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

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Geography 350: Urban Worlds

Geography 350: Urban Worlds
September-December 2018, 3 credits
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-5:00, Geography Room 212
Elvin K. Wyly, Professor, Chair, UBC Urban Studies Coordinating Committee
Office: Geography Room 132, but also look for me in Room 126, the Urban Studies Commons
Telephone numbers: 604 682 1750 (home), 778 899 7906 (cell), email ewyly@geog.ubc.ca
Course Web Page: http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/g350.html
Office Hours: http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/office.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, 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: while the urban population share recently crossed the fifty-percent threshold, the level is only about three-fifths the urban share of the United Kingdom, Brazil, the United States, and Canada.² Several years ago, on an official visit to India, then-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 reflected, in a rapidly developing and urbanizing society where the ambition is “breathtaking,” and “the striving, the competitiveness, is insistent.”³

At one point, world’s fastest-growing city — Lagos, Nigeria — was on pace to double its population within just five years, to more than 22 million people.⁴ Meanwhile, urbanization has nearly leveled off across most of Western Europe and North America, where the modern era of industrialization created the world’s first majority-urban societies 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 673 thousand, and lost 40,982 people between April, 2010 and July, 2016 — that’s a net loss of about 546 people every month. This city, one of the greatest concentrations of middle-class upward mobility the world had ever seen, is now only slightly more than one third of the 1950 metropolis it had once been. Yet 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

“This may be the best of times to be an urban geographer. ... Never before has a critical spatial perspective been so widespread, so focused on cities and urban life, and so generative of new ideas about economics, politics, culture, and social change more generally. Today, no scholar of any stripe can afford not to be, to some degree, an urban geographer.”


² Beazley, Snapshot, p. 32, 34, 36.
⁴ Beazley, Snapshot, p. 34.
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 actually 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. Internet evangelists and venture capitalists travel between Toronto, New York, Hong Kong, Shanghai, 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, Hong Kong ...) 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

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.

Some of the themes we’ll explore in this course involve the use of a few statistical techniques: urban geography was deeply influenced by a movement called ‘the Quantitative Revolution’ that reshaped geographical methods of analysis in the 1960s and 1970s. And, even today, some basic familiarity with quantitative methods is important in an increasingly competitive job market. But don’t panic! This does not mean you’ll be required to learn all the details of matrix algebra or perform regressions by hand! In this course we focus on very simple methods, with just a tiny sampling of how to interpret the results of more complex multivariate techniques. If you’re interested in the software used to generate some of these results, it’s called SAS, and we use it extensively in another course I teach in the Spring: Geography 450, the Urban Research Studio. ⁷

As we explore the exciting dynamics of urban worlds past and present, I am deeply grateful to the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh nations, and other communities of the Coast Salish peoples. We are guests on their traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory. All of our working and learning in this region are only possible because of the kindness and generosity of generations of those who have lived here for thousands of years.

Schedule

Below is an overview of the topics we’ll explore in the course. If you’re just skimming, “reading on the prowl”⁸ to decide whether to take this course, don’t panic as you look below. Most of the

---


⁷ See http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/g450.html SAS is proprietary corporate software with a fairly high price tag, but not long ago SAS release a limited-capacity version that is entirely free. It’s called SAS University Edition. For more details, see http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/g450/sas/started.pdf

⁸ This is a phrase introduced by the linguist Naomi Baron to describe the accelerated transformation of reading into something else entirely — a kind of speedy “power browsing.” See Naomi Baron (2015). Words OnScreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World. Oxford: Oxford University Press, especially pp. 22-23. If you don’t have time to read the entire book, consider the preface: “nl;pr: (Not long; Please read),” pp. ix-xv.
“volume” of the readings is in the category labeled “recommended.” The amount of required reading is quite reasonable. For the current version of the Schedule with specific dates and other details, see

http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/g350schedule.html

Each time you visit this site, make sure you refresh your browser so that you’re reading the latest updates.

- Tuesday, the first day of classes in September. **UBC Imagine Day.** All undergraduate classes cancelled. Read the syllabus, and browse a bit of the course web page.

- Thursday. **Course Introduction.** Pacione, Chapter 1.

- Saturday: the first Saturday following our first class meeting in September. **Walking Tour of Vancouver.** Optional, but I strongly recommend you join us if you can! Meet me at the intersection of Georgia & Granville Streets, right downtown, 9:00 am. Reach me on a voice call at 778 899 7906.


- **Midterm Examination.**


- **Project Deadline 1.**


Project Deadline 2.


**Textbooks**

**Required:**


**Optional:**


**Evaluation and Marks**

Course marks are based on three items:

1. Mid-term examination (multiple choice) 20 percent
2. Independent written project (approximately 3,000 words) 40 percent
3. Final examination (multiple choice and essay) 40 percent

**Deadlines**

1. Mid-term examination: Tuesday, October 9, in class.
2. Project Submission Date 1: Thursday, October 18, in class.
3. Project Submission Date 2: Tuesday, November 6, in class.

