



**Vancouver**, June 2008 (Elvin Wyly). “As a newcomer to the city I spent a lot of time that summer walking and cycling around the city ... trying to get a feel for the city. On a tour of Granville Island and False Creek, I remember saying to David Ley that I thought Vancouver was ‘unreal, too perfect, a chocolate box city.’ I thought it resembled a ‘city on Prozac.’ It was the image of Vancouver that struck me initially, but I had much more to learn.”  
-- Loretta Lees.<sup>1</sup>

## THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



**Urban Studies 200/  
Geography 250: Cities**

**Urban Studies Program**  
#252-1984 West Mall  
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z2

### **Urban Studies 200 / Geography 250: Cities**

September-December 2012, 3 credits

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:30, Geography Room 100

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Course Web Page: <http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/u200.html>

*Short course description:* An interdisciplinary introduction to the city in the context of contemporary globalization. Analysis of urban patterns and processes from the theoretical perspectives of various disciplines and methodologies.

<sup>1</sup> Loretta Lees (2001). “Towards a Critical Geography of Architecture: The Case of an Ersatz Coliseum.” *Ecumene* 8(1), 51-86, quote from p. 57.

## Welcome to the City!

Right about now, a majority of the world's population has become urban. There are four hundred cities in the world with a population of at least one million, compared with only eighty-six in 1950. Cities will account for all of the world's population growth for at least the next half-century.<sup>2</sup> Many of the most urgent, fascinating, and frustrating questions of our time have become *urban* questions.

And yet what is the "urban"? The obvious answer is that urban issues deal with events that take place in cities. But this answer soon raises other questions. Does urban studies include suburbs, for instance? Some experts say yes, because cities and suburbs are independent parts of large metropolitan regions; others say no, because many suburbs emerge and grow because of people who actively reject life in the city.

Disciplinary perspectives also matter: the "urban" means very different things to scholars and students working in various fields. For an economist, the city might best be defined as an intricate local web of interdependent incentives and opportunities for innovation, production, consumption, income and wealth, and the unique efficiencies of spatially clustered activities. For a sociologist, the urban is constituted by the distinctive ways that individuals fit into different groups and institutions in areas shaped by dense settlement and rich, evolving configurations of socio-cultural diversity. For a political scientist, the city is structured by the interactions between elite power and pluralist forms of participation in public affairs, and by the mix of continuity and change in allegiance, alliances, and tactical maneuvers of power. For geographers, the city is a setting in which social and environmental relations work themselves out in space, even as space and place help to shape social, political, and economic relations. And there are other valuable perspectives, too -- from history, social work, public administration, planning, art, architecture, and many other fields. This multiplicity of perspectives has always been a source of amusement to those searching for simple ways to define the field. Years ago, William Alonso offered this easy recipe: "Take a physical planner, a sociologist, an economist; beat the mixture until it blends; pour and spread."<sup>3</sup>

This course is an interdisciplinary introduction to urban processes. We examine key questions about cities (and suburbs!) from the vantage point of different fields, highlighting how the questions (and answers) can be shaped by variations in method, history, philosophy, and style. We explore such topics as the history of urbanization, social relations and ideals of community, urban facets of migration and immigration, identity, social inequality, political power, and the role of space and place.

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<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Lutz, Warren Sandeson, and Sergei Scherbov (1997). "Doubling of World Population Unlikely." *Nature* 387, 803-804. Mike Davis (2004). "Planet of Slums." *New Left Review* 26, 5-34.

<sup>3</sup> William Alonso (1971). "Beyond the Inter-Disciplinary Approach to Planning." *American Institute of Planners Journal* 37, 169-173, quote on p. 169.

## 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)

Paths to Understanding the City

Disciplines, Interdisciplinarity, and Urban Studies

Social Science, Public Debate, and Urban Policy

Ancient and Preindustrial Cities

Contemporary Urbanization and Global City-Systems

Defining Urban Community

Community in the Galactic Metropolis

Suburbia

Photography in the City

Immigration

Race, Ethnicity, and Identity

Class and the City

Aboriginal Urbanization: First. Nation. City.

Space and Place

Frameworks of Urban Governance

City Political Machines

Theories of Community Power

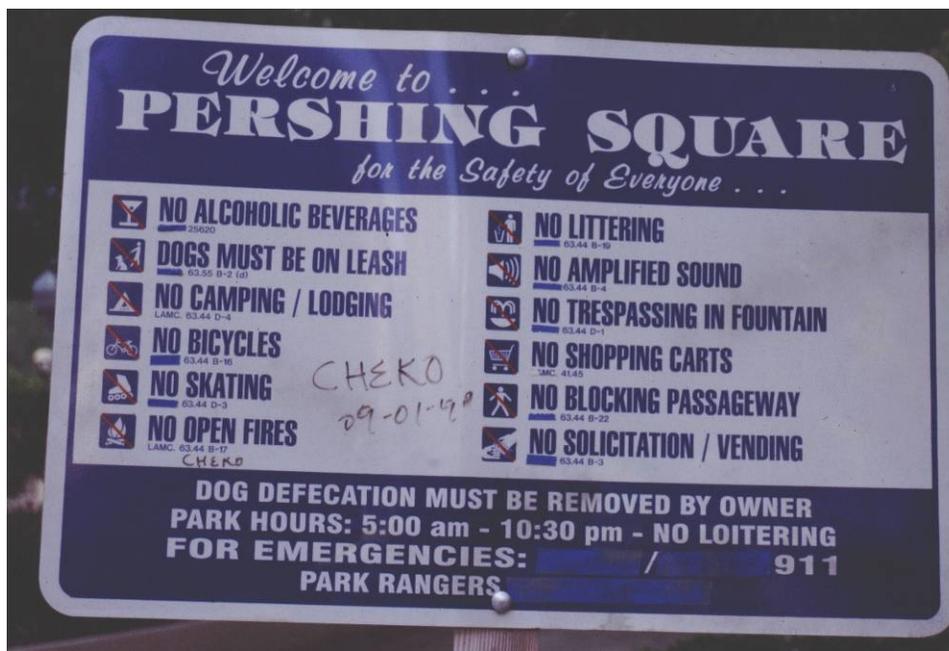
Urban Economic Theory

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.

**City Rules.** Downtown Los Angeles, May 2000 (Elvin Wyly).



## Textbook

E. Barbara Phillips (2009). *City Lights: Urban-Suburban Life in the Global Society*. Third Edition. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada.  
ISBN13: 9780195325034; ISBN10: 0195325036.

## Evaluation and Marks

Course marks are based on four items:

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

The discussion sections are intended to provide a friendly, supportive setting where you can ask questions, explore interesting topics with your colleagues, and get advice as you work on your independent project.

## 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 is a book review essay; one involves a essay on an urban photograph; one gives you an opportunity to analyze how an urban issue is presented in newspapers and other media; one involves the creation of what are called urban 'mental maps'; and one gives you an opportunity to analyze networks among urban officials with political power.

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. The Teaching Assistants will provide detailed comments on projects submitted on time, and the marked papers will be returned in approximately 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**<sup>4</sup> 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. The Teaching Assistants read and mark 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.**

### **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

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<sup>4</sup> 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*.

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](http://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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

### **Welcome to Urban Studies!**

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 studies 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 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.

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.