



Vancouver. Downtown peninsula, looking West, June 2008 (Elvin Wyly).

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Geography 350:
Introduction to Urban Geography**

Department of Geography
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Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2

Geography 350: An Introduction to Urban Geography

September-December 2012, 3 credits

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-5:00, Geography Room 200

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Course Web Page: <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/g350.html>

Short course description: City systems and theories of urban location; internal spatial structure of the city; commercial and industrial location; social areas; neighbourhood and land use change; urban trends and public policy.

A bit more detail: We live in a rapidly urbanizing world: half of the world's population now lives in cities, and all trends point to the rise of scores of multi-million "megacities" and a dramatic increase in urban populations across Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The roster of urban regions with more than twenty million inhabitants now includes Tokyo-Yokohama, Seoul,

Mexico City, New York, Mumbai (Bombay), Delhi, and Sao Paulo.¹ In China, ten million people move to existing cities each year, while the government plans to build more than 300 entirely new cities. China's rapid urbanization will continue for a generation or more: only 41 percent of the population currently lives in cities -- half the urban share of the United Kingdom, Brazil, the United States, and Canada.² On a recent visit to India, UBC President Stephen Toope met with China's Minister of Human Resources, who told him that the current pace of economic expansion would require the creation of about 800 new universities over the next decade -- each with 60,000 students or more. "That is 800 new UBCs with 48 million new student spaces," Toope reflects, in a rapidly developing and urbanizing society where the ambition is "breathtaking ... and ... the striving, the competitiveness, is insistent."³

The world's fastest-growing city -- Lagos, Nigeria -- is expected to double its population within the next five years, to more than 22 million.⁴ Meanwhile, urbanization has nearly leveled off across most of Western Europe and North America, where the modern era of industrialization first created fully urbanized societies more than a century ago. In some cases, urbanization seems to have slipped into reverse. In 1950, the population of Detroit, Michigan topped 1.8 million; decline set in during the 1950s, however, and has continued ever since. Now the city is down to 912 thousand, and loses almost five thousand people every year -- even as the broader metropolitan region, with its ring of wealthy and middle-class suburbs surrounding the distressed central city, continues to grow at a modest pace.⁵

Cities highlight the best and worst of everything. They also reveal the most remarkable contradictions of our time. Globalization blurs the old borders of nation-states with transnational flows of money, people, goods and ideas. Yet urban centers are becoming *more* important in the face of globalization, either as control points in complex networks of capital investment and trade, or as meeting-points for upwardly-mobile immigrants, destitute refugees, footloose investors, maverick entrepreneurs, and tourists in search of a good time. Dot-com moguls and venture capitalists travel between Toronto, New York, London, Tokyo, Silicon Valley, and Las Vegas to attend lavish conferences celebrating technologies that hold out the promise of eliminating the hassle of traveling to expensive, congested cities (like Toronto, New York, London, Tokyo ...) for face-to-face meetings. Meanwhile, central bankers and trade ministers travel from city to city to meet in fortified hotels to discuss the need for open borders for free trade and investment, while on the other side of the barricades alliances of activists march in the streets to protest corporate power, the destruction of labor rights, and environmental degradation. So now any city that hosts international trade meetings must also host armadas of police, intelligence, and security officials who keep watchful eyes and comprehensive files on the protests and the protesters.⁶

¹ Mitchell Beazley (2008). *Snapshot*. London: Octopus Publishing Group, p. 35.

² Beazley, *Snapshot*, p. 32, 34, 36.

³ Stephen Toope (2010). "There's No Room for Complacency in Today's World." *The Vancouver Sun*, Op/Ed, June 12, p. C5.

⁴ Beazley, *Snapshot*, p. 34.

⁵ U.S. Bureau of the Census (2009). *American Factfinder*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, available at <http://factfinder.census.gov>; also Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (2002). Historical Population 1990-2000 by Minor Civil Division. Detroit: SEMCOG.

⁶ See, for example, Eric Lichtblau (2003). "F.B.I. Scrutinizes Antiwar Rallies." *New York Times*, November 23, A1, A18. See also some of the press coverage of the June 2010 G8 and G20 conferences in Toronto: United Press

How do we make sense of this dizzying blur of city stories? This course provides an introduction to theories of urban processes and urban change. We begin with theories of the origin, growth, and development of cities, and then we study their contemporary economic functions, spatial structure, and socio-cultural characteristics. We then turn to several current urban debates and public policy controversies. Throughout the course, we will examine the interplay between established or ‘classical’ theories of the city, and new efforts to understand new processes, new problems, and new opportunities. Most current issues have an explicitly urban dimension; many debates are impossible to comprehend without some appreciation of basic urban theory.

