

**Professor Ocean Howell**

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**T, Th 10 - 11:20AM**

**104 Condon Hall**

**Office hours: Zoom, Th noon - 2PM**

## **HIST 399: History of American Cities**

### **Course Description**

The cities of the United States provided the world with a number of firsts, including the first skyscraper and the first settlement to reach a population of 10 million. At various points, American cities have been the largest, the tallest, the densest, and the wealthiest on the planet. For all of their technological and social triumphs, however, American cities have also nurtured crushing inequality, dangerous slums, and criminal economies. This course will introduce students to the history of one of the most fascinating and contradictory social forms of the modern world. Students will read about the American city from a variety of perspectives. Special emphasis will be given to understanding the built environment, the city as a design artifact, a product of architects and planners. But we will also consider the city as a political arena, a set of governmental institutions; as a system for ordering social relations, especially those of race, ethnicity, class, and gender; as a market, an engine for generating and distributing wealth; as an "entertainment machine," an engine for generating and satisfying a dizzying array of human desires; and as an underworld, a breeding ground for countercultures and criminal enterprises. The course will include two walking tours that teach students to read historic photos, maps, and the built environment itself as a source.

### **Learning Objectives** (by the end of this course students will be able to . . .)

- Understand the processes that guide the growth of American cities
- Understand the roots of residential segregation and inequality in American cities
- Read the built environment around them for cues about not only urban planning history, but also cultural, political, and socioeconomic history
- Identify the key features in the scholarly literature on the history of American urbanism
- Identify the research question, argument, source base, and methodology for a secondary source

- Write a historiographical essay

## Readings

Course readings are selected from a variety of scholarly works, and from primary source documents and images. Readings will average between 60 - 120 pages of secondary source material, or an equivalent of primary source material, per week. Occasional longer assignments will be accompanied with tips about what areas to focus on and what sections to skim. All readings will be made available electronically through Canvas.

## Assignments/Grading

Participation and Short Assignments:	<b>15%</b> of total grade
Mapping Assignment	<b>10%</b>
Paper:	<b>20%</b>
Exam 1:	<b>25%</b>
Final Exam:	<b>30%</b>

NOTE: Failure to complete any component of the course will result in a failing grade

### *Participation and Short Assignments:*

Participation will take place in the classroom, and on Canvas discussion boards. Each week, the instructor will pose a question, or questions, about assigned readings in order to start conversation. Each student must both 1) respond to a question and 2) ask a question. The first student to respond each week will only have the option of responding to an instructor's question, but because that student will also pose a question, the next student (and all subsequent students) will have the option of responding to an instructor question, or a student question. Questions and responses should be oriented towards a critical analysis of the reading, rather than a subjective reaction. Discussions of whether we liked a reading, or whether we find it interesting are fine for casual conversation, but are ultimately rooted in subjective reactions. Better discussion topics include analysis of how authors use their sources, or critical comparisons of different course readings. Instructor will both moderate and participate in discussion, but the boards are primarily for students to interact with one another. If you're unsure about whether a question/response is appropriate, feel free to contact instructor. Together, written responses and questions should average about 1 page of writing a week.

### *Mapping Assignment:*

Students will be asked to complete a mapping assignment, using historic fire insurance maps, which are made available through the UO library's website. Walking tours during Week 6 will train students in how to read maps in the field. Detailed prompt available under Assignments in Canvas.

*Historiographical Research Paper:*

Students will write a 4 to 5-page essay. Students will use the UO library's digital resources to locate two scholarly, peer-reviewed articles on whichever aspect of American urbanism most interests them, pending instructor approval. Student essays will advance comparative analyses of those scholarly pieces. While students are free to choose whatever subject interests them, they are encouraged to choose a subject that deals with inequality or difference in some way. This would include, but would not be limited to, topics pertaining to race, ethnicity, immigration, class, gender, or sexuality. Detailed prompt available under Assignments on Canvas.

*Exams:*

Exams will assess students' grasp on all course material (readings, lectures, and in-class exercises). Exams will include a mix of short identification questions and longer essay questions. Students will have 24 hours to complete exams.

*Final Grade thresholds:*

A+ = 98 - 100%  
A = 93 - 97%  
A- = 90 - 92%  
B+ = 88 - 89%  
B = 83 - 87%  
B- = 80 - 82%  
C+ = 78 - 79%  
C = 73 - 77%  
C- = 70 - 72%  
D+ = 68 - 69%  
D = 63 - 67%  
D- = 60 - 62%  
F = 0 - 59%

