Comparative Urban Geography of Very Big Cities  
GEOG 383.32/785.96  
Summer 2010  Mon/Weds  
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A. Objective

This class will investigate the hypothesis that very big cities, like NYC, are typically quite unlike cities in their own nation and more like one another. As we evolve into a world with increasingly rapid international communication, urban innovation and change may depend on adaptations and relationships that are based on size, density and complexity rather than proximity and cultural similarity.

This class will review the literature on models of cities for their adequacy/inadequacy in explaining spatial patterns, growth and change in the very large cities of the world. Students will select a metropolitan area from among the world’s 25 largest and open lines of communication with experts and their peers in these cities as well as search for existing literature. We will compare these cities to NYC around such topics as response to topography, transportation, evolution of the CBD, in-migration, intra-urban migration, ethnicity and various planning initiatives.

B. Calendar/Attendance

The class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from June 2 through July 12, 2010 (except for the holiday on July 5.) Additionally there will be a three hour class field trip in New York City on Saturday June 25 or Sunday June 26. This will be scheduled at a time most convenient for the greatest number of students.

This class will be taught as a “round-table seminar” requiring active participation from every student at every class. Casual attendance is not tolerated.

C. Required Contacts Abroad

After selecting a “Very Big City”, students will establish email contact(s) in that city through suggestions from the instructor or other means. The contact(s) will be used to funnel particular information about that city for comparative topical discussions throughout the semester. Published and Internet reference material may also be used, but not exclusively. Another objective of the class is opening lines of communication with peers!

D. Tentative Course Outline

W. June 2  Models of Cities retrospective; Class organization  
M. June 7  Models and Globalization; Class organization  
W. June 9  Topography
M. June 14 Transportation (Boats and Rail)
W. June 16 Transportation (Blvds, Xways and Metros)
M. June 21 Demography (Migration; Ethnicity); Class organization
W. June 23 Demography (Class, Density, Health and Age Issues)
Sat. June 26 or Sun. June 27 3 hour field trip in NYC stressing VERY BIG features
M. June 29 Economic Issues (Movement of CBD and Industry); Political Issues
W. June 30 Planning Issues (Zoning, Redevelopment, Preservation)
W. July 7 Student Presentations
M. July 12 Student Presentations

E. Grades

Grading for this class is based on two forms of class participation.

1. 50% on oral participation and contributory notes relating to issues covered in classes from June 9 through June 30. The instructor will provide guidelines or questions to answer for each class.

2. 50% on oral/written/graphic topical presentations on July 7 and July 12. Each student will be assigned to work on two presentations in conjunction with another student. (There will be choices. Same pairings are not likely.) The presentations will focus on a comparative look at each issue based on contributions from the separate cities.

F. Readings

There is no text. Background readings for the discussion at the first two sessions are assigned as follows: (a few more reference readings may be added later in the class) Readings will be available on line or scanned into a Black Board format for the class.

G. Retrospective readings discussion (Session 1)

In order of priority:

Maurice Yeates and Barry Garner, The North American City Ch 9 (part) pp 241-261

Stanley Brunn et al. Cities of the World, 1993. Parts of chapters Ch 1 pp 1-12; Ch 6 pp 224-240; Ch 9 350-365; Ch 11 pp 430-443 (N.B. This book is also on reserve at the Hunter Library)

Arnold Toynbee, *Cities on the Move*, 1970. Ch. 3  pp 67-78

Ray Northam, 1975, *Urban Geography*, Ch. 3  pp 23-50

T. G. McGee, 1967, *The Southeast Asian City*, Ch. 4  52-75


**H. Globalization readings discussion (Session 2)**

*In order of priority*

R. D. Kaplan 1999  *Could This Be the New World? N. Y. Times*  27 December  (on line)  

Jean Gottman  1961  *Megalopolis*  Ch. 15  pp. 770-782


David Harvey  1973  *Social Justice and the City*  Ch. 7 (part)  pp. 302-314

Arnold Toynbee  1970  *Cities on the Move*  Ch. 10  pp 195-247

Lewis Mumford  1963  *The Automobile and the City*  Ch 22  pp 244-256

**I. Hunter College Policy on Academic Honesty**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. Plagiarism, dishonesty, or cheating in any portion of the work required for this course will be punished to the full extent allowed according to Hunter College regulations.