T H E  U N I V E R S I T Y  O F  B R I T I S H  C O L U M B I A

Urban Studies 400
Seminar in Urban Studies
The City as an Entertainment Machine
January-May 2006, 3 credits

Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:00 AM to 12:30
Geography Room 214

Calendar description: A seminar for students who are anxious to explore some common topics of importance to urban studies from the perspective of several disciplines.

A bit more detail:

“The city fosters art and is art; the city creates the theater, and is the theater. It is in the city, the city as the actor, that man’s more purposive activities are focused, and work out, through conflicting and cooperating personalities, events, groups, into more significant culminations.”

Lewis Mumford.¹

¹ Mumford, Lewis. 1937. “What is a City?” Architectural Record 82.
downtown tourist amusements, up-market gentrified restaurants and bar districts, and even occasional public investment in such amenities as museums, theaters, and concert halls.”

Don Mitchell.²

“Remain calm and be Canadian.”

Larry Campbell.³

“...it may not be going too far to say that the Vancouver Olympics are envisaged as a showcase for a decade of neoliberalism, just as the ‘free enterprise’ Olympics in Los Angeles were celebrated by some U.S. conservatives as confirming the values of the Reagan years.”

David Whitson.⁴

This course is an interdisciplinary engagement with the city. We approach the urban in three ways. First, we will consider recent efforts to update one of the classical models of urban development. Thirty years ago, the sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch began a research program based on the idea of “the city as a growth machine,” which emphasized that even the most sharply polarized city politics would find common ground in the shared need of all locally-dependent elites: growth. The growth machine metaphor inspired an enormous and interdisciplinary literature on the various ways that cities compete for industrial growth and relocation, and the varied effectiveness of different cities. Recently, however, an emergent interdisciplinary literature has introduced a new metaphor that gives much more attention to the complexities of consumption: “the city as an entertainment machine.”

Second, we will consider an influential sociological critique of the driving force behind the city as an entertainment machine. In a series of books and articles over the last two decades, John Urry has synthesized a broad stream of critical social theory that raises fundamental questions about the meaning and implications of what has become the world’s single largest internationally traded service. Considering Urry’s critique does not require a wholesale rejection of tourism – but it does sensitize us to the inescapable inequalities, contradictions, and problematic cultural politics of the enterprise.

Third, we examine the specifically urban consequences of tourism, entertainment, and the rise of what might be called the mega-event era of urbanization. This new era is shaped by alternating currents of global tourist flows, attempts to secure heritage site designations, an itinerant industry of convention and hallmark event planning, and of course the ever-more intense competition to

³ Front-page headline in the Vancouver Sun, June 30, 2003. Widespread leaks to the press and speculation that Vancouver’s bid for the 2010 Winter Games would win prompted fears of an IOC backlash against perceived arrogance. Bid officials held a press conference, at which Bid Corporation Chair Jack Poole told reporters, “We’re in a three-horse race, the bid’s in, there’s nothing new, and we’re fighting for our life.” Vancouver’s Mayor at the time, Larry Campbell, said “I don’t think anybody here is overconfident. I don’t know how the boosters could wreck the bid. I think everyone has to remain calm and be Canadian.” Lee, Jeff. 2003. “Remain Calm and Be Canadian: Bid Organizers Worry Loose Lips of Over-Confident Boosters Could Cause IOC Backlash.” The Vancouver Sun, June 30, A1, A8.
host the Olympic Games. Mega-event urbanization is bound up with the rhetorical and empirical realities of globalization, and the sometimes frantic attempts of cities to remake the links between their local situations and a seemingly abstract, elusive space of flows portrayed by urban theorists like Manuel Castells.\(^5\) If this sounds rather lofty and abstract, consider an empirical vignette: not long ago, Gary, Indiana, surely one of the most depressing instances of deindustrialization and poverty in the United States, bid US $1 million for the rights to host the Miss Universe contest. Gary might be an extreme case, but even Vancouver’s “Invite the World In” mantra during the Olympic bidding process in late 2002 and early 2003 signals the new requirement to craft images of transnational, cosmopolitan energy - all to attract affluent tourists, footloose professional migrants, and deep-pocket investors.