Schedule

Below is a general schedule of topics. Further details and updates are at

<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/u200.html#schedule>

Course Introduction

An Introduction to Vancouver (optional walking tour)

How Geographers Approach the City

Urban Origins and Historical Processes of Urbanization

Cities of the European Renaissance

The Industrial City

Detroit Case Study: “I Do Mind Dying”

Theories of Urban System Development

Recent Changes in the Canadian Urban System

Canadian-U.S. Contrasts: Looking for the “North American City”

Analyzing and Interpreting Metropolitan Economies

Model to Plan to Market: State-Socialist and Post-Socialist Urban Systems

Urbanization in the Global South

Globalization and World Cities

The City as a Real-Estate Growth Machine

Housing Markets and Neighborhood Change

Social Area Analysis: Classical and Contemporary

Race, Housing, and Discourse: The Urban “Underclass”

Gentrification

Homelessness



Hong Kong, Central, with Bank of China building in center and lower left, March 2010 (Elvin Wyly). "...the Bank of China engaged I.M. Pei -- a native of China whose father was himself a prominent banker -- to design a new seventy-floor tower on Garden Road behind the old building. It was completed in 1989 and opened for business in 1990. At 1,209 feet (including its two masts) it was the tallest building in Hong Kong and in all of Asia until the Central Plaza building in Causeway Bay was completed in 1992. ... Its reflective glass on the back side is said to hold the image of Government House (the official abode of the governor) in captivity. In the 1990s, as the handover of Hong Kong loomed, the political symbolism of this Chinese bank towering over [the] bastions of British colonial power was hard to miss." Loe Ou-fan Lee (2008). *City Between Worlds: My Hong Kong*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 47-48.

City Rules. Kowloon Park, Hong Kong, February 2010 (Elvin Wyly).

The rest of this syllabus specifies various policies and procedures. I am very sorry for all the detailed regulations: if rules are rabbits, UBC is a bunny farm. The University has numerous policies and procedures, and one requires instructors to provide as much information as possible on the policies and procedures used in a course. So, on the following pages you'll find the City Rules used in this course.



Textbook

I strongly recommend that you acquire one of the texts listed below. They are both excellent books, but they are also very different. Knox and McCarthy is a comprehensive, sophisticated and wide-ranging overview of the entire field of urban geography -- but with no attention to Canada. Bunting, Filion, and Walker offer in-depth analysis of Canadian cities -- but the book is an edited collection of chapters by different authors, rather than a traditional textbook with a consistent viewpoint from start to finish.

Paul Knox and Linda McCarthy (2012). *Urbanization: An Introduction to Urban Geography, Third Edition*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. ISBN-10: 0321736435. ISBN-13: 9780321736437.

Trudi Bunting, Pierre Filion, and Ryan Walker, editors (2010). *Canadian Cities in Transition: New Directions in the Twenty-First Century, Fourth Edition*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada. ISBN-13: 9780195431254.

Textbook purchase is *recommended*, not mandatory.

Evaluation and Marks

Course marks are based on three items:

1. Mid-term examination (multiple choice)	20 percent
2. Independent written project I (approx. 2,500 words)	40 percent
3. Final examination (multiple choice and essay)	40 percent

Deadlines

1. Mid-term examination: Tuesday, October 2, in class.
2. Project Submission Date: Tuesday, October 23, in class.
3. Project Submission Date: Tuesday, November 13, in class.
4. Final examination: December examination period. All projects not previously submitted should be submitted in person at the examination.

Projects must be submitted in person, typed on standard letter-sized paper. Revised and resubmitted projects must be delivered in person at the final examination, including the first version with TA comments as well as the new, revised version.

Mid-term. There are no alternate times for the mid-term except in documented cases of emergency or other provisions specified in University policy. If you miss the exam, then submit an additional written project.

Final. The final course examination date announced by the University is firm and non-negotiable. Instructors are required to submit final course marks promptly after the examination, and instructors do not have authority to grant standing deferred. If you find yourself in impossible circumstances when the final arrives, talk to one of the dedicated professionals in your Faculty advising office. They have the authority grant standing deferred.

University policy allows for make-up final examinations in the case of documented schedule conflicts -- but since University policy also mandates speedy grade submissions, this means that makeup final examinations can only be scheduled earlier than the regular announced exam.

Projects. Part of the course mark involves independent written work. You can choose almost any topic you'd like, but detailed guidance and recommendations are currently available for five options: one involves an analysis of the changing occupational and/or industrial structure of a metropolitan area; one allows you to study population gains and losses among Canada's largest cities and smaller urban centers; one gives you an opportunity to study the connections between global cities; one allows you to compare and contrast urban conditions in Canada and the United States; and another gives you a chance to investigate the changing neighborhood patterns of social conditions in Vancouver neighborhoods. Guidelines for the projects will be discussed in class.

