Urban Life:  
Social Justice and the Lived City

Social Sciences (NSOS3500)  
Mondays 6:00pm-7:50pm  
Building F, Room 301  
The New School, Spring 2006  
Rachel Heiman  
Office hours: Tuesdays 12:00-2:00pm  
66 W. 12th, Room 908 (212.229.5119)  
heimanr@newschool.edu

In *The Republic*, Plato creates an ideal city, a *kallipolis*, in order to discover the nature and ends of justice. From ancient to modern times, justice has been a central question in the conception, design and lived experience of the city. And yet, more often than not, cities have enabled vast forms of injustice. In this course, we explore the cultural, political, and economic complexities of modern urban life. In our journey through the modern metropolis, we examine the following questions: What does the development of the modern city tell us about social conditions and the politics of class, race, gender, nation, and empire? What do modernist visions of the city reveal about its promise, its wonders, its pitfalls, and its inequalities? What are the different sites and strategies of inclusion and exclusion in the city? And how might we create socially and economically just cities in a postmodern world?

In the course of our study, we explore the ways that different disciplines approach the study of cities. If a novelist, an anthropologist, a historian, a sociologist, and an urban planner were dropped onto the same city street at the same moment, what would each of them see – social strife, buildings, art galleries, ethnic groups, class mobility? What questions would they ask of their experiences, and how would they arrive at those questions? How would they then register, document and record their responses? How would they talk to one another? Through an exploration of the possibilities for justice in the city, this course provides an introduction to the ways in which writers, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and architects come to terms with the city in their respective disciplines.

REQUIRED READINGS

The following books are available at Shakespeare & Co. (716 Broadway at Washington Place). A course pack of required reading materials is available for purchase at Advanced Copy Center (552 Laguardia Place at 3rd Street). The texts and the course pack are also available on reserve at Fogelman Library (65 Fifth Avenue).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Weekly Journal (30%): Each week during which there are outside readings, credit students are required to submit 1-page of writing (typed, single-spaced). These weekly journals are a chance for you to process your thoughts on the week’s readings before our class discussion. The first couple of paragraphs should summarize the authors’ key ideas and arguments. The final paragraph(s) may either discuss links to other weeks’ readings or explore connections between issues raised in the material and your own observations of urban life. Your grade for these short writings will reflect your critical engagement with the reading material. Because the weekly journals are an opportunity to organize your thoughts before class, they will not be accepted after the date on which they are due.

Class Participation (20%): Class participation is essential in this class. Your grade for class participation is not calculated by how much you speak, but rather by the ways in which you enable a lively and useful discussion. At times this means bouncing an idea off the group or bringing up something that is puzzling you. At other times this involves asking one of your peers to elaborate more fully on a thought that he or she is sharing. And sometimes this entails sitting quietly and holding onto an idea that can best be entertained at a later point in the discussion. It is important that everyone get the chance to participate fully in our class discussions. We will be learning as much from each other as we will from our readings and writing projects. All credit students are required to attend our weekly classes, so I expect you to let me know if you are unable to attend. Extenuating circumstances aside, your grade for the course as a whole will be lowered upon more than 2 absences.

Ethnographic Study: Students will be conducting an ethnographic research project on a topic about which they feel personally connected, passionate, or simply curious. You can dive deeper into an issue that we are reading about together in class or you can choose to explore another topic pertaining to struggles for social justice in the city. Students will meet with me early in the semester to discuss their project idea, which consists of two parts:

- **Midterm Paper (20%)**: The first paper (6-8 pages, double-spaced) will involved *library research*, drawing on at least four sources (such as academic journals, books, newspapers, or magazines) that enable you to map out divergent political perspectives on the topic. On March 13th, we will be having a workshop with the head librarian. We will meet in one of the computer labs, where she will guide you through online resources for conducting research for your midterm papers.

- **Final Paper (30%)**: The second part consists of ethnographic research, either through conducting an *interview* with someone directly involved with the issues or an *observation* of an organization or event pertaining to them. You will integrate your findings from your ethnographic research into your midterm paper, along with pertinent class readings. The culmination of the project will be a 10-15 page paper (typed, double-spaced).
Extenuating circumstances aside, papers will not be accepted late. All sources must be properly cited.

Other Important Information:

University Writing Center: The University Writing Center offers students individual tutoring sessions that cover every phase of the writing process. Students can meet with a tutor to revise a paper, develop a rough draft, or discuss how to approach and organize an assignment. The University Writing Center is located at 65 Fifth Avenue, Room 218. To find out more information or to make an appointment, go to http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism will result in an F in the course in accordance with the University’s policy on plagiarism (see Student Handbook). Students should purchase *A Writer’s Reference* by Diana Hacker for information on proper citation format. Also keep in mind that self-plagiarism will not be tolerated. Self-plagiarism entails using the same paper for more than one class without approval from both instructors.

Students with Disabilities: Please let me know if you will need any academic accommodations. If you have not already done so, contact Tom McDonald (212-229-5472) in the office of Student Disability Services to figure out a plan that best suits your needs. Mr. McDonald’s office is located in the Graduate Faculty building at 65 Fifth Avenue, Room 409. All conversations will be kept confidential.

CLASS SCHEDULE

I. Vivid Places and Spaces of (In)Justice

January 23: Introduction to the Study of Cities

January 30: Social Justice and Urban Utopias
- Guest Speaker, Charles Oliver, Ph.D. in Philosophy, GF, New School for Social Research
II. The Development of Modern Urbanism

February 6: The Industrial City, Urban Ills, and the Politics of Class in the 19th Century


February 13: The Crowd: Masses, Urban Anxieties and Pleasures at the Fin de Siècle


February 20: No Class – President’s Day

February 27: Cities-in-Miniature: World’s Fairs, Arcades, and the Orientalist Gaze


III. Modernist Visions

March 6: Architecture or Revolution: The Housing Question

• Guest Speaker: Esra Akcan, Postdoctoral Lecturer, Departments of Philosophy & Architecture, Columbia University

March 13: Expressionism, the Avant-Garde, and the Woman-Machine
• Film: Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1926).
• **In-Class Library Workshop**

March 20: No Class – Spring Break

March 27: Peer Review Workshop
• We will spend our in-class time workshopping your midterm papers in preparation for the research and writing of your final papers.
• **Midterm Paper Due**

IV. Sites and Strategies of Inclusion and Exclusion

April 3: The Street and the Neighborhood
• In-class film clips: “New York: A Documentary Film” (2001, Episode 7, selections)

April 10: The (Sub)urban

April 17: El Barrio
April 24: Gentrification and the Militarization of Urban Space

May 1: Cities of Walls

May 8: Public Space, Heritage Tourism, and the Development of Governors Island
- Guest speaker: Peter Fleischer, Senior Vice President, Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation

May 15: Creating Socially and Economically Just Cities in a Postmodern World
- **Final Paper Due**