

# Geography 175

## *Urban Geography*

### Spring 2020

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Dr. Meghan Cope

*Office:* Old Mill 211

*Office hrs:* Mondays 9-10am,

Wednesdays 2 – 3pm, or by appt.

[mcope@uvm.edu](mailto:mcope@uvm.edu)

**Class Meetings:**

Lafayette 200

Tues/Thurs 1:15-2:30pm

3 credit hours; GenEd/CAS: SocSci

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this course is to examine the roles and workings of cities, with a focus on North American cities, viewed in a context of economic and political change, social and spatial fragmentation, and cultural identities. In this course, we use the *social-spatial dialectic*, that is, the idea that society and space mutually construct and condition each other, as a conceptual framework through which to view urban areas. We take 'the urban' to mean a set of conditions, interactions, processes, and functions rather than just as a particular type of location or a scale of analysis. Cities are in many ways the *engines* of culture, politics, and economic change, as well as the expressions of our best and worst – this is what makes them so fascinating to study!

#### **Structure**

We first examine the geo-historical development of North American cities within the context of broad economic, political, and social processes, focusing on **industrialization** – the historical framework is to look at both *how places were urbanizing* and *what people said about cities* in parallel. Then we engage in a social justice-based critique of **suburbs, segregation, and the disinvestment/reinvestment in central cities**. We then move to considering issues of the recent '**urban renaissance**' and **gentrification**, and finish by examining **urban sustainability** through the possibilities of Smart Growth, the sharing economy, and other approaches.

#### **Objectives: this course will help you...**

- ♦ Critically examine the internal dynamics of cities, their rhythms, conflicts, and quirks
- ♦ Understand the roles of cities in regions, states, and internationally
- ♦ Explore *Urban Geography* as an area of study, its common methodologies, and theoretical approaches and key debates of the past and present (including many concepts of *Urban & Regional Planning*)
- ♦ Practice strategies for interrogating and discussing scholarly texts, including identifying the core argument and supporting evidence that authors present
- ♦ Engage in 'rhetorical discernment' – identifying and making use of the differences between popular media, data reports, and scholarly work on cities
- ♦ Using the tools and methods of social science, research a city to find and analyze data relevant to the assignment; present your work to your peers
- ♦ Work in small groups to gain deeper understanding of concepts
- ♦ Write effective materials representing and evaluating a central argument from the literature and connecting themes from the readings, films, class discussions, etc.

#### **Required Readings:**

1. Desmond, Matthew. 2016. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. New York: Broadway Books.
2. Selected readings from key texts, urban books, and scholarly journals. These are available as pdf's through our Blackboard site. **Please read them, take notes on them, and make sure you have access to them (paper or digital) in preparation for class!**

Assessment	
Class Attendance & Participation	10%
In-Class Exercises	10%
Short Assignments	15%
Film Reviews (2)	10%
<i>Evicted</i> Reflection	15%
City Profile Project	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

Grading Standards			
A+	97-100	C+	77-79.9
A	94-96.9	C	74-76.9
A-	90-93.9	C-	70-73.9
B+	87-89.9	D+	67-69.9
B	84-86.9	D	64-66.9
B-	80-83.9	D-	60-63.9
		F	<60

Please see the separate document "GEOG175 Schedule" for topics and specifics

### Notes on Assessment:

*Class engagement* and *In-Class Exercises* are evaluated by attendance and participation in class discussions, activities, and exercises. These will happen in some form virtually every day and they constitute one of the pillars of this course. You will hand something in, discuss, or create something on many days of class and each of these will count toward your grade.

*Short Assignments* includes a media reflection, one urban 'observation', a short reflection on in-class guest speakers, etc. Details for these, including their relative points, will be announced at the time of assignment.

*Film Reviews* are one-page *critical reviews* of films we see in class in which you are asked to make a connection to at least one of our relevant readings. You must hand in one of these, but there are several films over the course of the semester to choose from. Film reviews are due in hardcopy, in class on the date listed in the assignment.

*Evicted Reflection*: This will be based on Matthew Desmond's book, which is required reading. More info to come.

