Urbanization and Urban Geography

Course Introduction to GEOG 4210/5210

Urbanization & Urban Geography

This course is an introduction to a geographic perspective on cities in the United States, Canada, and the developed world.

- An overview of the practical meaning of urban geography for government and business.
- Also, information of general interest to people interested in cities.

Instructor

- Dr. Murray Rice
  - Associate Professor, UNT Geography
  - Bachelor of Science in Engineering Physics
  - Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy, Urban/Economic Geography
  - 10 years of consulting experience with Altavision Geographics, a Canadian geographic consulting firm
  - Primary area of consulting: market analysis

My dog, Nox, a chihuahua/miniature pinscher

Instructor

- My newest dog, Maggie the beagle
The Basic Plan for the Course

- There are three main areas of emphasis that we will develop through this semester
  - 1. historical development of cities
  - 2. the urban form of the modern city
  - 3. planning and development of urban areas

We will use examples from many cities to further our discussions on all of these topics.
The Course

- Note my weekly office hours
  - Tuesdays, from 2 to 4pm
- Also note the course website (important resource for handouts etc.)
  - www.murrayrice.com/teaching.html
    - Look for the GEOG 4210 link on this page

The Course

- What you will do this semester (grade breakdown refers to 4210 only)
  - Discussion Questions (2 sets), 10% total
  - Group Project (Individual Project for 5210)
    - Proposal/Overview, 5%
    - Project Update, 5%
    - Paper, 20%
    - Presentation, 10%
  - Mid-Term Exams (2 in semester), 30% total
  - Final Exam (May 7, 10:30am), 20%

The Course

- Discussion questions will be marked on a 10 point scale, ranging from
  - 1: well, at least you handed something in
  - 6: some relevant observations, but mostly trivial and/or poorly written
  - 8: some good thoughts and some skill at communication
  - 10: the best of the best, innovative thinking plus superb writing

The Course

- Discussion questions are only due a couple of times during the semester (4210)
- However, your course package lists questions to consider for most weeks of the course
- **First DQ (not graded, consider for next class):**
  - Pages 6-8 of your reading for this week
  - Summarize a few approaches (or ways of thinking) about urban geography
  - Which approach makes the most sense to you?
The Course

- **Term Project**: a group project (4210)
  - Selecting which group you're in, and who is in your group, is very important
  - Ideally, groups should be 2-3 people
  - **Task**: produce a written report and an oral presentation that will be delivered in class in April

The Course

- **Term Project**: a couple of general topic ideas
  1. **it could be about a specific urban place**: an overview of the history, development, economy, society, and challenges associated with a city of interest to your group
  2. **it could be about a specific issue connected to many cities**: outline a topic of importance to cities and what that topic means for the future of cities
  - Consider the topics on our course schedule as a starting point: land use, transportation, urban planning, development and cities, …
  - Don’t just name an issue and describe: **address a specific problem**

The Course

- **Term Project**: a word about the “problem” orientation I have been mentioning
  - My handout “Research Question Thoughts” gives some very specific ideas and guidelines for how you need to focus your project
  - This handout applies to both of the project options I just described

The Course

- A project proposal is due at the end of week 6 (Feb 21), so it would be a good idea to start thinking about your group (4210) and topic sometime soon
- I want your group to **divide the workload as evenly as possible**: if you have issues with this later in the semester, come see me

The Course

- See a couple of additional handouts that aim to give you an idea of what my expectations are for you this semester
  - “Student Agreement”
  - “Expectations for Anything You Write for This Class”
The Course

Your textbook: note that we’re using the 3rd edition

One note on the attendance policy for this class (see your syllabus)
- I will not take attendance in this course on a regular basis (I understand if occasionally you cannot make it to class)
- However, persistent non-attendance may result in your being withdrawn from the course with a grade of WF

Now: get to know each other
- Primary purpose: start to form groups and think about possible project topics
- Suggested discussion questions as you meet your classmates
  - What’s your background? (where are you from, what’s your major, career goals)
  - Why are you in this class?
  - What do you find interesting about cities?

Why Study Urban Geography?

A knowledge of urban geography is important if we are to understand our changing world
- Q: Who needs to understand the world today, and why?

Governments need to understand cities so they can serve their populations better
- Public services (health, education)
- Infrastructure (roads, mass transit, utilities)
- Development (business growth and regulation, among other development measures)
- Urban planning (what's the best way for the city to grow and develop in terms of its geographic layout)
One Issue: Suburbanization and Sprawl

Chandler, AZ (Suburban Phoenix)

Chandler, AZ in 1989

Chandler, AZ in 2009

Why Study Urban Geography?