To add empirical richness and local relevance to our discussions, we will consider Vancouver’s experience of the city as an entertainment machine - starkly illustrated by the successful bid for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games and the planning process now underway. The months leading up to the July 2, 2003 announcement demonstrated just how competitive the Games site selection process has become, and how important this sort of locational tournament is for contemporary urban politics and long-range infrastructure planning. The subsequent institutional transformations at the city, provincial, and federal levels are providing a rich and ongoing series of insights into how this particular Olympic hosting event compares with the experiences of other cities and regions. Our analysis of Vancouver will dovetail closely with the interests and activities of the Impact on Community Coalition, a broad-based independent community coalition whose mission is to evaluate the development of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games from social, environmental and economic perspectives, advocate for a rich post-games legacy devoid of adverse impacts, and foster that element of the Olympic Movement which ensures these issues are addressed for all future Olympic Games.\(^6\)

**Readings**

An order for several books has been placed with the UBC Bookstore.\(^7\) You don’t need to purchase all of the items on the list below; acquire the two required texts, and then consider

\(^6\) Impact on Community Coalition (2005). “About the IOCC.” World Wide Web page, at http://www.olympicsforall.ca Last accessed December 29. Vancouver: IOCC. There is a small but growing community of interested observers who have begun studying Vancouver’s Olympic planning, from a variety of perspectives. Examples include historical or economic comparisons of the Vancouver bid with other cities in rounds of competition for Olympic events; inter-city variations in economic impacts, financing, and infrastructure after Olympic events; content analyses of place-marketing campaigns and press coverage of Olympic cities; analysis of the role of globalized television and telecommunications in the rise of Olympic competition; cross-national and regional variation in politics and planning for Olympic urban development; profile and analysis of structure and change in the IOC, or the consulting industry devoted to helping cities prepare bids; mapping or scenario planning for specific urban or neighborhood design features; policy analyses, inter-urban comparisons, and recommendations for homeless policies, security provisions, access to public space, access for people with disabilities, and related venue and event issues; evaluation of environmental discourses (and empirical impacts) of the IOC and city events.
\(^7\) I cannot guarantee that these books are actually available at the Bookstore at the present time. History suggests that some of these volumes may be available, perhaps even in time for them to be useful. You will not need to purchase any books until the fifth week of the term.
acquiring one or more of the recommended books. A supplemental collection of articles and resources will be made available during the first week of class.

**Required:**


**Choose One or more:**


**Schedule**

Jan 4  Course introduction.


Jan 27 Special Event (Optional): “Healthy Communities, Healthy Olympics.”

With Keynote speech by Bruce Kidd, via video from Toronto, Olympic medalist, honorary member of the Canadian Olympic Committee and Dean of the Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Toronto. Wosk Centre for Dialogue, 580 W. Hastings, 9:00 AM to 3:30 pm.

Registration Required: RSVP to IOCCvancouver@hotmail.com by Friday, January 20, 2006.


Feb 1 Individual Proposal Deadline, 11:00 AM


Feb 13 Reading break; no seminar meeting.

Feb 15 Reading break; no seminar meeting.


Mar 6 No seminar meeting: Working groups meet or correspond to plan presentations and discuss individual projects.

Mar 8 No seminar meeting: Working groups meet or correspond to plan presentations and discuss individual projects.

Mar 13 Progress Report Deadline, 11:00 AM


Mar 20 Group II: Olympic Growth Machines and Urban Regimes.


**Mar 27** Group IV: Symbolic Economies, Cultural Capital, and Olympic Dreams.


**Mar 29** Group V: Cultural Politics of Olympic Urbanism.


**Apr 3** Group VI: Environmental Facets of Olympic Urban Development.


**Apr 5** Group VII: Neighborhood Spaces, Opposition, and Community Activism.


Expectations, Evaluation, and Similar Stuff

I am reasonable and flexible on most matters. Yet we face a serious dilemma when it comes to the transactional dance of deadlines, marks, and other administrative bureaucracy. I am committed to recognizing and accommodating unique circumstances and individual needs; but there are so many individuals, and each of us rightly claims distinct and quite understandable circumstances. No matter what kind of deadline I set, the approach of a due date invariably precipitates requests for extensions (or post-hoc requests for understanding) from at least ten percent of the students in any given class. Unfortunately, dealing with these individual circumstances imposes severe transactional costs, requiring me to spend a great deal of my time handling correspondence regarding missed classes, missed deadlines, make-up arrangements, and all sorts of other details. I can be quite absentminded, and I’m not that smart anyway, and so the more time I devote to keeping things organized and dealing with transactional stuff, the less time I can devote to the hard work of research, scholarship, reading, and preparing for an engaged seminar discussion.

