

POL 447 Global Cities (Problems in International Politics) Spring 2018

Instructor: Dr. Kevin Funk

Contact: kfunk@shc.edu

Website: Google Classroom

Office hours: T 1:15-4:15; W 2:30-4:30 (QH 314) – or by appointment

Class schedule/location: W 6:00-8:45 PM (QH 325)

Summary and objectives:

While *national* governments, institutions, social groups, and spaces are often the primary “units of analysis” through which we seek to understand the world around us, this course is premised on the notion that there is much to be gained from theorizing “the political” from the perspective of *cities*. It is, after all, commonplace to observe that ours is a rapidly urbanizing world (indeed, over half of the global population now resides in urban areas; the world’s largest megalopolis, China’s Pearl River Delta region, has a population of well over 100 million). Or that cities are often microcosms of broader issues/trends (ranging from climate change to various forms of inequality) and crucibles for movements that seek political, economic, social, and cultural transformation (including Occupy and Black Lives Matter).

Yet cities also elucidate the importance of “space” in the global economy, for they serve as central nodes in worldwide flows of capital, goods, services, and people. Accordingly, this course will focus on cities as *globally* embedded units and agents. While this will naturally entail paying particular attention to “superstar cities” – such as New York, London, Tokyo, Dubai, and São Paulo – we will also explore how smaller urban areas, including Mobile itself, simultaneously participate in globalizing processes and are subjected to globalizing forces.

Throughout the semester, we will highlight the contradictory and dialectical nature of cities and the imaginaries that exist about them, as places defined by both extreme wealth and crushing poverty, egalitarianism and stratification, excitement and danger, freedom and entrapment, anarchy and surveillance, cosmopolitanism and localism, and utopian dreams and dystopian nightmares. In addition to promoting our collective understanding of *what* (global) cities are and *why* we should study them, this course will also push us to consider how urban spaces are on the frontlines of many of the most pressing problems facing humanity, as well as efforts to address them.

Specifically, through this course you will work toward the following program/departmental objectives and student learning outcomes:

- Increase your familiarity with global current events and explore theoretical tools for deepening your understanding of them. [International Relations/Studies objectives A-E & G; Political Science objectives I & V]
- Develop/hone the ability to read, engage with, and discuss higher-level and challenging texts. [Political Science objectives I-II]
- Make substantive contributions to complex and nuanced conversations about difficult and at times contentious ideas and issues. [Political Science objective II]
- Gain research experience by conducting an independent project related to core course themes, which will culminate with the submission of a final paper and an in-class presentation. [Political Science objectives I-IV]

Course format:

This course will function as a discussion-oriented seminar in which learning is a collective enterprise. Accordingly, your comments and reactions to readings and other materials are *essential* for our shared educational experience and will play a fundamental role in guiding the trajectory of the class. As such, participation and deep engagement are *expected* and will factor heavily into your final grade. Throughout the semester, we will also set aside time to discuss the research and writing processes, as well as specific issues that arise vis-à-vis your individual projects.

Books & readings:

I have selected the readings with great care. Your ability to digest, critically engage with, and react to the readings will be of great importance for both your grade and our collective experience in this class. The (below) required books may be purchased from the campus bookstore or obtained elsewhere. The other readings are available online or through the course webpage (details below).

Required texts:

Dávila, Arlene. 2016. *El Mall: The Spatial and Class Politics of Shopping Malls in Latin America*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Graham, Stephen. 2016. *Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers*. Brooklyn: Verso.

Harvey, David. 2013. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Brooklyn: Verso.

Rossi, Ugo. 2017. *Cities in Global Capitalism*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Taibbi, Matt. 2017. *I Can't Breathe: A Killing on Bay Street*. New York: Spiegel & Grau.

News & current events:

You are *required* to follow current events relating, in particular, to global urban issues. It is thus expected that you will regularly follow the excellent coverage provided by both *CityLab* (www.citylab.com) and *The Guardian's* "Cities" section (www.theguardian.com/cities). For more general news coverage, palatable and relatively serious options include, but are certainly not limited to:

- U.S.-based
 - *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/index.html>)
 - *Los Angeles Times* (<http://www.latimes.com/world/>)
 - *Washington Post* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/>)
 - *Wall Street Journal* (<http://www.wsj.com/news/world>)
- International
 - *BBC* [UK] (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world>)
 - *Al Jazeera* [Qatar] (<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/>)
 - *Agence France-Presse* (<https://www.afp.com/en/news-hub>)
 - *The Guardian* [UK] (<https://www.theguardian.com/international>)
 - *The Economist* [UK] (<http://www.economist.com/>)

Course requirements & grades:

A	93-100	B+	87-89.9	B-	80-82.9	C	73-76.9	D+	67-69.9	D-	60-62.9
A-	90-92.9	B	83-86.9	C+	77-79.9	C-	70-72.9	D	63-66.9	F	<60

30 percent: attendance, participation & engagement

In addition to attending class, you are *required* to make substantive contributions to discussions, particularly in such a way that shows you have grappled with course materials. You will be graded on the

consistency and quality of these contributions. Your regular attendance is thus assumed as opposed to “graded” per se.

