



Sechelt, BC, August 2006 (Elvin Wyly)<sup>1</sup>

### **Preparing for the Final Examination**

Urban Studies 200 / Geography 250, November 2007

The final examination will be held on Wednesday, December 5, 2007 from noon to 2:00 pm in Geography Room 100. The examination includes two, equally-weighted components: a multiple choice section, and an essay section.

This document provides advice on preparing for the final examination. If you'd like to ask me questions about any aspects of the lectures that aren't clear, feel free to stop by my office for a chat; I'm in my office most days, and it's fine if you just stop by. But I can't tell you exactly how to write the essay section of the exam, or else it wouldn't be an exam.

Marks will be submitted as soon as possible after the final examination, at which time term essays will be returned at the Geographic Information Centre, Room 112. If you miss the final examination or you have an emergency, please make arrangements with the advising office. Please note the formal dates in the University Calendar, which specify the end of Term 1. Emails with interpretations and arguments about course marks will not be answered; if for some reason there is something that I should know in evaluating the work you've done when assigning

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, I know. It's not really an *urban* image. But perhaps an August view will refresh you just a bit in these cool days of November.

final course marks, then I need to know it *before* course marks are assigned. Final course marks are final course marks, unless there is clear documentation of a record-keeping error.

## Multiple Choice Questions

To prepare for the multiple choice section of the examination, you should review your class notes and the following class outlines:

- Class and urban social stratification
- Frameworks of urban governance
- City political machines
- Community power
- Metropolitan space
- Sense of place
- Terror Cities and alternative urban futures

## Essay Questions

You'll choose one question from a list of options and write an essay that demonstrates your understanding of a particular topic. The questions are provided below, to help you think about your response. But please note that a) the essay portion of the examination officially begins when you read these questions,<sup>2</sup> and b) you cannot bring any books, notes, or outlines into the examination room.

Keep three things in mind as you prepare for the essay. First, I recommend that you choose one topic and study it in depth – go *beyond* the lecture notes to read selected items from either of the textbooks, supplemental readings, your notes from discussion section meetings, or other sources. If you begin to see interesting connections between your chosen topic and other themes explored in the course – including themes from the first half of the course – that's a good thing. Second, don't try to memorize or recite the material in the lecture notes: we've already taken care of the factual details and sharp, right/wrong distinctions in the multiple choice section of the exam. Third, emphasize *analysis* and *interpretation*, not rote learning: essays will be evaluated on the basis of analytical rigor, logic, and creativity at synthesizing knowledge, and grading criteria conform to the criteria outlined by the University and the Faculty of Arts.<sup>3</sup> What this means is that *how* you think is more important than precisely *what* you think.

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<sup>2</sup> This means that formal University regulations on examinations apply: students are not permitted to ask further questions about the examination or how to prepare essay responses.

<sup>3</sup> Specifically, students who write essays that demonstrate basic understanding of the subject matter, that show ability to develop solutions to basic problems in the material, and engage with material presented in the class lectures and outlines will earn marks in the "adequate" range. Marks in the "competent" range will go to students writing essays that demonstrate firm grasp of the subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability, a reasonable understanding of relevant issues, and engagement with material presented in the class lectures, the outlines, and relevant sections of one of the textbooks. Marks for "exceptional" performance will be assigned to students who write essays showing substantial evidence of original, rigorous thinking, good organization, a strong capacity to analyze and synthesize, a superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations, and evidence of extensive knowledge base including engagement with the class lectures, outlines, text readings, and selections from the additional course bibliography entries.

## Choices for the Final Examination Essay

Answer one of the questions below

### 1. How does class shape the city?

You're an entrepreneur, and you have recently launched a specialized tour company, complete with a small fleet of buses staffed by young, eager tour guides. Your target market includes the steady stream of scholars, policy analysts, and students who visit your city for conferences. While they're in town, they often want to get to know a bit about the place, and many are especially interested in the contrasts between its landscapes of privilege and its landscapes of despair. They're interested in looking beyond the usual tourist spots, and that's where your company has an edge, because you know a lot about urban studies.

Write a program for the tour that you would design to help visitors understand the landscapes of class inequality in your city. Since you have a team of tour guides, you'll need to write the specific words that new employees could read out over the public address system of each bus, until they memorize the material themselves. What would your tour include? (You can choose any city that you know and/or love).

### 2. City Political Machines.

Rod Mickleburgh, a columnist with the *Globe and Mail*, recently described politics in Vancouver as “a Wild West scenario, spurred on by Vancouver’s unenviable status as the only major city in Canada without a ward system. Because municipal hopefuls – even those seeking election to the quaint Vancouver Park Board – have to be elected by voters across the entire city, the only realistic way for them to get their message across is to become part of well-oiled political machines with deep pockets.”<sup>4</sup>

Mickleburgh used a common urban metaphor – the city political machine – but his short column offered no further explanation. Write a letter to the editor, explaining what it means to refer to a city political machine, and how readers should understand what Mickleburgh tried to say about city politics.

### 3. Community Power.

You worked as an unpaid volunteer on the Mayoral campaign for a well-intentioned, but somewhat naive, inexperienced, and anti-intellectual candidate in your city. (You can choose any city). Surprisingly, your candidate wins, and you manage to get a paid position on the transition team that will help the Mayor set a policy agenda. But since the Mayor doesn't read much, (s)he seemed to lose confidence right after the election, because one of the interns on the opposing candidate's campaign staff sent a nasty email with this famous quote from Paul Peterson, who wrote in *City Limits*: “It is the burden of my argument that local politics is not like national politics. On the contrary, by comparison with national politics local politics is most limited. There are crucial kinds of public policies that local governments simply cannot execute. They cannot make war or peace; they cannot issue passports or forbid outsiders from entering

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<sup>4</sup> Rod Mickleburgh (2007). “Vancouver’s Very Own Wild West Scenario.” *Globe and Mail*, November 2, p. S1.

their territory; they cannot issue currency; and they cannot control imports or erect tariff walls. ... City politics is limited politics.”

Is there any point? Write a memorandum to the Mayor, explaining what matters about city politics, to reassure your new boss that there is indeed a lot of important work to do.

#### 4. Do space or place matter?

The most prominent newspaper in your city prints an excerpt from Release 3.0 of Thomas L. Friedman’s *The World is Flat*, in which he argues that globalization and information technology are thoroughly transforming the world, bringing what Peter Hall called the ‘death of distance’ – “a world in which the traditional distance-deterrence effects, embodied in every locational model, diminish to zero and the entire world becomes a frictionless plain on which it is perfectly easy to locate any activity anywhere.”

Do space or place matter for cities and urban life? If so, how? Write an opinion piece for the newspaper, evaluating the ‘flatness’ and ‘death of distance’ metaphors that are so common today.