Urban Geography, Planning and Political Processes

Course Code: GGR339
Time: Monday and Wednesday 14:00 - 16:00
Location: Sidney Smith Hall (100 St. George Street) Room SS2102

Course Instructor:
Adam Zendel (He/Him)
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday from 11-12pm in SS5029
Contact: adam.zendel@mail.utoronto.ca

Teaching Assistants:
Robert Catherall (He/Him)
Contact: r.catherall@mail.utoronto.ca

Hannah Galloway (She/Her)
Contact: hannah.galloway@mail.utoronto.ca

Course Description

Investigates North American urban political geography, exploring conflicts over immigration, environment, gentrification, homelessness, labour market restructuring, ‘race’ and racism, urban sprawl, nature and environment, gender, sexuality, security, and segregation. Explores competing visions of city life and claims on urban space. The course investigates how these struggles connect to economic, social and environmental politics at larger spatial scales, and considers different theoretical frameworks that geographers have developed to make sense of both the persistence of old problems and the emergence of new ones.

Each week of the class we will explore a different figurative city. These are different lenses that give us a theoretical framework with empirical cases to better understand urban geography. The first three cities, the Forgotten, Queer and Gendered, and Toxic cities give us insight into the history of colonization, segregation, environmental racism, but also of the social movements that struggle for the liberation of cities from these oppressions. The next two cities, the Gentrified city and Smart city, show us a history of urban development, theories of urban change, and a glimpse into the future of what is come for cities. The next three cities look at more specific cases of urban life. The Night city explores the rich activity that occurs as people sleep. The Resilient city explores the city under an emergency. The Militarized city considers the increasing militarization of police, the securitization of space and the new barriers emerging in urban space and life. The course concludes with the Good city, which will explore urban justice how to make cities more livable for all.
Course Vision

In Urban Geography, you will:

1. Learn central concepts, theories and theorists in Urban Geography
2. Develop a critical understanding of urban inequality along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality and ability.
3. Practice writing, research and argumentation
4. Construct critical arguments about current issues in Toronto or other personally relevant cities
5. Grow in three academic virtues: critical reasoning, spatial thinking, and geographic curiosity

Course Assignments

Reading Responses: 25% (Due at noon, the day before the class being responded to)
Final Paper: 35% (Due August 7, before 12 pm, noon)
Midterm Examination: 20% (In class on July 24)
Final Exam: 20% (During exam period)

Important Course Information

Course Website

The course website is available through Quercus (q.utoronto.ca). Login occurs with your utorid. All course content will be posted on the course website, including the syllabus, assignments, and readings. All communication will be facilitated through Quercus.

Schedule

Lectures are two hours long and occur following the schedule listed below.

Office Hours

The course instructor will hold twice-weekly office hours by appointment. Appointments can be made using the calendar feature on Quercus. Appointments are for 10-15 minutes. There will be a limited amount of drop-in hours available throughout the semester, however, appointments are preferred. Teaching assistants will host office hours throughout the semester.

Follow this guide to book appointments: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10580-4212716665

Email Policy

Please take the time to write a professional email. This includes using a subject line that includes the course code, a body that is clearly and concisely written, which directly states either the question or purpose of the
email. Please avoid disclosing personal information in the email. Please review the late policy before emailing about an extension. Extensions are only granted for accessibility, medical or similar concerns. If any question requires a longer answer, please make an appointment with the course instructor or a teaching assistant.

**Readings**

There is no textbook for this course. Readings are available through Quercus. The course schedule indicates the required readings. The readings are part of the course material and are necessary to understand the course content and meet the learning goals. Readings are part of the exams. Please read all required material before class. Recommended readings are there to help support students who wish to further explore a topic.

**Assignment and Grades**

All assignments should be submitted in a double-spaced, 12 point serif font (Times New Roman or Garamond), with a title page, subheadings, headers and footers, page numbers and bibliography in APA format. APA must be used for all citation and referencing. Citation both attributes authorship and communicates information about texts. APA provides immediate information about contemporaneity and authorship. Please visit the Online Writing Lab for additional support.

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/

Students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com website.

