workshop:</b> Update and troubleshooting on student projects		<b>Short Paper #3 Due</b>
Th 4/7	The Modernist City	Low Reader Pt. IV	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 4/12	Contemporary urban issues: Suburbs, Exurbs and Urban Decline	Fishman in course pack, Preface and pp. ix, Intro-2; pp. 1-72 and newspaper readings I place on blackboard	
Th 4/14	Low Reader Part V: “The Postmodern City” in Low pp. 317-377; Dear and Flusty 61-94;	Low Reader Part V: “The Postmodern City” in Low pp. 317-377; Dear and Flusty 61-94;	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 4/19	<b><i>Pesach, Day 1 Observed, NO CLASS</i></b>		
Th 4/21	Selections from <i>The Naked City</i>	<i>Pages tba</i>	Student discussion leaders hand in 2-page reading response, typed and stapled.
T 4/26	<b><i>Pesach, day 8 observed: NO CLASS</i></b>		
Th 4/28	Photo shoot in Austin, location to be announced		
T 5/3	Creating captions and texts relating to our readings, a collective, visual final		<b>DUE: FINAL PAPER</b>
Th 5/5	Student Presentations, Final Party with food!		