THE URBAN SCALE:
build environment, social forms, and political potentials

Claudio Sopranzetti

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course examines key theoretical concepts and research engagement with cities. The main driving force is an exploration of the city as a multiscalar entity. With this in mind the course is divided in three sections. In the first one we will explore prominent conceptualization of urbanism, urban revolution and the relations between cities and capital. In the second section, instead we focus on different traditions of exploring cities at a variety of scales and in relation to different social formations (individual, neighborhood, global and so on), finally we engage with the political potential that cities, and their multiple scales, offer.

CLASS FORMAT: The online course consists of three parts: lectures, readings, and seminar discussions. Each week you will have an introductory video and lecture that grounds the themes and readings for the week in their historical, intellectual, and political context. The second part will instead be based on your readings and comments on them using Perusall. Starting from Week 3 a few of you will sign-up each week to read all the comments on the text before class and summarize them for this discussion. This is a very important part and is a requirement that you engage there with each other questions, comments, and notes. Finally, we will have a discussion section. Ideally, we would do this live online in the class designated time but, given the time difference, we may have to break down in groups or occasionally have asynchronous discussions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students are expected to critically engage with the intellectual history of the discipline, address the strength and weakness of different theories and employ the conceptual paradigms in their own research projects (see final paper).

[1] Careful preparation of the mandatory readings by the date on which they are to be discussed in class. Class discussion will require informed participation on the part of all. The readings will be available on Perusall, an annotation and reading software. Basically, this will allow you to write notes on the text, both notes for yourself (that no one else will see) and others that will be public. The idea is that through your notes, comments, doubts, and question we get to read together and develop a discussion directly in the text. This will be a very important part of class so you are expected to engage with our questions and with one another, which will be part of the final grade. (see below for info on how to use Perusall).

[2] Sign up to summarize the readings and start discussion in class with those themes for a week.

[3] Final Paper: This will be a research paper based on something you are working on. We will discuss over the course of the term this with each of you. The paper should be 4000-5000 words.

GRADE COMPOSITION:

Reading, Participation, and Discussion questions: 45%

Summary of discussion: 20%

Final Paper: 35%
SECTION I: ON URBANISM

WEEK 1: Urban Revolution

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


Harvey - Rebel Cities, Chapter 2, “The Urban Roots of Capitalist Crises.” (2013)

WEEK 2: City and Capital

Required Readings:


“Industrialization and Urbanization,”

Additional Readings:


Peck, Jamie, and Adam Tickell (2002) "Neoliberalizing space." Antipode 34.3: 380-404


Greenfield, Adam. Against the Smart City: A Pamphlet. This is Part I of" The City is Here to Use”. Do projects, 2013.

SECTION II: MULTIPLE SCALES

WEEK 3: City and Individuals

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:

**WEEK 4: Neighborhoods and Enclaves: the city as mosaic**

**Required Readings:**


**Additional Readings:**


**WEEK 5: City Governance**

**Required Readings:**


Additional Readings:


WEEK 6: Global Cities

Required Readings:

Sassen, Saskia “A New Geography of Centers and Margins.” In The City Reader. (First published in Cities in a World Economy in 1994).


Additional Readings:


WEEK 7: Cities from the South

Required Readings:


Additional Readings:


**WEEK 8: The Nature Metropolis**

**Required Readings:**


Alexander, Christopher. “A City is Not a Tree.” Architectural Form 172,(April/May, 1965).


**Additional Readings:**
Davis, Mike. “Fortress LA.” Pg. 222-63 in City of Quartz and “How Eden Lost its Garden” in Ecology of Fear.


**WEEK 9: Planetary Urbanization**


**SECTION III: POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES**
WEEK 10: Housing, Gentrification, and Squatting


Aalbers and Christophers - "Centering Housing in Political Economy" (2013)

Bryan and Rafferty - "Political Economy and Housing in the Twenty-First Century: From Mobile Homes to Liquid Housing?" (2013)

** WEEK 11: Urban Rioting **


**WEEK 12: Mobility, Infrastructures and Blockages**


