



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

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

Urban Studies 200, Geography 250: *Cities*

The final examination will be held on Friday, December 8, 2006 from 3:30 PM to 5:30 PM, in Geography Room 100. The examination includes two components: a multiple choice section, which must be completed in class during the examination period; and an essay section, which may be completed as a take-home or written during the examination period. This document provides advice on how to prepare for the examination, and also includes the essay questions. This document should be treated as part of a formal examination, subject to formal UBC policies and procedures; in particular, students are not permitted to ask further questions about the examination or how to prepare essay responses.

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<sup>1</sup> Yes, I know. It's not really an urban image. But with these days of snow and cold, perhaps the view might refresh you just a bit.

## Multiple Choice Questions

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

- Race, ethnicity, and identity.
- Class and urban social stratification.
- Frameworks of urban governance.
- City political machines.
- Community power.
- Metropolitan space.
- Sense of place.
- Urban economic theory.

## Essay Questions

You must choose one question (from a list of five, presented below) and write an essay that directly responds to the question. To prepare to write your essay, you should review your class notes, lecture outlines, textbook readings, and supplementary readings for one of the following topics. You cannot write your examination essay on the same topic as your term paper.

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Phillips</u>	<u>Macionis and Parillo</u>	<u>Bibliography*</u>
Race, ethnicity, and identity.	228-238	306-328	11
Class and urban social stratification.	262-278	274-300	12
City political machines.	365-378	249-264	14, 15
Space.	415-441	192-210	16, 17
Urban economic theory and trends	495-515	242-264	19, 20

\*See the course syllabus

You have two options for submitting your essay. You may complete the essay as a take-home examination, or you may choose to write your response in class during the formal examination period. If you choose the take-home option, you must conform to several requirements: Your essay may not exceed 1,200 words; it must be typed and double-spaced; it must include a precise word count at the end of the document; and it must be submitted, in hard-copy form, along with the completed multiple-choice section of your examination at the beginning of the examination period on Friday, December 8, 2006, at 3:30 PM in Geography Room 100. Take-home essays will not be accepted after 3:30 PM on Friday, December 8, 2006. Students who arrive at the examination room without a completed, typed essay response will be permitted to write their answer to an essay

question during the examination period; but students entering the examination room are not permitted to consult any notes, reference documents, or other class materials.

You are free to draw on material from all parts of the course as you prepare your essay, but you must provide a direct answer to one, and only one, of the questions. If you choose the take-home option, you are allowed to consult course materials as you prepare your essay, but you must use your own words to answer the question. Students entering the examination room are not permitted to consult any notes, reference documents, or other class materials.

Essays will be evaluated on the basis of analytical rigor, clarity, organization, breadth and depth of knowledge; so don't try to memorize, or to simply recite material from the lectures, class outlines, or course readings. Grading criteria conform to UBC's official Guidelines for Grading.<sup>2</sup>

### **Choices for the Final Examination Essay**

*Answer one, and only one, of the questions below.*

1. How does globalization affect relations of race, ethnicity, and identity in the city?

In an influential book on cities in the global economy, Saskia Sassen argues that "the city concentrates diversity ... marginalized people have come into representation and are making claims on the city." Sassen and many others believe that although global cities are unequal places, they are also spaces of possibility, where globally-concentrated racial and ethnic diversity make it possible to challenge old, entrenched stereotypes and discrimination. Others disagree. One urbanist writes, "Strongly affected by the forces of industrialism, immigration, and globalism, the city of today is more racially, ethnically, and socially diverse than ever ..." Unfortunately, the perceptions and attitudes of city-dwellers that Louis Wirth described in his famous essay, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," seem to have become more suspicious: "As the

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<sup>2</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.

urban public spaces of big cities have become more riven by issues of race, poverty, and crime, much of what Wirth described ... seems to have given way to a pervasive wariness toward strangers....”

What do you think? You are the speechwriter for the mayor of a large, diverse city that is often described as a ‘global’ city. Your mayor has been invited to give a speech to the Metropolis Conference, a high-profile meeting to discuss globalization, racial and ethnic identity, and immigration. (You can go either to Canada’s national conference, in Toronto in March 2007, or to the International Metropolis conference, in Melbourne, Australia, in October, 2007). The mayor has asked you to prepare a speech that outlines the possibilities and problems that globalization creates for racial and ethnic relations in your city. Write a speech for the mayor, choosing any large, diverse city that might reasonably be considered a ‘global’ city.

## 2. How does class shape the city?

Paul Fussell once described the reactions he got when he told people that he was writing a book about class. People would often hesitate, look away, and then “a few minutes later, they silently get up and walk away. It is not just that I am feared as a class spy. It is as if I had said, ‘I am working on a book urging the beating to death of baby whales using the dead bodies of baby seals.’”

Even if it makes some people uncomfortable, it is clear that class is a very important part of life in the city.