4. Final examination: December examination period. All projects not previously submitted must be submitted in person at the examination.

Projects must be submitted in person, typed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper. You must include your name, student number, course number, and your preferred contact information on the first page. 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. E-mail submissions are only accepted in genuine cases of serious emergency.

You will note that while the course requires only one written project, there are multiple submission dates. This policy is intended to give you maximum flexibility in planning your coursework and various deadlines. Please note, however, that “maximum flexibility” means that no further extensions can be provided: all communications regarding excuses or requests for extensions will be ignored. See further information on deadlines below.
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.” Leo Ou-fan Lee (2008). *City Between Worlds: My Hong Kong.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 47-48.

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 rule 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.

**Mid-term.** There are no alternate times for the mid-term except in documented cases of emergency or other provisions specified in formal University policies and regulations. If you miss the exam without a formally approved excuse, 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 any topic related to any of the major themes of the lectures and/or readings. On various sections of the course web site you’ll find examples of papers submitted by students in previous years. For several published articles that developed out of course term papers, see


One paper idea: use the Zip et al. (2013) article as a model for how to analyze the biography and intellectual contributions of a prominent urban scholar from a previous generation to understand today’s fast-proliferating technological worlds of urban transformation. If you choose this option, you should identify a prominent urban scholar who died at least a decade ago, and read enough of their written scholarship to use their theories to analyze a major, fast-changing technological trend that is currently reshaping cities and urban life. Another paper idea: use the media analysis methods described in Silva’s article to address a contemporary urban process, political struggle, or policy debate. There’s been a dramatic methodological revolution in media analysis techniques in recent years — which perhaps make the newspaper-database used in that 2001 article look a bit dated. Still, data analytics are only as good as the theoretical framework you use to interpret the empirics. For one updated, web-based approach to mining and measuring certain kinds of media discourses, see the “Data and Methods” section, on pages 13 to 16, of

Please note: Many of the exciting readings we’ll explore in this course were written by scholars or journalists who interviewed people in various cities, and who used these interviews, conversations, and other direct interventions with urbanites in order to tell fascinating stories about the rich, complex details of life in the metropolis. Unfortunately, you are not allowed to talk to anyone or use any kind of similar social research methods for your term paper. This is because of strict UBC regulations that require any kind of research involving “human subjects” to first be approved by a formal “Behavioural Research Ethics Board” application and review process. The labor and time required for this review, which includes extensive legal and regulatory provisions on every step of the work, makes approval impossible for this course.

For other ideas and suggestions, see the “Projects” tab on the course web page. There, you’ll find guidance on recommendations for five different kinds of urban-geographical inquiry. One involves an analysis of the changing occupational and/or industrial structure of a metropolitan area. Another allows you to study population gains and losses among Canada’s largest cities and smaller urban centers. A different project involves studying the connections between globalizing cities. Then there’s one that allows you to compare and contrast urban conditions in Canada and the United States. And another option is to investigate the changing neighborhood patterns of social conditions in Vancouver neighborhoods. Additional information and recommendations on term papers will be presented in class.

You are required to follow the general guidelines on written projects, at
http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/guidelines.html

Note especially that papers without the required signed certification specified in Guideline #1 will not be read or graded; the mark will remain “0” until such time as the written certification is provided and signed.

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, you are permitted to revise and resubmit your essay for another evaluation. Scholarship is a process, and it’s also a conversation. The 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

---

10 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 should all be understood as forms of conversation.
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.

Essays must be submitted in person. E-mail submissions are only accepted in genuine cases of serious emergency.

Other Policies and Procedures

Here are some of the other specific policies the University encourages on course outlines. Regular attendance is required. 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.

Pursuant to UBC Senate requirements on Content and Distribution of Course Syllabi, please note that this course is governed by the following principles, policies, and procedures.

Students are responsible for understanding and complying with the University’s policies on Academic Honesty and Standards, described at

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0#15620
which specifies that

“Academic honesty is essential to the continued functioning of the University of British Columbia as an institution of higher learning and research. All UBC students are expected to behave as honest and responsible members of an academic community. Breach of those expectations or failure to follow the appropriate policies, principles, rules, and guidelines of the University with respect to academic honesty may result in disciplinary action.

It is the student's obligation to inform himself or herself of the applicable standards for academic honesty. Students must be aware that standards at the University of British Columbia may be different from those in secondary schools or at other institutions. If a student is in any doubt as to the standard of academic honesty in a particular course or assignment, then the student must consult with the instructor as soon as possible, and in no case should a student submit an assignment if the student is not clear on the relevant standard of academic honesty.

If an allegation is made against a student, the Registrar may place the student on academic hold until the President has made his or her final decision. When a student is placed on academic hold, the student is blocked from all activity in the Student Service Centre.”

