

Geography 340 – A01
Geographies of the North American City
University of Victoria
Fall 2015

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Office hours:	Mondays and Thursdays, 1:20 p.m.—2:20 p.m.
Course time:	Wednesdays and Thursdays, 2:30 p.m.—3:50 p.m.
Course location:	Clearihue Building, Room A308

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to GEOG 340—Geographies of the North American City! This course offers a broad introduction to the field of urban geography with a primary focus on the historical development and contemporary processes of urbanization in Canada and the United States. The main objective of this class is to examine key themes in urban geography, including the historical geography of urbanization, changing approaches to urban planning and governance; the politics of urban renewal; neoliberal urbanism; housing and homelessness; gentrification; cultural diversity, social segregation, and immigrant communities; and utopian speculations on the urban future. We shall explore these issues and more in relation to various North American cities, yet we will delve most deeply into the historical geographies of New York City to illuminate the complexities of the urban experience in North America's largest megacity.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Provide a broad overview of the key concepts and perspectives in urban geography
- Examine the main urban geographical processes of urbanization in North America
- Assess the major political, economic, social, and cultural changes that have transformed contemporary urban landscapes in North America
- Critically analyze the politics of urban development and social inequality within capitalist societies

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Acquire a general understanding of the major concepts and approaches in contemporary urban geography
- Acquire an in-depth knowledge of the historical and contemporary processes of urbanization in the North American context
- Develop the ability to critically assess the contested politics that have shaped urban spatial imaginaries and regimes of urban governance
- Improve competency in critical urban analysis by writing a critical review essay and producing a digitally-edited short urban film

CLASS FORMAT

The format for this course will consist of a combination of lectures, in-class activities, and films. Most class sessions will be lecture-based, but we will also occasionally use class time to discuss the assigned readings, which students are expected to have read prior to class each day. In addition to the standard lecture format, there will also be several in-class activities and films throughout the semester. Aside from the midterm and final exam, the main assignments for the course will be a critical review essay and an urban film project.

READINGS

Required Course Texts

- Scobey, David (2002), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- All other reading materials will be available on the CourseSpaces page for this class (<http://coursespaces.uvic.ca>).

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING SCHEME

Your final grade will be based on the following calculation:

Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Critical Review Essay	20%
Urban Film Project	30%
Attendance	10%
Total:	100%

Grading Scale

A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	D	F
90-100%	85-89%	80-84%	77-79%	73-76%	70-72%	65-69%	60-64%	50-59%	0-49%

COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM: COURSESPACES

We will be using the CourseSpaces management system as a medium for the posting of relevant course materials and related course information (<http://coursespaces.uvic.ca>).

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams (40%)

The course will have one mid-term exam (20%) and a final exam (20%). Each exam will consist of a combination of multiple-choice and essay questions. The final exam, held during the regular final exam period, will be cumulative.

Critical Review Essay (20%)

The ability to write well and develop critical thinking skills is a crucial component of any university education. For this class, we will be reading David Scobey's book, *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*, during the first half of the semester, and the major writing assignment for the course will consist of a Critical Review Essay on Scobey's book. If you review the syllabus schedule, I have listed recommended dates to complete specific chapters of this book, so that you can stay on track in order to have enough time later in the semester to write your essay. The essay should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt Times New Roman font, 2.54 cm margins, with no large spaces between paragraphs. The primary objective of this essay is NOT to simply summarize the book but rather to develop your own argument by selecting a key theme that is interwoven throughout the book, and exploring this theme through an in-depth engagement with the text itself while also considering how it relates to contemporary forms of urbanism in North America today. The essay can either be written individually or in groups of two.

We will be having a class discussion of Scobey's *Empire City* (Chapter 1-6) on **October 15**, so make sure to have finished reading these chapters prior to class on that day. On **November 19**, please bring a hardcopy draft of your Critical Review Essay to class for a peer-to-peer writing workshop, and the final submission is due in class on **December 3**. No late papers will be accepted without prior consultation with the instructor regarding a medical emergency or related university-excused extension.

Urban Film Project (30%)

As part of this course, students will work in groups of 3-5 students to make a 10-minute film about a particular aspect of urban geography in the Greater Victoria Region. The film should be digitally edited using desktop software (such as iMovie for Macs or comparable software for PCs). Groups should consult with the instructor about potential topic ideas, but examples might include a focus on:

- a particular neighbourhood in the Greater Victoria Region
- a key urban issue in Victoria (e.g., homelessness, urban redevelopment, transit planning, the sewage debate, the amalgamation debate, graffiti, etc.)

Once your group has selected a topic, you should post your group members' names and your topic idea on the CourseSpaces discussion forum entitled "Selecting an Urban Film Project Topic." This will enable your fellow classmates to see what other topics have already been chosen, so as not to have multiple groups picking the same topic.

Ideally, there should be at least one person in each group with prior video-editing experience. However, we will spend a portion of one class session learning some basic techniques to edit video using iMovie software. Video equipment is available for rent at a reasonable cost via UVic's Audio-Visual Media Services if group members do not have their own video equipment (<http://web.uvic.ca/mediaservices/djrentalpricelist.htm>). No late videos will be accepted without prior consultation with the instructor regarding a medical emergency or related university-excused extension.

Attendance (10%)

Attendance is crucial to the successful completion of this class. A sign-in sheet, therefore, will be distributed at the beginning of each class session. Each student is responsible for signing the sign-in sheet. If a student has a university-excused absence, this should be discussed with the instructor, preferably before the date of absence. Additionally, each student is required to attend at least one of *The City Talks* public lectures as part of their participation in this course (see below). If a student cannot attend one of these talks due to a scheduling conflict, please consult the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make other arrangements.