*Grading Rubric:*

Grading in the humanities is, by its nature, a subjective process, but it may help to have a reminder of what each grade represents. To receive an A, you must do work that you and I agree is exceptionally careful, insightful, thoughtful, and original. To receive an A, work must not

only fulfill all of the stated requirements, but also be free of errors. This includes not only technical errors, like persistent typos or incorrectly formatted citations, but also stylistic errors, like infelicitous turns of phrase or jarring transitions from one portion of an essay to another. Most importantly, A-level work must be free of interpretative errors, like hastily reasoned conclusions or thinly supported truth claims. To receive an A+, you and I must agree that the work could not be improved, which is why I almost never award that grade. B work goes beyond what is merely required and demonstrates insight and critical thought, but lacks the depth and ingenuity that would warrant an A. Work that is exceptionally well argued, but that is carelessly executed, may also receive a B. Average work that meets all requirements, gets the “facts” right, but goes no further will receive a C. Substandard work--meaning work that is poorly reasoned and poorly executed--will receive a D. Unacceptable or incomplete work will receive a failing grade.

*Rough Outline of Time Commitments:*

Lectures and online skills lessons:	27 hours total, 24 hours in class, 3 hours online.
In person walking tours:	3 hours total.
Take-home exams:	10 hours total. Each exam should take 2 hours each to complete. Reviewing study guides and rereading course materials should take 6 hours total.
Research:	20 hours total. Historiographical essay and Mapping Project represent significant investments of time, an estimated 10 hours a piece. (Mapping assignment equivalent to historiographical research because of steep learning curve with resource that is new to most students.)
Writing assignments:	10 hours total. Approximately 4 hours to write historiographical essay, 1 hour to write map analysis, and 30 minutes per week on reading responses. (Students are required to read other student posts, then post a response to a question, and ask a question to the group.)

## **Grading Policies**

Exams cannot be accepted late. They are due 24 hours after having been made available.

Papers will be accepted late, but will drop by 1/3 of a letter grade immediately after the due date and time, and will drop by a further 1/3 letter grade for each subsequent 24-hour period.

A note on academic honesty: there are many forms of plagiarism, and all are serious. Any instances of plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty, will result in a failing grade for the course, and will be reported to the university. If you have any questions at all, please come talk to me. Please also consult the very good guide produced by Bowdoin College:

<https://www.bowdoin.edu/dean-of-students/judicial-board/academic-honesty-and-plagiarism/index.html>

Here are some excerpts describing the most common forms of plagiarism:

#### "Direct Plagiarism

Direct plagiarism is the word-for-word transcription of a section of someone else's work, without attribution and without quotation marks. . . .

#### "Self Plagiarism

Self-plagiarism occurs when a student submits his or her own previous work, or mixes parts of previous works, without permission from all professors involved. For example, it would be unacceptable to incorporate part of a term paper you wrote in high school into a paper assigned in a college course. Self-plagiarism also applies to submitting the same piece of work for assignments in different classes without previous permission from both professors.

#### "Mosaic Plagiarism

Mosaic Plagiarism occurs when a student borrows phrases from a source without using quotation marks, or finds synonyms for the author's language while keeping to the same general structure and meaning of the original. Sometimes called "patch writing," this kind of paraphrasing, whether intentional or not, is academically dishonest and punishable – even if you footnote your source! . . .

#### "Accidental Plagiarism

Accidental plagiarism occurs when a person neglects to cite their sources, or misquotes their sources, or unintentionally paraphrases a source by using similar words, groups of words, and/or sentence structure without attribution. . . . Students must learn how to cite their sources and to take careful and accurate notes when doing research. . . . Lack of intent does not absolve the student of responsibility for plagiarism. Cases of accidental plagiarism are taken as seriously as any other plagiarism and are subject to the same range of consequences as other types of plagiarism."

Students should be aware that Canvas includes software that automatically scans for plagiarism. I use this software, and I have caught instances of plagiarism this way.

## ***Academic Disruption***

*Following university policy, students are required to wear a face mask at all times while in class. Students who refuse to wear a mask will be asked to leave. If an unmasked student refuses to leave, class will be canceled.*

*In the event of a campus emergency that disrupts academic activities, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to change. Information about changes in this course will be communicated as soon as possible by email, and on Canvas. If we are not able to meet face-to-face, students should immediately log onto Canvas and read any announcements and/or access alternative assignments. Students are also expected to continue coursework as outlined in this syllabus or other instructions on Canvas.*

*In the event that the instructor of this course has to quarantine, this course may be taught online during that time.*

## ***COVID Containment Plan for Classes***

*As the University of Oregon returns to in-person instruction, the key to keeping our community healthy and safe involves **prevention, containment, and support**. Here is information critical to how the UO is responding to COVID-19.*