All teaching and learning activities at the University are governed by the **Policy on Academic Freedom**, available at

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0

which specifies that

“The members of the University enjoy certain rights and privileges essential to the fulfilment of its primary functions: instruction and the pursuit of knowledge. Central among these rights is the freedom, within the law, to pursue what seems to them as fruitful avenues of inquiry, to teach and to learn unhindered by external or non-academic constraints, and to engage in full and unrestricted consideration of any opinion. This freedom extends not only to the regular members of the University, but to all who are invited to participate in its forum. Suppression of this freedom, whether by institutions of the state, the officers of the University, or the actions of private individuals, would prevent the University from carrying out its primary functions. All members of the University must recognize this fundamental principle and must share responsibility for supporting, safeguarding and preserving this central freedom. Behaviour that obstructs free and full discussion, not only of ideas that are safe and accepted, but of those which may be unpopular or even abhorrent, vitally threatens the integrity of the University's forum. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated.”
An essential element of this academic freedom involves UBC’s **Policy on Freedom from Harassment and Discrimination**, available at

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,87,0

which notes that

“The University of British Columbia is committed to ensuring that all members of the University community - students, faculty, staff, and visitors - are able to study and work in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect that is free from harassment and discrimination.”

UBC’s Policy on accommodations for students **whose responsibilities conflict with religious observances**, along with procedures for notification, is outlined at

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,48,0,0

UBC’s **Policy on Accommodation for Students with Disabilities** is available at

http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,34,0,0

and provides that

“The University of British Columbia recognizes its moral and legal duty to provide academic accommodation. The University must remove barriers and provide opportunities to students with a disability, enabling them to access university services, programs, and facilities and to be welcomed as participating members of the University community. The University's goal is to ensure fair and consistent treatment of all students, including students with a disability, in accordance with their distinct needs and in a manner consistent with academic principles.”

Students with a disability who wish to have an academic accommodation should contact Access and Diversity as soon as possible:

https://students.ubc.ca/about-student-services/access-diversity

UBC Policy No. 131 specifies that “UBC has a responsibility to maintain a respectful environment where its members can study, work, and live free from sexual misconduct.” Further details on UBC’s **Policy on Sexual Assault and Other Sexual Misconduct** are available at

https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2017/05/policy131_final.pdf

Resources for the prevention of sexual violence, and for support for survivors, is provided at UBC’s **Sexual Violence Prevention and Response** office, at
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 influential field of urban geography, and by inspiring and revealing the brilliant urbanist that can be found deep within 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 asset: 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. 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.

---

11 Yet. Compare with the digital predatory innovations of the University of Phoenix, at 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. Several years ago, John Sperling, Phoenix’s Chief Executive Officer, 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. Equating mind expansion with ‘bullshit’ is a serious threat to those values of humanity that are sometimes labeled “civilization.” See, for example, the course materials developed at the University of Washington, Seattle, by Carl T. Bergstrom and Jevin West, Calling Bullshit, available at http://callingbullshit.org. More recently, an entrepreneur whose innovations included launching a predatory, deceptive scheme given the label “University” went on to describe immigrants from Mexico as rapists and murderers, to declare global warming a hoax by the Chinese, to advocate a religious test for admission to the U.S., and to agree with the ‘shock jock’ Howard Stern that the entrepreneur’s own daughter was “a piece of ass.” The online reach of this entrepreneur is impressive: with more than 50 million followers, he once described himself as the “Ernest Hemingway of Twitter.” This is a reference, of course, to Donald J. Trump and Trump University, which was heavily promoted with promises that everyone could get rich from real estate by learning The Donald’s amazing business secrets. The scheme was the subject of class-action lawsuits over high-pressure sales tactics and deceptive, costly programs. Trump settled the lawsuits immediately after winning the 2016 U.S. Presidential election. See Michael Barbaro and Steve Eder (2016). “At Trump University, Students Recall Pressure to Give Positive Reviews.” New York Times, March 11; Steve Eder (2017). “Trump University Lawsuits May Not Be Settled After All.” New York Times, March 6. The point of this entire footnote? Beware the “innovations” of an online world that is becoming increasingly predatory. See also Student (2013). “The Automated Epistemology of an iParadigm Shift.” Human Geography, pre-publication distribution version at http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/g350/Student(2013a).pdf, and then see http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/Redish_Letter_2015.pdf, which deals with the evolutionary dialectical epistemological violence between the cognitive predator drone turnitin.com and human capital ponzi schemes like https://www.acemytermpaper.com

12 Among the most frequently asked questions is, “Did I miss anything in class?” or, even more curiously, “Did I miss anything important in class?” Turn to your left, and introduce yourself. Turn to your right, and introduce yourself. Share contact information, and if you miss class, ask your colleagues and friends for notes, advice, and suggestions.
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 who left things to the last minute have sent so many late-night emails asking ever more detailed and litigious questions, or devised ever more creative excuses (“...but it was on time! I was on an airline flight, 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. Come up to the front of the room before I begin the day’s lecture, and you can take a few minutes to share interesting items with everyone in the class.