*Semester Project*: The *City Profile Report* involves small pieces of work that will support and then culminate in your final 'profile report'. Each student will investigate a different one of the top 50 cities of the US (by population) using the themes of the course: segregation, social justice, gentrification, sustainability, etc. to examine the historical context, present situation, and ideas for the future of that city. Ingredients of this project include the following (more details to follow closer to due dates):

- Profile paragraphs – History and present context of your city = 2 pts.
- Reference list - Popular media, City Reports/Data Sources, Scholarly Literature on your city = 5 pts.
- Annotated Bibliography & Thematic Review – critical summaries of popular media, City Reports/Data Sources, Scholarly Literature on your city; AND brief thematic review = 10 pts.
- Data summary, maps/charts, and analysis (i.e. draft of final report empirical section) = 5 pts.
- Final City Profile (Written Report) = 15 pts. Due at final exam meeting **Fri., May 8, 1:30-4:15pm**.
- Final presentation = 3 pts. **During our final exam period – attendance required**

**Blackboard** – We will use Blackboard in several ways in this class:

- All syllabus and schedule materials, including updates and announcements are available
- All readings except *Evicted* will be provided as PDFs or web links here
- All assignments and will be available here
- Lecture notes, links to online videos, and other content will be posted here
- Additional information re: events, public talks, internship opportunities, etc. will be posted for your convenience
- You will occasionally submit materials to me via Bb – make sure you click the 'submit' button!

### A few class policies...

1. Respect each others' views. Participate in, but do not dominate, class conversation.
2. I do not accept late papers or assignments except in the most dire situations (which need to be documented by Student Services in your Dean's Office).
3. I expect all work turned in for this class to be your original words and ideas, with others' words and ideas properly **cited and referenced**. I will provide information on how to cite other sources. Comply with UVM's Code of Academic Integrity, from the Center for Student Ethics and Standards (CSES): <http://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf>. Familiarize yourself with what constitutes

cheating, plagiarism, and other ethics violations. This caution includes using Epic Summaries and e-notes in place of actually reading *Evicted* – I am familiar with these resources and they cannot replace actually just reading the book for the assignment in this class. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please see a CSES staff member. You are expected to abide by the Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/studentcode.pdf>

4. Common courtesies: I expect you to be present and *engaged* in class, and that you do the assigned readings on time. **No laptops open during lectures unless by prior arrangement.** Please resist the urge to look at your phone. Please arrive on time and avoid unnecessary disturbances during lectures and discussions. Failure to abide by these requests will result in disenrollment and/or impact your participation grade.
5. Take responsibility for your education. If you miss class, find someone willing to share notes and review them carefully before coming to Dr. Cope for help. *Although I post bare-bones lecture outlines on Blackboard after class, they are not a substitute for being in class and the details of the material will not be apparent from the outlines alone, particularly because I always bring in material outside the assigned readings.* Taking responsibility also means making use of the resources provided – feel free to come to my office hours to introduce yourself, discuss a class topic further, or learn more about the Geography Department. You should check your UVM email regularly for all course-related communications, Blackboard announcements, etc.
6. ACCESS: Students with documented disabilities are encouraged to contact me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations. I can best be reached by e-mail or during my office hours. I will make every reasonable effort to insure your full participation in this course. If you feel you may be eligible for accessibility services, please make an appointment to see them: Contact Student Accessibility Services: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; [access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu) [www.uvm.edu/access](http://www.uvm.edu/access)
7. All classroom policies, including athletic and religious schedule accommodations, follow UVM policy: <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/rightsandresponsibilities/>
8. In the case of multiple absences due to extreme illness, family issues, or other causes, your first point of contact should be **your Dean's office**. They will document legitimate absences and contact all your professors centrally.
9. Statement on Alcohol and Cannabis in the Academic Environment: As a faculty member, I want you to get the most you can out of this course. You play a crucial role in your education and in your readiness to learn and fully engage with the course material. It is important to note that **alcohol and cannabis have no place in an academic environment**. They can seriously impair your ability to learn and retain information not only in the moment you may be using, but up to 48 hours or more afterwards. In addition, alcohol and cannabis can:
  - Cause issues with attention, memory and concentration
  - Negatively impact the quality of how information is processed and ultimately stored
  - Affect sleep patterns, which interferes with long-term memory formationIt is my expectation that you will do everything you can to optimize your learning and to fully participate in this course.
10. Course Evaluation: All students are expected to complete an evaluation of the course at its conclusion. The course evaluations will be anonymous and confidential, and the information gained, including constructive criticisms, will be used to improve the course in future years. More details to come.
11. Grade Appeals: If you need to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy: <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/gradeappeals.pdf>
12. FERPA Rights Disclosure: The purpose of this policy is to communicate the rights of students regarding access to, and privacy of their student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/ferparightsdisclosure/>
13. Promoting Health & Safety - The University of Vermont's number one priority is to support a healthy and safe community. Resources include:  
Center for Health and Wellbeing: <https://www.uvm.edu/health>  
Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS) Phone: (802) 656-3340  
C.A.R.E. If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at <https://www.uvm.edu/studentaffairs>