- ***Prevention:*** *To prevent or reduce the spread of COVID-19 in classrooms and on campus, all students and employees must:*
  - *Comply with [vaccination policy](#)*
  - *[Wear face coverings](#) in all indoor spaces on UO campus*
  - *Complete weekly [testing](#) if not fully vaccinated or exempted*
  - *[Wash hands](#) frequently and practice social distancing when possible*
  - *Complete daily [self-checks](#)*
  - *Stay home/do not come to campus if feeling [symptomatic](#)*
  - *Complete the UO [COVID-19 case and contact reporting form](#) if you test positive or have been in close contact with a confirmed or presumptive case.*
- ***Containment:*** *If a student in class tests positive for COVID-19, all relevant classes will be notified via an email by the Corona Corps Care Team with instructions for students and staff based on their vaccination status. Specifically:*
  - ***Vaccinated and Asymptomatic students:*** *Quarantine not required, but daily self-monitoring before coming on campus is advised; sign up for testing through MAP 3-5 days after exposure if advised you are a contact.”*

- **Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated students:** 14-day quarantine advised – do not come to class – and sign up for testing 3-5 days after notification through [MAP](#), if asymptomatic, or through University Health Services (541-346-2770) or your primary care provider, if symptomatic.
- **Symptomatic students:** stay home (do not come to class/campus), complete the online [case and contact form](#), and contact University Health Services (541-346-2770) or your primary care provide to arrange for immediate COVID-19 testing.

Students identified as a **close contacts** of a positive case will be contacted by the Corona Corps Care Team (541-346-2292).

- **Support:** The following resources are available to you as a student.
  - [University Health Services](#) or call (541) 346-2770
  - [University Counseling Center](#) or call (541) 346-3277 or (541) 346-3227 (after hrs.)
  - [MAP Covid-19 Testing](#)
  - [Corona Corps](#) or call (541) 346-2292
  - [Academic Advising](#) or call (541) 346-3211
  - [Dean of Students](#) or call (541)-346-3216

## **Good Classroom Citizenship**

- Wear your **mask** and make sure it fits you well
- **Stay home** if you're sick
- **Get to know your neighbors** in class, and let them know if you test positive
- **Get tested** regularly
- Watch for **signs and symptoms** with the daily symptom self-check
- **Wash your hands** frequently or use hand sanitizer

## **Contacting me**

Email is best for short questions. If you have a substantive question, please come to my office hours.

## **Schedule** (tentative)

### **Week 1, 1/4 - 1/6: Imperial Conquests & Early American Urbanism**

Reading: "Laws of the Indies," reproduced in Crouch, Dora, with Daniel Garr and Axel Mundigo, *Spanish City Planning in North America* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1 - 65).

## **Week 2, 1/11 - 1/13: *New York City & the Commodification of Land***

Reading: Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1 - 71).

## **Week 3, 1/18 - 1/20: *The City as Capitalist Marketplace***

Reading: Blackmar, Chapter 3 (pages 72 - 108), and David Henkin, *City Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), Introduction and Chapter 6 (pages 1 - 25 and 137 - 165).

## **Week 4, 1/25 - 1/27: *The Native City & the Cities of the West Coast***

Reading: Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (University of Washington Press, 2008), Chapters 1 - 3 (pages 1 - 65).

## **Week 5, 2/1 - 2/3: *The City as Machine: Postbellum Chicago***

Reading: William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (New York: Norton, 1991), Preface, Chapters 1 and 2 (pages xv - xxv, 23 - 93)

*Exam 1 due: 2/3, noon*

## **Week 6, 2/8 - 2/10: *The City as a Source***

Reading the Built Environment: Walking Tours. These tours will train students to read Sanborn Fire Insurance maps in preparation for the mapping project due in Week 7.

Reading: Cronon, selections from Chapter 3, all of Chapter 5 (pages 120 - 147, 207 - 259).

## **Week 7, 2/15 - 2/17: *The Modern City & the Question of Democracy***

Reading: Frederick Law Olmsted, *Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns* (Cambridge: American Social Science Association, 1870), all (pages 1 - 36).

*Mapping project due, 2/17 at noon.*



## **Week 8, 2/22 - 2/24: *Class Inequality & Racial Segregation in Late Nineteenth-Century New York***

Reading: Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives* (New York: Scribner, 1890), Introduction; Chapters 1, 2, 13, 23 - 25 (pages 1 - 20, 148 - 158, 263 - 297).

## **Week 9, 3/1 - 3/3: *Real Estate, Federal Policy, & the Persistence of Segregation in the Twentieth Century***

Reading: Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1 - 67).

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019), Introduction and Chapter 1 (pages 1 - 54).

*Paper due: 3/3, noon.*

## **Week 10, 3/9 - 3/11: *Can a City Be Controlled?***

Reading: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1961), Chapters 1 and 2 (pages 5 - 34, 37 - 54).

Roger Montgomery, "Is There Still Life in The Death and Life?" *Journal of the American Planning Association* 64(3), 1998 (269 - 274).

## **Finals Week:**

### **Final Exam**

*Available 8AM Wednesday, 3/16*

*Due 8AM Thursday, 3/17*