



**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 2014, 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 processes that involve the active rejection of urban ways of life.

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 the dense concentrations of rich, evolving configurations of humanity's 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 provisional schedule, subject to change. For the latest version, see

<http://www.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/u200schedule.html>

- Discussion sections for the week below: Michael Kahn (1971). "The Seminar." Santa Cruz, CA: Kresge College, University of California; Student (2013). "The Automated Epistemology of an iParadigm Shift." *Human Geography, Comments & Debates Section*.

Tuesday, September 2. UBC Imagine Day. All undergraduate courses cancelled. Read the syllabus, and browse through a bit of the course web page.

Thursday, September 4. Course introduction. Phillips, pp. xxiii-xxix. Recommended: Richard LeGates and Frederic Stout, "Introduction," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 1-4.

Saturday, September 6. Optional Walking Tour of Vancouver. This is optional, but I strongly recommend you join us! Meet me right downtown, at the corner of Georgia Street and Granville Street at 9:00 am. I can be reached by voice call to 778 899 7906.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Lewis Mumford, "What is a City?" in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 91-95. For a sample of the many cities around the world that shape the answers to Mumford's question offered by students who took this course not long ago, see this. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, September 9. Paths to understanding the city. Phillips, pp. 3-18. Recommended: Richard T. LeGates, "How to Study Cities," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 7-11.

Thursday, September 11. Disciplines and the city. Phillips, pp. 37-44, and then read carefully any one of the discipline subsections (see pp. 45-65) that is closest to your planned major specialization.

- Discussion sections for the week below: V. Gordon Childe, "The Urban Revolution," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 31-39. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, September 16. Social science, public debate, and urban studies. Phillips, pp. 74-96.

Thursday, September 18. Ancient and preindustrial cities. Phillips, pp. 106-115. Recommended: Kingley Davis, "The Urbanization of the Human Population," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 20-30.

- Discussion sections for the week below: UN-HABITAT, "Key Findings and Messages: The Challenges of Slums," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 583-589. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, September 23. Contemporary urbanization and global city-systems. Phillips, pp. 148-162. Jonathan V. Beaverstock, Richard G. Smith, and Peter J. Taylor, "World-City Network: A New Meta-Geography?," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 563-571.

Thursday, September 25. Defining urban community. Phillips, pp. 166-189. Recommended: Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 134-142.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 96-104, and Frederic Stout, "Visions of a New Reality: The City and the Emergence of Modern Visual Culture," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 150-153. Discussion Questions are here and here.

Tuesday, September 30. Writing the city with light: Urbanism and photography. Elvin Wyly (2010). "Things Pictures Don't Tell Us: In Search of Baltimore." *City* 14(5), 497-528.

Thursday, October 2. Suburbia. Phillips, pp. 218-227. Recommended: Kenneth T. Jackson, "The Drive-in Culture of Contemporary America," and Robert Fishman, "Beyond Suburbia: The Rise of the Technoburb," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 65-74, 75-83.

- No discussion sections for the week below.

Tuesday, October 7. Midterm Examination.

Thursday, October 9. Community in the exploding metropolis. Phillips, pp. 196-203. Recommended: Michael Dear, "The Los Angeles School of Urbanism: An Intellectual History," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 170-175.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Manuel Castells, "Space of Flows, Space of Places: Materials for a Theory of Urbanism in the Information Age," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 572-582. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, October 14. Case study: Cities, smartphones, and social networking. Larissa Zip, Rebekah Parker, and Elvin Wyly (2013). "Facebook as a Way of Life: Louis Wirth in the Social Network." *The Geographical Bulletin* 54, 77-98.

- This is a revision of a paper written by a student like you, who took this course not long ago. Writing can be like a form of conversation -- sometimes it just takes time and effort for that conversation to unfold in a way that an editor deems worthy of publication! If you're interested, the first version is here, the revisions I made before submitting it for publication are here, here is the chain of correspondence from the editor who required us to make many, many changes -- a complete rewrite!, and the statistical software code I wrote to analyze a data file from a national survey of social network usage in the U.S. is here.

Thursday, October 16. Submission Deadline 1. Case Study: "American Revolutionary: Grace Lee Boggs." Recommended: the first chapter of *The Next American Revolution*.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Ali Madanipour, "Social Exclusion and Space," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 186-194. Discussion Questions will be posted soon...