I offer my most sincere apologies if my words seem harsh or cynical; it can be difficult to strike the right connotation and tone in writing. Yet it is necessary to describe expectations and evaluation practices formally on the course outline, because a significant number of folks will miss the first few classes when we talk about these things, and no matter how many times a particular point is repeated in class, there are always people who manage to miss, for entirely understandable reasons, every single clarification that is not put in print on the syllabus. I am amazed at the accelerating proliferation of scheduling and logistical conflicts as the contemporary university experience becomes ever more frantic, particularly for students juggling heavy course loads or struggling to pursue academic careers while employed part- or even full-time. I have the deepest respect for students who manage to navigate the Weberian nightmare of UBC bureaucracy. Yet if I do understand the individual circumstances that invariably happen in the course of an academic term, we can minimize the collective transactional costs if you read through these expectations carefully, and if you do your very best to follow these directions. In the sections below, I’ve tried to answer all possible questions on missed deadlines and other details so that we can focus our attention on the fundamental, substantive, intellectual challenges and excitements of contemporary urban studies. Our goal is to create a setting in which we can dive into some thoroughly fascinating, interdisciplinary, and methodologically rich ways of seeing cities, urban life, and the increasingly complex economic and cultural systems of circulation bound up with tourism, conventions, and the hosting of hallmark events.

You’re expected to attend regularly, to participate in seminar discussions, to help lead one discussion and submit a very short reaction paper, to complete an individual research paper or project, and to participate in a group presentation for one of the seminar meetings near the end of the term. The course mark is based on three main components:
Components of Final Course Mark

**percentage**

1. **20** Participation:
   Includes co-leading one seminar and submitting a short reaction paper for one seminar meeting between the third and ninth weeks of term.

2. **60** Individual Paper or Project:
   - Proposal deadline: 11:00 AM February 1
   - Progress report deadline: 11:00 AM March 13
   - Draft deadline: 5:00 PM April 7
   - Final paper deadline: 5:00 PM April 28

3. **20** Working Group Presentations:
   Collaborative coordination of one of the seminar meetings in the last three weeks of the term.

1. **Participation.** The first part of the course mark is based on individual participation. In the first day of class, I'll distribute a sign-up sheet for the seminar meetings scheduled between the third and ninth weeks of term. For each meeting, we'll have between two and four colleagues help guide our discussion: each will prepare a very short reaction paper (as short as one side of one page, but no length limit is imposed), and make a brief, informal presentation at the beginning of class. What do you see as the most interesting questions or problems addressed in the reading? What strengths (and perhaps limitations) do you see in the author’s contribution? How does the work help you to understand the city as an entertainment machine, and what ideas does it give you for your own research plans? Keep in mind that the reaction paper need not be a masterpiece of formal, rigorous scholarship; however, it does need to be done and submitted on time. Reaction papers will be accepted in the seminar for which you help lead the discussion; late submissions will not be accepted. I am sorry, but there are no exceptions to this policy.

If you miss the first day of class, add your name to a date of your choice on the sign-up sheet that will be posted on my office door, Geography Room 252. It is not necessary in this case that you correspond with others leading the seminar for that day, but on the other hand it's fine if you do want to get in touch with them. If you sign up for a particular class and then miss the class, then choose another class and prepare a reaction paper. If you prepare a reaction paper but then miss the class in which you have committed to leading the discussion, then you should prepare a new submission corresponding to the seminar you actually do help to lead. If you don’t lead a seminar discussion, or if you don’t submit a reaction paper, or if you miss one of these but not the other, I certainly won’t impose a harsh penalty like assigning a failing grade for the course. But I will find it difficult to provide an accurate assessment of your ability to contribute to our scholarly discussion. Therefore, if you somehow find yourself in the tenth week without having led a seminar discussion and/or without having submitted a corresponding reaction paper, then it’s
your responsibility to prepare something that a) explains your circumstances, and, more importantly, b) gives me some reasonable intellectual basis for evaluating your ability to participate in the scholarly enterprise of an interdisciplinary seminar.

2. Deadlines for the Individual Paper or Project: The most important and non-negotiable date is the deadline for submission of the final paper; no extensions are permitted under any circumstances, because this date is the latest I am allowed to set under University regulations. Grades must be submitted within seventy-two hours of this date, and so if you miss the deadline I will be forced to submit a mark that excludes consideration of your final paper or project. In cases where a missed deadline results from documented emergency circumstances, a mark of “SD” or “DNW” can be recorded; note, however, that the instructor is only permitted to assign “SD” if you have secured formal approval from Arts Academic Advising.

All the other intermediate deadlines are optional but firm. Proposals, progress reports, and drafts received by the specified deadlines will receive comments, criticisms, and suggestions. At the times specified for each deadline, I’ll collect what I receive in class - or, for the noted deadlines after classes have ended, I will check my mailbox in the Geography Department Office (Room 218), and my email (ewyly@geog.ubc.ca), and then I’ll get to work on everything I’ve received. No harsh penalties will be imposed if you don’t meet these intermediate deadlines; but late submissions will not receive any feedback. I am sorry, but there are no exceptions to this policy. If you would like comments and suggestions, it is best to submit whatever you have when the deadline arrives. Your final paper should be approximately five thousand to eight thousand words. These are only guidelines; it is entirely possible to create a first-rate piece of rigorous scholarship that is substantially shorter, and of course we’ve all read lengthy documents that seem to have very little redeeming intellectual value. Your paper should fully document and cite all sources and contributions you use in preparing your analysis; when in doubt, cite all points that do not represent your own interpretation, synthesis, insight, or analysis.

