

The Metropolitan Environment
(Pols: 3330 01)
Spring 2020
Dr. Gilsinan

Course Goal:

The course introduces students to concepts that provide the basis for understanding the metropolitan environment on a global and local scale. It starts with the fundamental building block of that environment, your address, and progresses to the neighborhood, the municipality, the region, the state, the nation and the world.

“There are places I’ll remember,
All my life though some have changed.
Some forever not for better,
Some have gone and some remain.
All these places have their moments,
With lovers and friends, I still can recall” (*In My life, the Beatles*)

You are a place-based person. You identify with your home community, your neighborhood, maybe even a shopping center or a favorite hangout. These places are associated with memories of particular experiences and people. Places can also provide opportunities for growth and development through access to education, jobs, and social networks.

But what if you had no place? Or what if you were confined to a place not because you chose it, but because you were denied access to a more desirable place? These questions force us to confront several contemporary issues. Being homeless means more than not having shelter; it also removes an essential part of one’s identity. As we will see, a variety of methods have been employed to deny people access to desirable space. In the case of people with disabilities, they confronted physical barriers that restricted their ability to move about – which affected employment opportunities, educational attainment, and a robust social life. The visible demarcation of neighborhoods by race, ethnicity, and income level happened because of restrictions on the ability of certain groups to buy property outside of designated areas. To claim a just place in society necessarily involves a claim on access to and/or control of various physical spaces. Without such access economic horizons are limited, educational attainment is truncated, health is threatened, and social networks are diminished.

As the readings and class discussion will demonstrate, changes come about through a variety of means including personal choice, government policy, economic and social shifts, and the dynamics of land use growth and development. Moreover, these changes often result in conflict among groups as they compete for resources, political power and lifestyle options. Conflict also takes place at the metropolitan level as areas compete for jobs, people, entertainment venues, and amenities that result in a desirable quality of life for its residents.

At the local and regional levels, competition among spaces is usually, although not always, without violence. Because we are place based people, places get fought over as part of one’s national identity – thus immigration policy and the role of undocumented workers is now part of

a national conversation. Indeed, the continuing conflicts in the Middle East and parts of Africa, as well as the recent history of Ireland, underscore the importance of place for one's identity.

Course Objectives:

Given the above, there are five objectives for this course. At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe the inter-connectedness among the elements of their community and the global community;
2. Articulate the dynamics that contribute to community development and decline;
3. Develop an in depth understanding of the key issues affecting the St. Louis metropolitan region including:
 - a. History and Sources of Racial Tension
 - b. Educational Inequality
 - c. Disparities in employment opportunities by location
 - d. Homelessness
 - e. Immigration
4. Connect today's urban policy conflicts with your own experience of place;
5. Provide strategies for empowering underrepresented groups to claim a just *place* in society

Text:

Urban Issues, CQ Press, 8th edition, 2017

Contemporary Articles as Assigned

Written Assignments:

Assignment 1: The history of your place and you

Products:

- A five-slide power point describing your neighborhood – the tour
- A five-minute class presentation taking us on a tour of your neighborhood
- A four to seven page paper describing the following:

Your Family's Mobility History: How did you (they) get to your current address?

Your Neighborhood: Median and Average Income; Education level; Racial Makeup; Amenities; Challenging Situations.

Your relationship to your home and neighborhood space: A neighborhood map/ actual and psychological; important places in your home and your neighborhood.

Summary: A reflection on how your "place" helped you become you

%of Final Grade: 15%

Due: February 3

Assignment 2: How does your community relate to your region

Products:

- A five-slide power point describing your general-purpose government: form of government, departments, budget, community demographics
- A five-minute class presentation presenting your power point
- A four to seven page paper describing:

Your general-purpose government

The demographic, income, school achievement levels of your community compared to the region of which it is a part

Summary: A reflection of how your community compared to the region advantaged or disadvantaged you

% of Final Grade: 15%

Due: Feb. 24

Assignment 3: The Urban Issue of My Choice

Products:

- A ten – twelve slide power point presentation describing the background, controversies, and current state of your specific urban issue
- A fifteen-minute class presentation presenting your power point and leading a class discussion on your topic
- An eight to twelve-page paper describing:

Your problem area's background, current state of research, controversies and proposed solutions

Summary: What solution do you think is best and why

% of Final Grade: 20%

Due: Power Point Presentation Due on the Day of Class Discussion of Your Topic

Paper Due: May 1

Class attendance and participation: 10% of the grade:

No absences and class participation = A

Up to two absences and class participation = B

Three absences or less than three but with minimal participation = C

Three absences with minimal participation = D
More than three absences = F

Mid Term and Final: Each 20% of your grade

Assignments are due on the date indicated and will be graded one grade lower for each class day late.