**Grading**

Assignments and the final exam will be graded by teaching assistants. Reading responses will be graded by the course instructor. Critical thinking, research and communication are important to being successful in this class. Marks are not deducted, rather marks are earned. Submissions will be taken in their entirety and evaluated as a whole. See the official Arts and Science grading scale below for more details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Grade Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Excellent: Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
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**Percentage**

**Letter Grade**

**GPA**

**Grade Definition**
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Adequate: Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>Adequate: Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Marginal: Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Marginal: Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>Marginal: Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>57-59</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>53-56</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.</td>
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From: [http://calendar.artsci.utoronto.ca/Rules_Regulations.html#grading](http://calendar.artsci.utoronto.ca/Rules_Regulations.html#grading)

**Grade Appeals**

To appeal a grade, write a 200-word paragraph outlining the mistakes made during grading. Send this to the course instructor no sooner than 48 hours after the paper has been returned to you. The instructor or a
different teaching assistant will regrade the paper. This will be the final grade. It is possible that the grade will go down.

**Late Policy**

**Papers are considered on time if submitted before the deadline.** If a paper is submitted before the due date it will be graded and returned within approximately ten days of the due date. Papers are graded in order of submission. Papers can be submitted up to **five days** after the initial deadline, however, these will be marked as late, and will be graded and returned at the convenience of the teaching assistant.

**There are no late deductions.** However, papers submitted after the deadline may not be returned within ten days. Late papers will be graded at the convenience of the teaching assistants and returned according to their schedule.

**Papers will not be accepted after five days** of the initial deadline without acceptable medical or accessibility services documentation. After five days, any paper submitted without medical or accessibility documentation will be given an automatic zero.

**Papers submitted with an illness verification form or accessibility services letters will not be marked as late.** Additional accommodations can be made as needed on a case by case basis, following the direction of a medical professional, accessibility services, or a registrar. Students with accessibility or medical needs are encouraged to tell the course instructor and teaching assistants how the course can be better delivered to meet their needs.

For medical extensions, please attach the following illness verification form:  
http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca/index.php

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. It is your responsibility to know the university’s policies regarding plagiarism and academic misconduct. Review the UofT Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters at:  
http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm

Academic dishonesty is a serious matter and will not be tolerated in any form, especially plagiarism. According to University policy, for any assignment where plagiarism is suspected must be reported to senior university officials. “I didn’t know” is NOT accepted as an excuse. Learn more here:  
http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize/

**Audio and Video recording**

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussions and/or activities. Unauthorized audio or video recordings of lectures and tutorials is strictly prohibited, and would constitute a form of academic misconduct. Exceptions can be made for students with accessibility needs that might require audio recording. These will be dealt with on a case by case basis.
Pronouns and Oppressive Language

Please use an individual’s preferred pronouns as a marker of basic respect. Please be cognizant of the language used when talking to and about people both in class discussions and in writing. If you are unsure how to talk about a person or population, please take the time to research the preferred terminology, or seek guidance from the course instructor or a teaching assistant. Use gender-neutral writing. “They” is appropriate as a singular pronoun, use an author's first name or a title “the authour describes...”. Grades may be deducted for failure to use gender-neutral language or for misgendering authors.

Other impediments to participation

Please let the course instructor know how they can accommodate your learning needs.

As childcare can be difficult to secure, young children are welcome in the classroom as needed.
Course Outline

Class 1, July 3: Introduction

Required Reading

Class 2, July 8: The Forgotten City

Required Readings


Recommended readings
Secret History of Canada - Season 2 - Water


Class 3, July 10: The Queer and Gendered City

Required Readings


Class 4, July 15: The Toxic City

Guest Lecture: Nicki Van Lier

Required Readings

Class 5, July 17: The Gentrified City

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


Class 6, July 22: The Smart City

Required readings


Class 7, July 24: Midterm

Class 8, July 29: The Night City

Guest Lecturer: Robert Catherall

Required Readings


Class 9, July 31: The Militarized City
Guest Lecturer: Andrew Merril

Required Readings:

Class 10, August 7: The Resilient City
Guest Lecturer: Benjamin Patrick Butler

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings

Class 11, August 12: The Good City
Required Readings
Assignments

Reading Responses

Overview
The purpose of the reading responses is to help process course material and generate questions for discussion that can be addressed in class. The responses are also a place to for you reflect on or engage with course material in an ongoing basis. The reading responses reward ongoing participation with the course material. Reading responses are opportunities to practice academic writing in a low stakes environment. Also, they are a way to communicate your understanding directly to the course instructor.