The City Talks: Urban Studies Speaker Series

This fall the Committee for Urban Studies at UVic will be hosting its annual public speaker series entitled, *The City Talks*. The series schedule will be posted on CourseSpaces, and while you are only required to attend one of the lectures as part of your class attendance for the course this fall, I encourage you to come to all the lectures if time permits. For more information about *The City Talks* schedule, see <http://thecitytalks.ca>.

OFFICE HOURS

I strongly encourage you to come to my office hours. As the course instructor, my main goal is to help you learn, so if you have any questions about the material, or the class in general, you are more than welcome to come speak with me during office hours. If you are not available during that time, email me to set up an appointment.

EMAIL

Send all email to me using the email address listed on the first page of the syllabus (redwood@uvic.ca). Please include the course number (GEOG 340) in the email subject title. I will do my best to respond promptly to your questions.

PLAGIARISM

All class assignments should be prepared by the student(s) submitting the assignment. Plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty, will not be tolerated in this course. Plagiarism consists of: (a) submitting someone else's work as your own without the use of proper citation or (b) paraphrasing another's ideas without acknowledging the author's work through citation. If you have any questions concerning matters of plagiarism, please see the following link: <<http://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/plagiarism/index.php>>.

COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEYS (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed via MyPage and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Below is the course schedule for the entire semester. I will do my best to stick to this schedule, although I do reserve the right to make changes if necessary.

Course Schedule

Week 1

Wednesday, September 9: Course overview

No assigned readings.

Thursday, September 10: The North American urban experience in global context

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), “Can a City Be Planned?” (Introduction), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 1-14.

Week 2

Wednesday, September 16: Urban historical transformations I

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), “Metropolis and Nation” (Chapter 1), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 15-54.

Thursday, September 17: Urban historical transformations II

No assigned readings.

Week 3

Wednesday, September 23: Film—New York, A Documentary: The City and the World

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), “The Midcentury Boom” (Chapter 2), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 55-88.

Thursday, September 24: Film—New York, A Documentary: The City and the World, continued

No assigned readings.

Week 4

Wednesday, September 30: From modernism to the new urbanism

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), “The Rule of Real Estate” (Chapter 3), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 89-133.

Thursday, October 1: Changing consumerscapes in the commodity world

No assigned readings.

Week 5

Wednesday, October 7: Regimes of urban governance and the politics of scale

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), "The Frictions of Space" (Chapter 4), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 134-157.

Thursday, October 8: Guest speaker

No assigned readings.

Week 6

Wednesday, October 14: Spatial imaginaries in the age of neoliberal urbanism

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), "Imagining the Imperial Metropolis" (Chapter 5), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 158-188.

**** Make sure to finish reading Scobey's *Empire City* (Chapters 1-6) before class (October 15).

Thursday, October 15: Discussion of Scobey's *Empire City* (Chapter 1-6) and exam review

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), "The Politics of City Building" (Chapter 6), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 189-216.

Week 7

Wednesday, October 21: MIDTERM EXAM

No assigned readings.

Thursday, October 22: Film—*Remember Africville*

No assigned readings.

Week 8

Wednesday, October 28: Geographies of housing and homelessness

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), "Uptown Utopia" (Chapter 7), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 217-250.

**** Make sure to finish reading Slater's article on gentrification before the next class (October 29) since we will be doing an in-class activity related to this reading.

Thursday, October 29: Gentrification and the politics of urban revitalization

Readings

Slater, T. (2004), "North American Gentrification? Revanchist and Emancipatory Perspectives Explored," *Environment and Planning A* 36(7): 1191-1213.

Week 9

Wednesday, November 4: Film—My Brooklyn

Readings

Scobey, D. (2002), “The Failure of Bourgeois Urbanism” (Chapter 8), *Empire City: The Making and Meaning of the New York City Landscape*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 251-267.

**** Make sure to finish reading Lee’s article on gentrification in Brooklyn before the next class (November 5) since we will be doing an in-class activity related to this reading and the *My Brooklyn* film.

Thursday, November 5: In-class activity

Readings

Lees, L. (2003), “Super-Gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City,” *Urban Studies* 40(12): 2487-2509.

Week 10

Wednesday, November 11: NO CLASS—READING BREAK

No assigned readings.

Thursday, November 12: Cultural diversity, immigration, and urban social change

Readings

Bauder, H. and B. Sharpe (2002), “Residential Segregation of Visible Minorities in Canada’s Gateway Cities,” *The Canadian Geographer* 46(3): 204-222.

Week 11

Wednesday, November 18: Guest speaker

No assigned readings.

* Bring a hardcopy draft of your critical review essay on Scobey’s *Empire City* for a writing workshop at the next class (November 19).

Thursday, November 19: Critical review essay writing workshop

No assigned readings.

Week 12

Wednesday, November 25: Utopian and dystopian visions of urban futures

Readings

Pinder, D. (2015), “Reconstituting the Possible: Lefebvre, Utopia and the Urban Question,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39(1): 28-45.

Thursday, November 26: Final exam review and submission of urban film project

No assigned readings.

* **URBAN FILM PROJECT DUE TODAY IN CLASS (NOVEMBER 26)**

Week 13

Wednesday, December 2: Screening of urban film projects

No assigned readings.

Thursday, December 3: Screening of urban film projects

No assigned readings.

*** *CRITICAL REVIEW ESSAY DUE TODAY IN CLASS (DECEMBER 3)***

*** *The final exam will be scheduled during finals week: time and location to be announced.***

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.