Tuesday, October 21. Race, ethnicity, and urban identities. Phillips, pp. 300-316.

Thursday, October 23. Immigration and the metropolis. Phillips, pp. 261-270, 283-285.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Friedrich Engels, "The Great Towns," and Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, "From Global Cities to Globalized Urbanization," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 46-54 and 599-608. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, October 28. Class and the city. Phillips, pp. 341-359.

Thursday, October 30. First. Nation. City. Evelyn J. Peters (2010). "Aboriginal People in Canadian Cities." In Trudi Bunting, Pierre Filion, and Ryan Walker, eds. *Canadian Cities in Transition, Fourth Edition: New Directions in the Twenty-First Century*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press Canada, 375-390.

- Discussion sections for the week below: World Commission on Environment and Development, "Towards Sustainable Development," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 351-355. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, November 4. Submission Deadline 2. Nature's metropolis. Read the first three pages of Erik Swyngedouw (2006). "Circulations and Metabolisms: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) Cities." *Science as Culture* 15(2), 105-121.

Thursday, November 6. Frameworks of urban governance. Phillips, pp. 423-444.

- Discussion sections for the week below: David Harvey, "Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 230-237. Discussion Questions, and advice on Preparing for the Final Examination, are here.

Tuesday, November 11. Remembrance Day; University Closed.

Thursday, November 13. City political machines, I: History and theory. Phillips, pp. 464-482.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," in LeGates and Stout, *The City Reader*, pp. 238-250. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, November 18. City political machines, II: Case study, Harold Washington vs. the Chicago machine.

Thursday, November 20. Community power. Phillips, pp. 493-512.

- Discussion sections for the week below: Sikee Liu and Nicholas Blomley (2013). "Making News and Making Space: Framing Vancouver's Downtown Eastside." *The Canadian Geographer* 57(2), 119-132. Discussion Questions are here.

Tuesday, November 25. Transit world city: Transportation planning and globalizing cities. [In previous years, we've had a short guest informational presentation from Charlotte Watson, from the Institute of Transportation Engineers. Slides from her presentation are here.]

Thursday, November 27. Imaginative cities: The case of Vancouver. Katherine McCallum, Amy Spencer, and Elvin Wyly (2005). "The City as an Image-Creation Machine: A Critical Analysis of Vancouver's Olympic Bid." *Yearbook of the Association of Pacific Coast Geographers* 67, 24-46.

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).



**Required Texts**

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

Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout, eds. (2011). *The City Reader*. Fifth Edition. New York: Routledge.

**Evaluation and Marks**

Course marks are based on four items:

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| 1. Mid-term examination (multiple choice)            | 20 percent |
| 2. Discussion section attendance and participation   | 20 percent |
| 3. Independent written project (approx. 1,200 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 7, in class.
2. Project Submission Date 1: Thursday, October 16, in class.
3. Project Submission Date 2: Tuesday, November 4, 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 standard letter-sized 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. Papers are not accepted by email.**

**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” means that no further flexibility can be provided: all communications regarding excuses or requests for extensions will be ignored. See further information on deadlines below.**

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; I do not. 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, and the course web site includes examples of papers submitted by students in previous years. For the best recent model, see

Larissa Zip, Rebekah Parker, and Elvin Wyly (2013). “Facebook as a Way of Life: Louis Wirth.” *Geographical Bulletin* 54, 77-98.

[http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/u200/Zip\(2013\).pdf](http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/~ewyly/Private/u200/Zip(2013).pdf)

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 two decades 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.

Additional guidance and recommendations are also available on the course web site for other project options: one is a book review essay; one involves a essay on urban photography; 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>

Note especially that papers without the required signed certification specified in Guideline #1 will receive a mark of 0.

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, and no opportunity for revision.

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.**

**Essays must be submitted in person. Submissions are not accepted by email.**

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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*.

## 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 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 human asset: your attention. Please come to class, and pay attention in a thoroughly low-tech, non-distance-education way. UBC is not an online 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> The *worst* way is to miss class and then send emails asking, “what did I miss in class?” This is not an online course.

## 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

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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.

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 interesting questions. Come up to the front of class before I begin the day’s lecture, and you can take a few minutes to share interesting items with everyone in the class.