

Urban Anthropology

Summer 2023

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"The city is the maximal expression of the human need – and capacity – for interdependence." ~ Ulf Hannerz

"Cities are problems in organized complexity." ~ Jane Jacobs

"Cities are places where strangers are likely to meet." ~ Richard Sennett

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course explores the city as a product of, and a rich site for, human beings' negotiations over social and economic rights, power, identity, memory, meaning, and community. Drawing on a variety of historical, geographic, and ethnographic studies, we will ask what is qualitatively unique about urban life. The city is a site of economic and political centralization, but also a landscape of sentiment and belonging. It is a space of ritual observance and spectacle, as well as the locus of inequality, alienation, suffering, and dysfunction. Debates over urban planning encompass moral, cultural, and personal concerns, not simply the blueprints of economists, policymakers, and architects. Throughout the course, methodological questions regarding the city as an object of historical and ethnographic study are highlighted. We will look at Tokyo's fish markets, mid-20th century New York City, contemporary Washington, DC and Baltimore, and the wounded cities of Beirut and New Orleans in order to understand the complexity of the urban experience through a holistic and critical anthropological lens.

Whether you realize it or not, you are part of a city. Each of you participates, to one degree or another, in the social, economic, recreational, and cultural matrices of Washington, DC. Although you might spend most of your time west of Wisconsin Avenue, you are intricately intermeshed in the ecological, infrastructural, economic, administrative, and imaginative systems of our nation's capital. The anchor text of this course, Ulf Hannerz's *Exploring the City*, states that cities are the "maximal expression of the human need-and capacity-for interdependence." Cities present us with the opportunity and necessity to play different roles at different times, and to traverse spaces and places in unpredictable ways that can open new horizons, attitudes, and relationships to us in serendipitous ways. As we will see, the quality, not just the quantity, of human interactions are what makes a city a city.

Two key themes of this course will be *interdependence* and *interrelationship*. We will explore these themes through our readings and discussions.

COURSE TEXTS:

Hannerz, Ulf. 1980. *Exploring the City*.

Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

Steinberg, Phil and Rob Shields. 2012. *What is a City? Rethinking the Urban after Hurricane Katrina*

ON CANVAS:

Krieger, P. "Aesthetics and Anthropology of Megacities: A New Field of Art Historical Research" <http://actesbranly.revues.org/318#text>
[Links to an external site.](#)

Pickett, Cadenasso, et al., "Beyond Urban Legends: An Emerging Framework of Urban Ecology, as Illustrated by the Baltimore Ecosystem Study"

Gmelch, George, Robert V. Kemper, Walter P. Zenner. 2010. *Urban Life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*. (Selected chapters.)

King, L., 2005. "The Millennial Medina: Discourses of Time, Space, and Authenticity in Projects to Market and Renovate Beirut and Nazareth" (on Canvas)

King, L. 2008. "A Nixed, not a Mixed, City."

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Participation and attendance: Read the weekly assigned material in a timely fashion. You should take an **active role in discussions** (10%) since your participation will indicate your level of engagement with the readings. **Your regular attendance** (5%) is required.
2. Cognitive mapping exercise (5%)
3. Two analytical essays (40%)
4. Two field research exercises (24%) (Details to be provided in class.)
5. Research proposal exercise (16%) (Details to be provided in class.)

SUMMARY OF STUDENT EVALUATION CRITERIA:

| Assessment | % of grade | Due on: |
|--|------------|--------------------------|
| Class Attendance and Participation | 15% | Throughout the semester. |
| Cognitive Mapping | 5% | June 9th |
| Two Analytical Essays (20 points each) | 40% | June 25th July 10th |

| | | |
|---|-------------|---|
| Two Field Research Survey Exercises (Eastern Market and Anacostia) (12 points each) | 24% | Weeks 2 and 5 (You will post these on Discussion Board) |
| Research Proposal Exercise | 16% | July 10th |
| Total | 100% | |

GRADING SCALE

| A | | B | | C | | D | | F | | | | |
|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----------|
| - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | | | |
| 100- | 96 | 92 | 89 | 86 | 82 | 79 | 76 | 72 | 69 | 66 | 62 | Below 60 |
| 97 | -93 | -90 | -87 | -83 | -80 | -77 | -73 | -70 | -67 | -63 | -60 | Percent |

Please keep your cell phones and Internet off as a common courtesy to your colleagues and instructor.