Reading responses are to be 500-600 word entries worth 5% each, due at noon the day before the class that you are responding to (Sunday at noon for Monday's lecture, Tuesday at noon for Wednesday's lecture). There is a zero-tolerance late policy for reading responses. Late submissions will not be graded. Only body text is counted towards the word count.

Each response is worth 5% and is due at noon the day before the content is discussed in class.

Requirements

- Students will submit short responses of 500-600 words (body text only) that engage with the readings for the next class.
- Responses must be submitted before the deadline (noon the day before lecture)
- Responses should summarize the readings and other content in brief
- APA formatting for in-text and bibliographic entries
- Gender neutral writing (Avoid he/she. Use their last name, “they/their” as a singular pronoun or their title, such as “the authour”)

Prompts
Responses could address one or more of the prompts:

- What is the author's main argument?
- What is the goal of paper?
- What other articles are being cited?
- How does this article attend to race, gender, class, or ability?
- What question guides the author?
- What answers does the author provide?
- What makes this research unique?
- What theory or theories does the author use and why?
- What methods does the author use, why did they choose these methods?

Tips

- Do not wait until the end of the semester
- Think about what you like or dislike about the article
- Take notes while you are reading about the article
- If you are having trouble with a text, write about what you do not understand
- Make links to other readings, weeks, lectures
- Be creative!
- This is a very low stakes way to try writing responses
- Ask questions in the response, try to answer them
- First person writing should be reserved for writing personally, otherwise write directly without first person writing.
- Focus on simple, clear, and direct writing.
- Avoid reproducing the academic jargon you might encounter in the article.

Evaluation

- Each response is worth 5%
- Responses are due 12pm (noon) the day before class.
- Late submissions will not be evaluated

Grading Standards for Reading Responses

4 - 5 points: Fully Satisfactory. The entry substantively reflections on all assigned readings and materials for that class. It summarizes the central claims and synthesizes the ideas into its core arguments. It evinces serious engagement with the material. The response is well presented with no spelling or grammatical errors, proper citation style, and professional appearance.

3 - 4 points: Satisfactory: The entry shows an effort to summarize and reflect on the assigned material. The response is descriptive and perhaps starts to demonstrate the core arguments. The response is readable, uses a proper citation format and is presentable.

0 -2 point: The response narrowly engages with the assignment material. It might not engage with all material. The response might be incomplete. It might lack meaningful engagement, critical thought, or even a basic description of the material. The response uses an incorrect citation style or does not properly cite any course material. There are numerous grammatical and spelling errors. The document is missing basic presentation elements, including a title, date, name, bibliography, etc.
Final Paper

Objective
Write a research paper on a topic below using theory and methods from urban geography.

Method
Write a 2400-2600 word research paper using one of the prompts below. The paper should:

- Explore the history of the issue
- The network of actors involved and their power relationships
- The geography of work, capital, production, distribution and consumption
- Explore what is at stake? Who stands to benefit and who stands to lose or suffer?
- Be critical

Below is a list of topics that can be used. However, students are encouraged to be creative in their choice and approach. Students who choose their own topic must seek approval in writing from either the course instructor or a teaching assistant during their office hours or over email before July 24th.

Organization

- The paper should have a creative title
- There should be an introduction which outlines the argument and the paper, with a clear thesis statement and argument.
- Introductions should introduce the paper and the argument (not just the topic).
- This could be followed by a theoretical framework section that explores a relevant theory from the course or urban geography.
- The main body of the paper should be used to forward the argument.
- Use description to map out the connections between actors, spaces, power relationships and flows of capital. However, description is not enough, it is important to develop and forward the argument in the paper.
- The conclusion should summarize the main points of the argument.