20 percent: leadership of class discussion

You will be required to lead (or co-lead) at least one of our class discussions (details forthcoming). You will sign up for a date(s)/session(s) shortly after the beginning of the semester.

50 percent: research paper & presentation

This is the largest component of your grade. You will choose a course-relevant topic/question that is both interesting and important; assemble a bibliography; draw from these sources to determine what we do and do not know about this issue; and finally, carry out independent research that advances our understanding of global cities. In so doing, you will learn about not only your topic of interest, but also the more general process of conducting social science research. Naturally, we will discuss these various steps throughout the semester.

You MUST meet with me during office hours to obtain my approval of your topic before the “research topic/proposal” deadline.

This project consists of multiple stages, which you will turn in sequentially. You should utilize the feedback you receive on earlier parts to improve the final product. The sum of these parts, once revised and put together into the final paper, must be *at least 2000 words* (not including the bibliography). On the last due date, you will submit the final paper in its entirety (including a revised version of your literature review, with your modifications clearly marked using “track changes”).

Assignment	Due date	Percentage of project grade
Research topic/proposal	February 8	10 percent
Literature review & bibliography	March 8	40 percent
Final paper	April 29	50 percent

Step 1: research topic/proposal

Clearly state and explain your topic and/or question of interest. Why is it interesting? Why is it worthy of study? At this preliminary stage, what do you think your ideas may contribute? What gap do you seek to fill in the literature and our collective understanding? What makes your potential contribution unique and actually worth pursuing?

Finding a suitable idea can be difficult (and frustrating). Following current events and perusing academic journals may help get the cognitive juices flowing. I will be happy to assist you with this process.

Step 2: literature review (minimum: 750 words) & bibliography

Here, you will review the different arguments that have been made about your topic. Yet a literature review is not merely a compilation of summaries. Rather, while you will need to do some summarizing, the focus is on your analysis of these works, how they can be categorized so that we can make sense of the existing universe of literature, and the strengths and weaknesses of these differing approaches. This is similar to what is often published in academic journals as a “review essay” (examples are posted on the course site).

For the accompanying bibliography, you must have at least 10 sources, comprised of a mix of scholarly books and academic journal articles. You may wish to gather news articles and other sources as well,

though these do not count towards the minimum of 10. For the final paper, your bibliography needs to include every source that you have cited and/or consulted – including news articles, etc. You must also cite at least 3 sources from the course readings (that is, for a total of at least 13).

Step 3: research & analysis (minimum: 1000 words)

Your analysis of the literature feeds into ideas concerning how to do better. That is, now that you have delineated the major approaches to this topic, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, how will you move our understanding of this topic forward? Conduct an analysis that sheds light on the phenomenon under investigation. Consider what information you need to collect, how you will gather it, and which methods you will employ to analyze it. Present a clear overall argument and conclusion, making sure to specify whether your “hypothesis” has been confirmed or rejected, and why.

Course policies:

- The contents of this syllabus are subject to change, revision, and/or update.
- All assignments must be turned in via the course website (Google Classroom).
- Late submissions will be penalized at a rate of 10 percent (e.g. from 95 to 85) every 12 hours. Thus, an assignment that was due at 11:59 pm on September 21 will automatically lose 10 points if turned in at any point between 12:00 am – 11:59 am on September 22, and so on.
- You can format assignments as you wish so long as the output is easy on my eyes.
- You may use your preferred citation style, provided it is applied consistently. Political science majors are encouraged to adopt APSA style (<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/DocAPSA.html>).
- In all of your writing assignments, style, syntax, grammar, etc. all count. As sagely observed by the writer William Raspberry, “Good English, well spoken and well written, will open more doors than a college degree. Bad English will slam doors you didn't even know existed.”
- IMPORTANT! While class is in session, computers/phones/tablets/etc. may *only* be used for course-related purposes (e.g., accessing readings). If you must take a call, then you may leave the room to do so. My expectation is that you will be fully mentally present for the conversation that is occurring in the physical space that surrounds you, not one that exists in cyberspace. Violations of this policy will have severely negative consequences for your “attendance, participation, & engagement” grade. Should issues arise with improper use of technology, I will consider imposing a strict, no-exceptions ban for the remainder of the semester.
- I reserve the right to ignore emails that A) ask for information available on the syllabus and/or B) do not adhere to basic norms of etiquette. Regarding the latter, you are *required* to follow these guidelines: <https://static01.nyt.com/section/opinion/WorthenEtiquetteHandout.pdf>.
- Absolutely *no* in-class recording is permitted in any format unless I grant you prior, written authorization.