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8 If you choose to submit items by email, I ask that you prepare your submission as a single portable document file (*pdf). Most current Mac OS X printer drivers offer a “save as pdf” option; for Windows-based applications, freeware is available at http://www.pdf995.com

9 Unfortunately, this document, 4,995 words and counting as I type this footnote, might fairly be judged as paradigmatic of the latter sort of scholarship. In my defense, however, this is a syllabus, which does require a certain level of obtuse regulatory language.

10 Any reference style is acceptable, so long as you’re consistent. One approach involves the in-text, Harvard-style, which involves dropping in a parenthetical reference (e.g., Urry, 2002) and then creating a separate “References” or “Literature Cited” section at the end, with full bibliographic details. All items cited in the text must include a corresponding entry in the references section, and all works in the references section should be cited in the body of the text. Alternatively, consider footnotes like the one you’re reading, which might, for instance, acknowledge John Urry (2002). The Tourist Gaze. Second Edition. London: Sage Publications, p. 5 (including the specific page number if, for instance, we are quoting Urry’s observation that “It is a crucial element of modern life to feel that travel and holidays are necessary. ‘I need a holiday’ is the surest reflection of a modern discourse based on the idea that people’s physical and mental health will be restored if only they can ‘get away’ from time to time” or if we are citing the specific, fascinating factoid Urry offers on the same page that provides an estimate of 300,000 people who are, at any given time, aloft as airline passengers above the Continental United States). Footnotes eliminate the need for a separate “References” or “Literature Cited” section at the end of your manuscript. Subsequent citations, to absolutely delicious insights like the notion of the “post-tourist,” which Urry borrows from another scholar, take the form of
3. **Working Group Presentations**: The same principle of firm flexibility applies to collaborative aspects of our seminar. In the sixth week of term, I ask that you submit a short proposal for your individual paper or project. You have considerable autonomy in designing an individual research path. I strongly encourage you to consider various aspects of the ‘Olympic Urbanism’ literature, or the case of Vancouver’s 2010 planning and development processes; however, it is entirely acceptable for you to propose a project dealing with another urban facet of tourism, consumption, place-promotion, and other dimensions of the course emphasis on the “City as an Entertainment Machine.” I will read these proposals with considerable interest and excitement, and I will provide comments, suggestions, ideas, possible sources of literature, my thoughts on the strengths and limits of particular methods or data sources, and the connections I see between your interests and those of your colleagues. I’ll then organize these proposals into thematically coherent working groups, and members of each group will receive copies of all proposals submitted by their colleagues. Each of seven working groups will take responsibility for setting the agenda for one of the seminar meetings in the final three weeks of the term; groups are encouraged to be creative, using whatever combination of formal presentation and informal discussion is deemed most productive for exploring the issues at hand. The schedule and reading list includes suggested items for consideration by each working group, but these are only suggestions. Working groups are free to choose some of these readings, all of them, or to identify alternative readings. It is not assumed that everyone in the seminar (or everyone in the working group) will read every item in the corresponding lists.

Information sharing and collaboration in the working groups are strongly encouraged, so long as your final individual paper represents individual work.

Since the individual paper proposals due in the sixth week of term will be used to constitute the working groups, anyone failing to meet the proposal deadline will be assigned to a group pretty much at random. Failure to participate in collaborative group preparations may affect marks assigned for this component of the course. At the end of the term, I will ask everyone to give me advice and recommendations on participation marks for members of their working group; obviously, colleagues are much more likely to provide positive comments for those they recognize as active contributors. If you anticipate a scheduling conflict that will make it impossible to contribute to your group presentation in the final weeks of the term (see the schedule), you are encouraged to move to another group. If you miss the group presentation for any reason, you are responsible for providing justification as well as some kind of material submission to your working group colleagues and the instructor in order to provide the basis for this component of the course mark.

**Additional Policies and Procedures**

The official University course outline template requires the disclosure of several additional specific policy and procedural details, so here they are. The last date for withdrawal without a W on your transcript is January 17; the last date of withdrawal with a W is February 10. The University inserting a new footnote that references Urry, “Tourist Gaze,” p. 90, citing M. Feifer (1985). *Going Places*. London: Macmillan.
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. I am very accommodating on these and many other matters, but please let me know as soon as you can if you need any such accommodation. Students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date. Please review the UBC Calendar “Academic regulations” for the university policies on academic dishonesty, and see http://www.arts.ubc.ca for useful information on correct documentation and avoiding plagiarism.