Requirements

- 2400-2600 words (not including title page and bibliography, only the main body text is counted)
- Minimum 8 scholarly sources (Peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, etc.)
- Minimum of 2 popular sources (newspapers, documentaries, magazine articles, podcasts, etc.)
- Double spaced, 12 point Times New Roman (or similar serif font)
- Cite all lecture material
- APA citation style for in-text citations and bibliography formatting
- Gender neutral writing (Avoid he/she. Use their last name, “they/their” as a singular pronoun or their title, such as “the authour”)

**Tips**

- Be creative, have a title, use subheadings
- Use geography and social science journals
- The more citations the better researched the document will look

**Evaluation**

This paper is 35% of the final grade.
The paper will be evaluated following multiple criteria, including how well the paper connects the chosen subject to course material, the strength of the overall argument, how well the paper integrates theory and empirical observation, how well the paper is presented including correct use of APA style and gender neutral writing, the depth of research and engagement with scholarly concepts and the quality of citations.

**Learning Outcome**

For students to gain a critical understanding of current issue facing cities. For students to research, analyze and put into dialogue different sources of knowledge and argumentation.

**Possible Topics**

Below is a list of potential topics. Consider these starting points, feel free to develop these ideas beyond the prompt. There is no pressure to answer all or even any of the questions in the prompt.

1. Climate change is affecting cities in a number of ways. Coastal cities are experiencing more severe storms and hurricanes. Cities in hot climates increasingly use air conditioning as a means of surviving extreme heat. Cold climate cities are dealing with larger seasonal shifts and more extreme weather. Cities are dealing with climate change in a number of ways. Some are building so-called green buildings and retrofitting older buildings to be more efficient. Others are building seawalls to deal with rising oceans. Some cities have declared a climate emergency following actions by groups like Extinction Rebellion. Write a paper that looks at a specific city and how they are affected by climate change and what is being done about it. Focus specifically on issues of climate justice, for example: How does climate change affect poor and homeless people? How does green building relate to gentrification? How does public transit relate to climate justice? Also, consider issues of distributive justice, are the people and cities who are most affected by climate change the ones most responsible for it? Be sure to highlight any relevant social movements. The paper could explore more than one city, but should not be a survey of many different cities. Depth is preferred to breadth.

2. Sidewalk labs a subsidiary of Google/Alphabet has recently proposed building a large development on Toronto's waterfront. The proposal includes a mix of new housing, commercial and retail space, along with the provision of municipal services such as waste, recycling and transit. The development is supported by a massive surveillance apparatus that will guide the daily operation of the development. Critics have suggested
that this experiment in urbanization could be costly for the city, promote gentrification, and violate people privacy, amongst other criticisms. Others argue that this could be a boon for the city, creating jobs and adding to the tax base. Write a paper that explores the Sidewalk labs projects with specific attention to municipal governance, privacy, and privatization. Focus on issues of social justice: Who gets to benefit from this development? What is the motivation of Google/Sidewalk to pursue this project? What is there history with urban development, have they carried out similar projects elsewhere? What are the implications of the surveillance infrastructure on policing and racialized groups? What is to be done with the data?

3. In 2018, Amazon began searching for a city to host a new headquarters. Cities began making proposals to the tech giant, offering numerous forms of tax incentives and other offerings. Governor of New York Andrew Cuomo went so far as to offer to change his name to "Amazon Cuomo". Increasingly, cities are competing for capital to come to their city in the hopes that it will create jobs and increase the tax base. Amazon eventually chose New York City. However, due to massive protest and social organizing, the city eventually withdrew the offer. This process is reminiscent of both Richard Florida's Creative Class theory, that cities should attract a certain class, and trickle down economics, that if you support capital that it will trickle down to the working class. Write a paper that explores interurban competition. Explore how feasible competition processes like Amazon's are. Do all cities compete evenly? Focus on critical questions about urban economies: Who benefits from this form of interurban competition? Do these projects benefit municipalities or is this a zero-sum game? Are there better investments for cities? Are there other relevant examples, such as Foxconn's attempt to make a factory in America.

4. Propose your own topic. Write a 250-500 word abstract that outlines a few research questions and offers a preliminary thesis, with a bibliography. Proposed topics must be approved by the course instructor or teaching assistants before July 24th. The abstract will not count towards the evaluation of the paper nor your final grade.