- Businesses need to understand cities so they can compete effectively
- Understand their markets (where are their customers, what are their characteristics)
- Understand their competition (where are they, what are their advantages/disadvantages)
- Identify good business locations (which city should they be in, and where in the city should they go: suburbs vs. downtown?)
Why Study Urban Geography?

- Ordinary citizens need to understand cities so they can make good decisions about their lives
  - Where is the best place to live?
  - Where is the best place to go to school?
  - What issues will have an impact on life in the city over the next few years?
  - Will some cities be better places to live than others?

Why Study Urban Geography?

- Bottom line: many different kinds of people and organizations are interested in cities and urban geography
  - Because of that, you can be certain that there are many viewpoints on the key issues impacting cities
  - Different viewpoints arising from the many different reasons people have for being interested in the city

Recall the DQ mentioned in our first class: approaches to “urban geography” (pp. 6-8)

- Spatial description
- Spatial analysis/positivist
- Behavioralist
- Humanist
- Structuralist
- Feminist
- Structure-agency

What do you take out of this discussion?
Why Study Urban Geography?

Q: What did you think of these approaches?
- Any particular approach or perspective on the study of urban geography that lines up the best with your own views/interests?
- Any observations about any of the other perspectives you didn’t select?

Why Study Urban Geography?

Urban Geography needs to be studied (great effort expended) because it is:
- 1. complex (many interrelated issues)
- 2. changing quickly
- 3. important to the future of people around the world

Why Study Urban Geography?

Key facts about urban geography today
- 1. urban populations are growing worldwide

Why Study Urban Geography?

Cities like New York have been big for a long time, and continue to grow modestly

Cities like Shanghai are experiencing much higher rates of urban expansion
Example: this part of Shanghai was farmland in 1990.

Why Study Urban Geography?

Key facts about urban geography today:

2. The developed world is already highly urbanized.

3. The developing world is urbanizing extremely rapidly.

Growth in Urbanization

Q: What changes do you see happening in these lists? Can you summarize?
Why Study Urban Geography?

- Key facts about urban geography today
  - 4. cities worldwide depend on each other for continued existence and growth (forming complex national and global urban systems)

Spain’s Urban System

US Urban System

World Urban System

- Each world region has some unique challenges (and opportunities) for its cities
  - Developing world: how do they keep up with the massive natural increase and incoming migration that is propelling their city growth?
  - Overurbanization: key problem in developing world – literally too much city compared to the economic prospects of the area
  - Opportunity: developing world cities are being built now, so how can they be built best?

- Here is an animated map of flights worldwide over a 24-hour period that highlights how interconnected our world cities really are
- On the world map in this video, each yellow dot is an individual flight
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yX7_yzypm5w

What do you see in the video? Any observations about the patterns you see?
Why Study Urban Geography?
- Each world region has some unique challenges (and opportunities) for its cities
  - Developed world:
    - 1. What do we need to do to ensure that our cities stay well-positioned for prosperity within the national and global urban systems?
    - What mix of businesses and planning/development strategies will make our cities attractive as places to live and work?
    - A related concept: the long-term evolution of economies

Long Waves in Economic Development
Q: Why should the planners and leaders of urban regions care about this kind of an idea?
The economy advances by developing new technologies to replace aging, older ones

Why Study Urban Geography?
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  - Developed world:
    - 1. What do we need to do to ensure that our cities stay well-positioned for prosperity within the national and global urban systems?
    - Economic change is only one important kind of change that urban leaders need to consider
    - Also see the textbook’s discussion of other kinds of change that are important to cities (pages 9-14): demographic, political, cultural, etc.

Why Study Urban Geography?
- A good example of this kind of initiative is rail land redevelopment in downtown Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

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Why Study Urban Geography?

Such redevelopments provide at least three benefits to any city:
1. Revitalize core areas (many downtowns are "ghost towns" after business hours)
2. Economically efficient (society doesn’t have to extend utility lines and other services to far-flung suburbs)
3. Environmentally responsible (using land that is already urban; not developing rural land on the urban fringe)

Summing Up

Urban Geography is an area of research and theory-building that can provide urban leaders with the ideas they need to make good plans for the future. We will develop our study of urban geography methodically through our three focus areas:
1. Historical development of cities
2. The urban form of the modern city
3. Planning and development of urban areas

In the time remaining, take this opportunity to meet with your project group and to ask me any questions you may have about the course or the project.