



Fort Worth, Texas, July, 2007 (Elvin Wyly)¹

Term Paper Guidelines

Urban Studies 200, *Cities*, October 10, 2007

Your term paper gives you the opportunity to engage with some of the key concepts presented in this course, and to use these ideas to help you interpret urban debates or current events. Your job is to write a clear, concise, and creative essay that begins with one of the following topics:

¹ For one analysis and interpretation of the urban dimensions of these kinds of images and practices, see Elvin Wyly and Daniel J. Hammel (2005). "Mapping Neoliberal American Urbanism." In Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, eds., *Gentrification in a Global Context: The New Urban Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 18-38. An earlier version is available at <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/research/neo.pdf>

Urban origins and preindustrial cities
Contemporary urbanization and global city-systems
Community
Suburbia
Immigration in the metropolis
Race, ethnicity, and identity
Frameworks of urban governance
City political machines and community power
Terror cities and alternative urban futures
Space
Sense of place

Your essay should *begin* with one of these topics, but you should take it in a clear, focused direction.² Your work should be more than a summary of an issue. Develop a clear thesis, focused question, compelling argument, or innovative synthesis, and then set out to draw on the rich scholarship of urban studies to support your analysis. Begin by reviewing the lecture outlines for your chosen topic, and then exploring the footnoted sources, the relevant sections of the textbook, and the suggestions for further reading. Formulate a preliminary thesis statement to guide your reading, writing, and thinking. Then continue tracking down scholarly books and articles, and perhaps a few newspaper articles and other related materials, as you revise or refine your thesis statement and analysis.

If you have a hard time formulating a thesis statement, you may find it helpful to consider one or more of these approaches:

The case study: The scholarly literature provides a theoretical explanation for a particular process, but misses relevant details that influence how a *general* process is shaped by local urban *context*. Your essay draws on newspaper coverage or similar sources to show how theories presented in scholarly books or journals are modified in a particular urban setting.

The anomaly: Theory, history, or previous empirical studies lead us to expect a particular result. You have found a case that does not fit the norm, and your essay offers an explanation.

The telling metaphor: A turn of phrase is used to suggest insightful new connections between phenomena that are not usually examined together. Your essay provides an extended and critical consideration of the metaphor, its value, and its limitations or dangers.

The logical next step: A body of literature has established a step-by-step progression in a particular theoretical or empirical direction. You accept the premises of this literature, and your essay describes the next logical step.

² The topics listed above are intended to be fairly broad, giving you considerable room to maneuver. Moreover, you may find a few overlapping domains in your research and writing: an essay on the contemporary dynamics of immigration in the metropolis, for example, might very well relate to shifts in race, ethnicity, and identity, as well as new growth-machine processes. This list should not be viewed as a straightjacket, then, but as a way to focus your inquiry. If you have questions about a potential topic, speak with your Teaching Assistant.

The hypothesis test: A particular theory X has been verified or falsified by other investigators, but has never been tested under Y circumstances; your essay describes how the hypothesis should be tested under these new conditions.

The comparison: Two cities share similar attributes, but diverge in specific ways; your essay provides a comparison to account for the divergence.

The critique of the literature: There is a gap in the literature, and your essay offers a plea for how it should be filled. Gaps can take the form of errors of omission (nobody has considered a certain theoretical connection) or commission (many have accepted a theoretical premise, but they've been misguided by certain unquestioned assumptions or flawed logic).

The hot topic: A sudden groundswell of interest or debate has emerged, but the area of research is so new that there is no broad consensus; you propose to make your contribution to the debate, or to how consensus might be achieved.

Submission Requirements

1. Please type and proof-read your essay.
2. Please type your name and your Teaching Assistant's name in the upper-right hand corner of the first page.
3. Include specific citations for information and ideas that are not your own.³ Construct your thesis and analysis by reading and then citing scholarly, academic sources.⁴ Your paper should make reference to at least a half-dozen academic sources.⁵ Use as many non-academic sources as you'd like (newspaper articles, magazine features, etc.), but do not neglect the academic sources. Do not rely solely on internet-based sources: doing so conveys the impression that you've never been to the library, that you've left the paper to the very last minute, or both.

³ Citation helps to a) tell a reader where your inquiry has led you, b) demonstrate that the points you're making are backed up by solid research and the credibility of the recognized experts you're citing, c) give appropriate credit to those whose work has helped you in your own efforts, and d) provide a starting point for anyone who might want to retrace your steps to learn about your chosen topic. You can use any relevant citation style, but be consistent. Howard S. Becker (1998). *Tricks of the Trade: How to Think About Your Research While You're Doing It*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chuck Zerby (2002). *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*. New York: Touchstone. A sample citation for an electronic resource is: Michael Santos (2004). "Race in the Anti-Society." *Alternet*, posted on September 27. Available at <http://www.alternet.org/story/19995>, last accessed October 10, 2007. Use your good judgment on how much detail to provide for internet-based citations. Since part of the purpose of a citation is to provide *useful* information and guidance, it is usually not a good idea to cut and paste those addresses that run on forever. Who wants to try to type in an address like "http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F40615F93D5F0C728CDDA80894D9484D81"? Instead, I would simply cite this particular piece as *New York Times* (1981). "Amid the Gaiety of Times Square, a Brief Tribute to the Hostages." *New York Times*, January 1, p. 23, available at <http://www.nytimes.com>, last accessed October 10, 2007.

⁴ Please see page 6 of the course outline. Scholarly, academic sources include books distributed by major, reputable university presses and other publishers, as well as articles appearing in prominent scholarly journals. See the course web page for a partial list of prominent journals in urban studies.

⁵ This is not an absolute rule. It is possible to prepare outstanding essays that have fewer citations, but doing so requires careful, in-depth engagement with the smaller number of sources.

4. The main body of your text should be approximately 1,500 words. Illustrations, tables, and footnotes/endnotes are not counted in this word limit. If you do choose to include illustrations, tables, or similar materials, be sure you provide full source information.
5. If you want feedback on your essay, submit your term paper in class, in person, typed on standard letter-sized paper, at the beginning of class on November 15. Do not submit by e-mail. Late submissions will be accepted anytime until the final examination, but these late arrivals will only be marked (and will not be returned with feedback).