Overview: The city is one of humanity’s most profound and unwieldy inventions. This course surveys the culture of cities, exploring their historical development and their current dynamism. Our perspective will encompass the great global cities as well as major urban areas in the United States. We will frame the urban experience from a number of perspectives, examining the distinctive forms of expressive culture, ethnic and racial conflict, and political or economic activity that cities generate. Students will gain an understanding of the profound impact of new technologies, immigration, and gentrification on how cities grow and decline. We will consider each of these dimensions of urban experience from a cultural perspective, which focuses on how people create meaningful lives.

Dynamics: Through lectures, readings, and films, students will acquire an informed perspective on urbanism and be introduced to the methods and theories that anthropologists rely upon in analyzing urban settings. Lectures will frame the numerous dimensions that inform city life, while presenting students with a means of thinking synthetically about these complex interrelations. The readings feature a range of disciplinary perspectives on the culture of cities, but we will also develop a sustained attention to the work of urban ethnographers. Daily films will offer vivid, engaging depictions of particular dynamics related to city life. One in-class exam will test your comprehension of basic dynamics, key concepts, and critical historical developments related to urbanism. Then a final ethnographic project will allow you to pull all the strands of the course together in an applied, practice-based approach to a topic of your interest.

Class participation is comprised of the following components. Daily writing assignments allow you to respond thoughtfully to the topics examined in the readings and lectures. These are due in class and cannot be made up unless you have an excused absence. Discussions will be geared towards clarifying texts and grappling with the insights and issues raised in readings and films—attendance is a requirement of this course. Attendance is required and more than 3 unexcused absences will result in at least one letter-grade reduction.

Grading and Course Requirements:
1) One exam = 40%
2) One ethnographic project (10-12 pages) = 40%
3) Daily writing (paragraph summaries of films and topics selected from the readings) and class participation (showing up and engaging in class discussions of the readings and films) = 20%
**Required Texts:**

*Rethinking Urban Parks: Public Space and Cultural Diversity*, Setha Low et al.

*Triumph of the City*, Edward Glaeser


**Online Resources:**


*AnthroSource* [http://www.anthrosource.net/Default.aspx](http://www.anthrosource.net/Default.aspx)

*Public Culture:* [http://publicculture.org/issues/view/25/2](http://publicculture.org/issues/view/25/2)


**Class Schedule:**

**The Origin and Design of Cities.**

**June 7:** Introduction.

Film: *The Nature of Cities.*

**June 8:** Anthropology of the City:

Readings: *Rethinking Urban Parks*, Chp 1; *On the Plaza*, Chps 1 & 2; *Barrio Dreams*, Introduction; and *Triumph*, Introduction.

Film: *10 Parks that Changed America.*

**June 11:** Origins of Cities and Urban Design pt 1


Assignment: Identify an article focused on urban contexts/dynamics in an anthropology journal.

**June 12:** Urban Design pt 2: Grids and plazas.

Readings: *On the Plaza*, chp.4-5

Film: *Paris: From the Haussmann Era to the Ring Road.*

**June 13:** Industrial City, pt. 1: European origins


Film: *City Living.*

DUE: Journal Article Summaries.

**The Industrial and Post-Industrial City.**

**June 14:** Industrial City, pt. 2 Segregation and the inner city


Film: *Requiem for Detroit.*

**June 15:** The Post Industrial City


Film: *Paris Ring and Cities on Speed: Mumbai—traffic.*
June 18: Urban Ethnography
Film: *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth.*

June 19: Infrastructure.
Film: *The Water Front.*

June 20: EXAM.

June 22: Spatializing Culture: Discussion of ethnographic sites.
Readings: *Rethinking Urban Parks* Chapters 1-3; *Triumph,* Chp 8;
Film: *The Garden.*

June 25: Representing the City: Discussion of research sources.
Readings: *Rethinking Urban Parks* Chapters 4-7; Stevenson, “Imagining the City: Movies, Maps, and Cyberspace,” Film: *Bomb It.*

June 26: Reading the Urban: Discussion of research questions.
Readings: *Rethinking Urban Parks* Chapter 9; Stevenson, “Meaning and Memory: Reading the Urban Text.” Film: *Music in Exile.*

June 27: Methods of Urban Ethnography: Discussion of methods.

June 28: Fieldwork Day.


June 30: *Consuming Cities.*

July 2: Symbolic Economy. updates on ethnographic sites.
Readings: *Culture of Cities,* Chp.1 & 2
Film: *The Gods of Times Square.*

July 3: Disneyfication of Cities.
Readings: *Triumph of Cities,* Chp 5, and *Culture of Cities,* Chp. 5 & 6
Film: *Malls R Us.*

July 4: Gentrification:
Readings: *Barrio Dreams,* Introduction and Chps. 2-3.
Film: *Flag Wars*

July 5: Contesting Public Culture
Readings: *Barrio Dreams,* Chps 4-5; *On the Plaza,* Chps 8 & 11.
Film: *To Be Seen.*

July 6: Fieldwork Day.

July 9: Home Owner Associations and Governing Cities
Readings: *Barrio Dreams,* Chp 6;
Film: *Sand Wars.*
Readings: *The Triumph*, Chp. 4. Film: *Unnatural Causes.*  
July 11: Ethnographic Presentations.  
July 12: Ethnographic Presentations.  

DUE July 13: Ethnographic Papers. **By 4pm, at my office (SCA 4.158)**

**Identifying an Ethnographic Site:**

After reading discussing chapters from Day One, spend some time in a public place. The objective is simply to try out Setha Low’s perspective on the *production of social space.* By observing how different people occupy a similar locale, Low tries to recognize social relations and social practices in space, as well as to demonstrate how public space becomes meaningful to users. She considers how differences in the use of space define social groups, and she examines the types of boundaries these users construct. This is what Low means by the “social construction of space”: “the actual transformation of space—through peoples’ social exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting—into scenes and actions that convey meaning.”

**So pick a place and observe it. Consider its design features and pay attention to patterns of usage. Then try to articulate what kinds of meanings are attached to or contested in this place. Can you picture yourself developing an ethnographic perspective on this place?**

**Use of laptops:** Refrain from using laptops during any audiovisual presentation, as the sounds of typing create a distraction. In general, limit laptop usage to notetaking for this course.