You are 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 don’t have very much interest in the usual tourist spots.

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).

3. What questions should the public be asking about community power and urban politics?

On October 31, 2006, Vancouver's Anti-Poverty Committee (VAPC) staged what they called the "City Hall Women's Housing Takeover" by occupying a city-owned building across from city hall and demanded that it be converted into women's emergency shelter. The police broke up the squat the next day. As reported by the CBC, spokesman David Cunningham said "We're not going to stop the struggle until the NPA implements their homeless action plan and provides decent housing for women who are otherwise forced out onto the streets. I think we will continue delivering our message through an escalating campaign and that message has been pretty persistent, and this is, we demand that the NPA implement their homeless action plan immediately." The squat came on the heels of the City's release of a "five-point proposal" for addressing Vancouver's homeless crisis and a press release put out by the Mayor's office "calling upon the Provincial government to provide emergency funding to support our most vulnerable population this winter."

Things escalated in late November, when the VAPC reportedly tried to crash a City budget consultation session. Only a day earlier, homeless women began occupying The Downtown Eastside Women's Shelter drop-in centre – a protest unconnected to the activities of VAPC – to demand a full-time shelter for homeless women. The centre's staff supported the women's occupation and the CBC reported that the centre "had no success getting money from the city." But after VAPC's "crash" of the City's budget consultation meeting, a spokeswoman for the centre publicly criticized the tactics of VAPC, and suggested that the Poverty Committee's protest tactics in this case were not helping homeless women.

You are a research assistant working for a prominent regional political commentator, who has agreed to be on a media panel on the evening news to discuss these developments. Your boss predicts that the interviewer will seize on the apparent "in-fighting" between the VAPC and the Downtown Eastside Women's Shelter, and your boss wants to change the question, so to speak. Your job is to come up with three alternative strategies to steer the discussion away from a focus on the protest tactics of the VAPC and the DTES Women's Shelter to the political wrangling between the City and the Province – because it is this latter political conflict that has received almost no media coverage. Your boss does not expect you to do any research on the behind-the-scenes politics between City Hall and the province. But, how can your boss draw on the insights of urban scholars who have studied political power to encourage the media to investigate these "behind-the-scenes" politics? You can come up with a few rhetorical questions your boss might ask the interviewer and the other panelists, but make sure

your boss has a clear understanding of the conceptual underpinnings to economic and policy approaches to the study of political power. What questions should the media – or the public – be asking?

#### 4. Does space matter anymore?

Peter Hall, one of the most influential urbanists of the last half-century, began a recent essay by noting that “You sometimes hear the argument that cities have no future at all. Some experts predict 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.” Hall disagrees with this view, but he recognizes that many prominent and powerful people do often seem to think that technology has destroyed the importance of space, and therefore has undermined the essential foundation of urbanism.

What do you think? You have been invited to give a speech to a diverse audience in a place where the future of the city is being discussed right now: New Orleans, Louisiana. Your audience includes low-income residents who have just returned to the city, city officials, local entrepreneurs, and even several architects working with Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk on various designs for the physical redevelopment of the city. Despite their many differences, all audience members share a common concern: like Peter Hall, they have heard the argument that cities have no future at all, and they are wondering whether this discussion in urban studies has any relevance for their future in New Orleans. Write a speech to a) describe the debates over space, and b) advise people on what you think these theories mean for their decisions on whether and how to rebuild the city.

#### 5. Design a “utopian” urban policy ... sans Richard Florida.

Richard Florida argues that “the rules of the economic development game have changed. Companies were the force behind the old game,” but now “people are the center of the action.” Rather than competing to try to lure businesses with the hope that people will follow, Florida argues that cities must make themselves attractive to “high human capital” people, because wherever these people go, entrepreneurial companies will follow. The emergence of the “creative class,” Florida suggests, has turned traditional urban economic theory upside down, and cities must do everything they possibly can to create entertaining, attractive urban environments to attract creative types, so that firms wishing to employ those creatives will follow, generating increased employment and tax revenues.

Florida's theories have been subjected to harsh criticism from the right and the left (see Jamie Peck's 2005 article, "Struggling with the Creative Class.") But his ideas remain wildly popular with many mayors. You are a Florida-weary city planner working in a city that has had its share of unemployment and other urban problems. Your mayor has challenged you to come up with a specific plan to enhance the city's economic base. The mayor has heard of Florida's ideas; the mayor is intrigued, but has not succumbed to what Jamie Peck has called the "neoliberal snake oil." This means that the mayor has an open mind -- certainly receptive to Florida's argument if you decide to recommend that, but also willing to consider proposals that completely reject Floridian thinking.

Your job is to write a concise policy memorandum for the mayor, outlining an urban economic development strategy. If your suggestions are to be useful for the mayor, you will need to make specific recommendations, explain how they are supported by particular bodies of urban economic theory, and draw contrasts or parallels with Floridian creative-class policies.