Course Description

Several decades of deindustrialization and suburbanization during the mid- to late-twentieth century have left many of America’s urban areas in dire straits. The loss of jobs and residents has depleted the tax base and forced local officials to cut back on public services, thus causing a further decline in the quality of life. Social and economic problems have proliferated.

Yet the news is not entirely bleak for the nation’s urban centers. Some cities, both large and small, have responded to debilitating societal trends by implementing public policies that have made their cities more attractive places to live, work, and play. At the same time, other cities have continued to struggle. This course attempts to learn from the recent experiences of various cities in order to identify effective strategies for urban revitalization. We will examine policy initiatives in the key areas of economic development, housing and community development, education, law enforcement, transportation, sustainable development, and recreation to assess what works and what does not work. The course concludes by speculating on the future prospects of American cities.

Course Requirements

Field Trips to Philadelphia
  Center City (Saturday, February 10)
  West Philadelphia (March 24 or 25)
  no grade

Class Participation 30%
First take-home exam 20%
Second take-home exam 20%
Final exam 30%

Note: Exams submitted after the assigned due date will be penalized by one third of a grade (e.g. B+ to B) each day they are late.

Readings

William W. Goldsmith, Saving Our Cities: A Progressive Plan to Transform Urban America (Cornell University Press 2016)


All other assigned readings will be available on Moodle.
Newspaper Reading

Our academic analysis of public policies designed to revitalize American cities will be enhanced if we simultaneously follow the reporting of relevant news in the media. To that end, students are expected to read at least one daily newspaper such as The Philadelphia Inquirer, The New York Times, The Washington Post, or The Wall Street Journal on a regular basis and be able to draw upon material in these newspapers in class discussions. More specifically, you should choose one policy issue that is of particular interest to you and assemble, over the course of the semester, a portfolio of five to ten articles pertaining to that issue. Each student will make a brief presentation to the class (about 5 minutes) highlighting some aspect of the policy issue that you feel is most interesting and germane to the class; your presentation will be given during the week of the semester in which your policy issue is most relevant.

Journals and Web Sites

In addition to monitoring newspaper reporting about urban policy, you should acquaint yourself with some of the major scholarly journals that focus on the condition of cities: Urban Affairs Review, Journal of Urban Affairs, Housing Policy Debate, Economic Development Quarterly and Journal of the American Planning Association. Other useful magazines are targeted to urban practitioners and policy makers such as Governing and Planning. All of these publications will be helpful in preparing your research paper.

An abundance of web sites related to urban policy might also be worth consulting. Prominent ones include:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (http://www.hud.gov) and (http://www.huduser.org)
U.S. Census Bureau (www.census.gov)
Brookings Institution: Metropolitan Policy Program (www.brookings.edu/about/programs/metro/)
Planetizen (www.planetizen.com)
The Cyberhood (www.thecyberhood.net)
Shelterforce (www.shelterforce.org)
National Urban League (www.nul.iamempowered.com)
Economic Policy Institute (www.epi.org)
National Housing Institute (http://www.nhi.org)
International City/County Management Association (www.icma.org)
American Planning Association (www.planning.org)
National Civic League (www.ncl.org)
Right to the City.Org (www.righttothecity.org)
Poverty & Race Research Action Council (www.prrac.org)
PICO National Network (www.piconetwork.org)
Urban Institute (www.urban.org)
The Atlantic: CityLab (www.citylab.com)
National Coalition for the Homeless (www.nationalhomeless.org)
National Low Income Housing Coalition (www.nlihc.org)
Topics and Readings

Week 1

I. Introduction to Course

II. The Urban Context

Edward Glaeser, “Introduction: Our Urban Species” in *Triumph of the City*
Michael B. Katz, “What Is an American City?” in *Why Don’t American Cities Burn?*
William W. Goldsmith, Ch. 1: “Cities as Political Targets” and Ch. 2: “Cities as Budget-Cutting Targets” in *Saving Our Cities*

III. Economic Development

Week 2

A. Overview of Urban Redevelopment

Susan S. Fainstein, “Redevelopment Planning and Distributive Justice in the American Metropolis” in *Justice and the American Metropolis*, eds. Clarissa Rile Hayward and Todd Swanstrom
Jane Jacobs, “Introduction,” *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

B. Downtown


Week 3

C. Downtown (continued)

1. Uneven Development

Douglas Rae, “Two Cheers for Very Unequal Incomes” in *Justice and the American Metropolis*, eds. Clarissa Rile Hayward and Todd Swanstrom
2. The Creative Class and the Visiting Class

Costas Spirou and Dennis R. Judd, “The Legacy Projects” and “Epilogue: A City of Bread and Circuses?” in Building the City of Spectacle: Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Remaking of Chicago

FIELD TRIP TO CENTER CITY PHILADELPHIA: Saturday, February 10 (alt. date: Sunday, February 11)

Week 4

D. Neighborhoods


Week 5

E. Neighborhoods (continued)

1. Workforce and Small Business Development

Michael A. Stoll, “Workforce Development in Minority Communities” in Jobs and Economic Development in Minority Communities, eds. Paul Ong and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris

2. Alternative Strategies

Thomas H. Douthat and Nancy Green Leigh, “First Source Hiring: An Essential Tool for Linking
the Poor to Employment or a ‘Dead Letter’ Progressive Policy?” Urban Affairs Review, November 2017

FIRST TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

IV. Housing and Community Development

Week 6
A. Responding to Concentrated Poverty

Robert J. Chaskin and Mark L. Joseph, Chs. 1-5 in Integrating the Inner City

Week 7
B. Responding to Concentrated Poverty

Robert J. Chaskin and Mark L. Joseph, Chs. 6-9 in Integrating the Inner City

C. Community Development


Week 8

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

D. Neighborhood Revitalization and Gentrification

Lance Freeman, “There Goes the ‘Hood” in There Goes the ‘Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up
Film in class: “Class Divide”
V. Education

Week 10

William W. Goldsmith, Ch. 3: “Troubled City Schools” in Saving Our Cities

SECOND TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE

Week 11

A. Charter Schools

Elizabeth Green, “The Charter School Crusader,” Atlantic Monthly, January/February 2018
William W. Goldsmith, Ch. 4: “Options for City Schools” in Saving Our Cities
Film in class: “Tested”

Week 12

VI. Law Enforcement

A. Punitive Policing

William W. Goldsmith, Ch. 6: “Drugs, Prisons, and Neighborhoods” in Saving Our Cities

B. Race and the Carceral State


Week 13

C. Police Brutality

VII. Transportation

David Dayen, “The Great Los Angeles Revolt Against Cars,” *American Prospect*, Summer 2017
Jonathan Mahler, “The Case for the Subway: It Built the City and the City Must Rebuild It to Survive,” *New York Times Magazine*, January 7, 2018

Week 14

VIII. Parks, Recreation, and Ecology

Christopher G. Boone and Ali Modarres, “Green Spaces, Green Governance, and Planning” in *City and Environment*
William W. Goldsmith, Ch. 5: “The Paradox of Plenty” in *Saving Our Cities*
Kameshwari Pothukuchi, “‘To Allow Farming Is to Give Up on the City’: Political Anxieties Related to the Disposition of Vacant Land for Urban Agriculture in Detroit,” *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 39 (8), 2017

Week 15

IX. The Future of Cities


**FINAL EXAM DUE AT END OF EXAM PERIOD**