Please read the general guidelines on written projects, at
<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/guidelines.html>

The written project submission dates are optional but firm. If you'd like comments on the strengths and weaknesses of your thinking and writing, we're happy to provide detailed feedback and suggestions -- but only for those who meet the specified deadlines. Our Teaching Assistant will provide detailed comments on projects submitted on time, and the marked papers will be returned within one week. There is no penalty for submitting projects late. Submissions will be accepted any time until the course final examination. But late submissions will be graded late, with only a numerical score -- no detailed comments.

For essays submitted on time in one of the in-class deadlines, if you are not satisfied with your mark, you may **revise and resubmit**⁷ your essay at the course final examination for a second review. Scholarship is a process, and it's also a conversation. The detailed comments provided by the TA on your first submission offer you the opportunity to revise your work -- to re-read scholarly sources to gain a better understanding of key issues, to re-think your analyses and interpretations, or to improve your writing skills. Our Teaching Assistant reads and marks all first submissions; I read and mark all re-submissions. If you re-submit a project, your mark will be the highest score of your first and revised submissions. If you choose to revise and resubmit, **you must include the marked copy of your first submission when you turn in your revision, in person, typed on standard letter-sized paper, at the beginning of the final examination. Staple the first submission behind your revised, new submission.**

⁷ Please do not overlook the first part of the phrase. In previous years, some students just re-submitted papers, without making any changes whatsoever, in the hopes that I would be an easier mark than the T.A. This is not a good idea. *Revise* your paper, considering the T.A.'s comments, questions, and recommendations. Teaching, learning, and scholarship can all be understood as forms of *conversation*.

Other Policies and Procedures

Here are some of the other specific policies the University encourages on course outlines. Regular attendance is expected. Do not make travel arrangements for December until the final examination schedule is announced by the University. The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disabilities Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let the instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated. Please review the UBC Calendar “Academic regulations” for the university policies on academic dishonesty, and visit www.arts.ubc.ca for useful information on correct documentation and avoiding plagiarism. Violations of academic integrity will result in severe sanctions.

Now let’s translate this bureaucratese. *My job* is play a small role in expanding your education in the Arts, by showing you a bit of the scope and significance of the interdisciplinary field of urban studies, and by inspiring and revealing the brilliant urbanist that can be found deep in your soul. *Your job* is to help me to do my job. Please do your best to get to class on time, and if you’re late, come in quietly through the back door. Please turn off any disruptive technological distractions. I love it when my lectures are interrupted by interesting questions from real, live human beings -- but I’m not so thrilled about all the electronic beeps and rings that are constantly invading our lives. To cut through our information-saturated environment, I ask for your most valuable possession: your attention. Please come to class, and pay attention in a thoroughly low-tech, non-distance-education way. UBC is not an on-line university.⁸ I will make a number of materials available on the course web site, but please do *not* regard these as substitutes for attendance. The best way to know what happened in class is to be there. The second-best way is to ask someone you know, and whose judgment you respect, who was there.⁹

Welcome to Urban Geography!

I think that’s all the detailed rules and regulations. If you’ve read this far, I am truly very sorry for all the bureaucratic and legalistic stuff. Really, honest, I am an easygoing person, and I just love urban stuff and hope to get you excited about it too. Urban geography is fascinating and engaging, and this class is pretty easy if we all do our jobs properly. The syllabus has become so detailed and strident because, over the years, stressed-out students have asked ever more detailed

⁸ Yet. Cf. <http://www.phoenix.edu>. The Vancouver division, established in 1998, is their first international campus. Their combination of on-campus and on-line resources is called FlexNet®. My combination of in-person interaction and on-line resources is called Common Sense, but I have not yet applied for trademark protection. Stay tuned. Be forewarned, however, if the University of Phoenix succeeds with its heavy advertising budgets in convincing you to pursue your studies there. Not long ago, John Sperling, Phoenix’s chief executive, summed up their mission: “This is a corporation, not a social entity. Coming here is not a rite of passage. We are not trying to develop [students’] value systems or go in for that ‘expand their mind’ bullshit.” Quoted in Terri A. Hasseler (2006). “Fomenting Dissent on Campus.” *Academe*, May-June, 20-23, quote on p. 21.

⁹ Among the most frequently asked questions is, “Did I miss anything in last class?” or, even more curiously, “Did I miss anything *important* in last class?” Turn to your left, and introduce yourself. Turn to your right, and introduce yourself. Share contact information, and if you miss class, ask them for notes, advice, and suggestions.

questions, or devised ever more creative excuses (“...but it was on time! I was on a plane, and we crossed the International Date Line, and ...”).

One more thing: the first five minutes of every lecture are yours, if you want them. Perhaps you’ve recently visited another city, and you took a photograph of something that illustrates one of the theories and processes we’re studying in class. Perhaps you’ve stumbled across a news story that merits discussion or raises questions. Let me know before class begins, and you can take a few minutes to share interesting items with everyone in the class.