Office hours: Mondays and Fridays: 9:30 – 11:30 A.M.
1:30 – 2:15 P.M.

Or by appointment

Office Location: McGannon Hall, 133

Dates, Topics, and Reading Assignments

January 13 Introduction to the Course: What's An Address Mean?

January 15 - 22 How did place make me? How did I make place? (Note: no class
January 20, MLK day)

Readings: **The Changing Demographics of America's Suburbs**
RICHARD FLORIDA, NOVEMBER 7, 2019

<https://www.citylab.com/life/2019/11/suburbs-demographic-trends-population-data-immigration/601546/>

Youth Exposure to Violence in an Urban Setting

David Seal,¹ Annie Nguyen,² and Kirsten Beyer³

<https://www.hindawi.com/journals/usr/2014/368047/>

January 24 - 31 How did Place develop before I came along?

Readings: **The Racist Housing Policy That Made Your
Neighborhood**, ALEXIS C. MADRIGAL
MAY 22, 2014

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2014/05/the-racist-housing-policy-that-made-your-neighborhood/371439/>

The Making of Ferguson Public Policies at the Root of its Troubles

Report • By [Richard Rothstein](#) • October 15, 2014 <https://www.epi.org/publication/making-ferguson/>

The American Influenza Epidemic: St. Louis 1918

<https://www.influenzaarchive.org/cities/city-stlouis.html#>

February 3 - 7

Neighborhood tours

February 10 – 14

How law and policy shape cities

Readings: **Cities 101 -- Types of Local Governments**

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/cities-101-types-of-local-governments>

Cities 101 -- Forms of Local Government

<https://www.nlc.org/resource/cities-101-forms-of-local-government>

What Do States Have Against Cities, Anyway?

Alan

Ehrenhalt | Senior Editor

<https://www.governing.com/columns/assessments/gov-urban-penalty-legislatures-cities.html>

February 7 -21

The Financial Crisis of 2008 – Urban Consequences

Readings: **Dodd – Frank Act, History.com editors**

<https://www.history.com/topics/21st-century/dodd-frank-act>

February 24 – 28

My hometown, my home region

March 2 -4

Urban Vision from Obama to Trump

Readings: **CHART: How The U.S. Troop Levels In Afghanistan Have Changed Under Obama July 6, 2016:15 PM ET, Danielle Kurtzleben**

<https://www.npr.org/2016/07/06/484979294/chart-how-the-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-have-changed-under-obama>

Trump signs order aimed at revitalizing economically distressed communities BY NAOMI JAGODA - 12/12/18 10:21 AM EST

<https://thehill.com/policy/finance/420968-trump-to-sign-executive-order-aimed-at-revitalizing-distressed-communities>

March 6

Mid term

Week of March 9

Spring Break

March 16

Stealth Urban Policies

March 18 - 25	Urban Education: Challenges/Solutions Readings: Education: Chapters 1 and 2 in <i>Urban Issues</i>
March 27 – April 3	Land Use/Urban Development: Challenges/Solutions Readings: Land Use and Urban Development: Chapters 3 and 4 in <i>Urban Issues</i>
April 6 – 8	Police Community Relations Readings: Law Enforcement: Chapters 5 and 6 in <i>Urban Issues</i>
April 10 - 13	Easter Break
April 15 - 17	Social Control Readings: Law Enforcement : Chapter 7 in <i>Urban Issues</i>
April 20 – May 1 *Issue Paper Due May 1	Race, Class, Ethnicity and Wealth in the U.S. Readings: Race, Class, and Ethnicity: Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 in <i>Urban Issues</i>
May 4 th	Review and Final Thoughts
May -	Final Exam