Take notes by hand, not on your laptop. Here's why:

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/> Links to an external site.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1:

- Introduction to the course and each other.
- ASSIGNMENT: Cognitive mapping of Washington, DC, and your hometown. <https://www.handmaps.org/> Links to an external site.
- <https://www.fastcompany.com/3053172/these-beautiful-mental-maps-of-cities-help-your-brain-regain-what-it-has-lost-to-gps> Links to an external site.
- Krieger, P. "Aesthetics and Anthropology of Megacities: A New Field of Art Historical Research" <http://actesbranly.revues.org/318#text> Links to an external site.
- Pickett, Cadenasso, et al., "Beyond Urban Legends: An Emerging Framework of Urban Ecology, as Illustrated by the Baltimore Ecosystem Study" (on Canvas) NOTE: Do not be alarmed by this science-heavy article. The aim here is not to understand the biochemical processes that happen in and around a city, but rather, simply to learn that there are many different ways of looking at and

understanding cities, and anthropology's interdisciplinary nature requires us to take many perspectives into account.)

- “Anaquash” (short film about life along the Anacostia River) <https://vimeo.com/61503905>Links to an external site.
- Chapters 1, 2, 4 and 6 in Gmelch, Kemper, and Zenner, *Urban Lives* (on Canvas).
 - [Tracking the health of Baltimore's streams' systems](#) Links to an external site.
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/video/nyregion/100000001167211/nature-in-the-city-.html>Links to an external site.

Week 2:

- Chapter 7 in Gmelch, Kemper, and Zenner, *Urban Lives*. (On Canvas)
- Chapters 1 and 2 in Hannerz, *Exploring the City*. (Read these two chapters in their entirety)
- Field trip to Eastern Market

Week 3:

- Hannerz, *Exploring the City*.
 - Chapter 3: pp. 59-72 and pp. 76-118. (Monday)
 - Chapter 4: pp. 119-135 and pp. 140-144. (Tuesday)
 - Chapter 5: pp. 163-180, pp. 186-192, and pp. 200-201. (Tuesday and Wednesday)
 - Chapter 6: entire. (Thursday)
 - Chapter 7: pp. 242-261, pp. 276-288, and pp. 296-315. (Thursday)
 - Appendix (entire) (Thursday)

FIRST ESSAY DUE ON June 25th

Week 4:

Selected chapters in Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.

- Documentary about Jane Jacobs

Week 5:

Tuesday:

- Field Trip to Anacostia

Wednesday and Thursday:

- Selected Chapters in Steinberg, Phil and Rob Shields, *What is a City? Rethinking the Urban after Hurricane Katrina* (on Canvas)

- "The Big Uneasy" (documentary about the impact of hurricane Katrina on New Orleans) Watch this film on your own, before class on Wednesday: <https://vimeo.com/137159734> [Links to an external site.](#)

Friday:

- King, L., "The Millennial Medina: Discourses of Time, Space, and Authenticity in Projects to Market and Renovate Beirut and Nazareth" (on Canvas)
- King, L. "A Nixed, not a Mixed, City."

SECOND ANALYTICAL PAPER and RESEARCH PROPOSAL are due on Monday, July 12th by Noon

Course Summary:

| Date | Details | Due |
|------------------|--|---------------|
| Fri Jun 9, 2023 | Assignment Cognitive Mapping: Your Hometown and Washington, DC | due by 5:59pm |
| Sat Jun 17, 2023 | Discussion Topic Reflections on our Field Trip to Eastern Market | due by 5:59pm |
| Sun Jun 25, 2023 | Assignment First Essay Due on Sunday, June 27th | due by 12pm |
| Sun Jul 9, 2023 | Discussion Topic Reflections on our Field Trip to Anacostia | due by 5:59pm |
| Mon Jul 10, 2023 | Assignment Field Research Proposal Due on July 12th | due by 9pm |
| | Assignment Second Essay due on July 12 | due by 9pm |