College policies:

Academic accommodations

Students with a documented disability wishing to utilize academic accommodations should contact the Office of Academic Support by calling 251-380-3470 or emailing casa@shc.edu as soon as possible so that warranted accommodations can be arranged.

Academic dishonesty

Students who engage in any act of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the College’s Bulletin of Information. Possible sanctions

include receiving a failing grade for the course and dismissal from the College. You are encouraged to review the Bulletin for further information.

Academic support services

The Center for Academic Support and Advising provides academic support services for all students. For more information on academic support services including academic accommodations and course specific tutoring, visit www.shc.edu/casa. For writing and math tutoring, visit the Center for Academic Excellence, www.shc.edu/cae.

Early alert system

Purple Alert is the College's official early alert system. Faculty and staff are able to send an alert to a Student Success Coach about a student's level of engagement and/or performance inside and outside of the classroom. Students who receive alerts should respond to the Student Success Coach in a timely manner so that they can be matched with appropriate resources. For more information, call 380-3472 or email purplealert@shc.edu.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Availability of readings:

*- located on the course site (Google Classroom)

Note:

To maximize comprehension, readings are to be completed in the order they are listed.

- | | |
|------|--|
| 1/10 | The city: classic & contemporary approaches
*Mumford. "What Is a City?"
*Simmel. "The Metropolis and Mental Life."
*Wirth. "Urbanism as a Way of Life."
*Sassen. "Why Cities Matter."
Wainwright. "The haves and have-nots: four cities in crisis." https://goo.gl/wEkw88 .
Campanella. "Megacities: China's urban challenge." https://goo.gl/eAxK7o . |
| 1/17 | The (global) political economy of cities (part I)
Rossi. <i>Cities in Global Capitalism</i> . Introduction & ch. 1-2. |
| 1/24 | The (global) political economy of cities (part II)
Rossi. <i>Cities in Global Capitalism</i> . Ch. 3-5 & conclusion. |
| 1/31 | Class, consumption, & inequality in the neoliberal city (part I)
Dávila. <i>El Mall</i> . Introduction & ch. 1-3. |
| 2/7 | Class, consumption, & inequality in the neoliberal city (part II)
Dávila. <i>El Mall</i> . Ch. 4-6 & conclusion. |
| 2/14 | NO CLASS
Mardi Gras Break |

- 2/21 Seeing “space”: the politics of looking up (and down) (part I)
Graham. *Vertical*. Preface, introduction, & ch. 1, 3-6.
- 2/28 Seeing “space”: the politics of looking up (and down) (part II)
Graham. *Vertical*. Ch. 7-10.
- 3/7 **Research day**
- 3/14 Race, class & policing (part I)
Taibbi. *I Can’t Breathe*. Part I.
- 3/21 Race, class & policing (part II)
Taibbi. *I Can’t Breathe*. Part II.
- 3/28 **NO CLASS**
Spring Break
- 4/4 **NO CLASS**
Attending annual convention of the International Studies Association
- 4/11 The (gentrified) city: by whom, for whom?
Harvey. *Rebel Cities*. Ch. 1-2.
- 4/18 Future horizons
Starchitecture & (authoritarian) “trophy cities”
Wainwright. “Norman said the president wants a pyramid’: how starchitects built Astana.” <https://goo.gl/tyAAad>.
Kirk. “Saudi Arabia’s \$500 Billion Fantasy of a Utopian Megacity.”
<https://goo.gl/WeWslG>.
The “new” company towns: libertarian, corporate utopias
Mackey. “U.S. conservatives are about to run a dangerous economic experiment in Honduras.” <https://goo.gl/YQ6BGk>.
Holder. “The Extreme Amazon Bidder Just Got Real.” <https://goo.gl/ML25K2>.
Spencer. “Bill Gates is building his own city — no democracy required.”
<https://goo.gl/aZnxPG>.
Tveten. “Zucktown, USA.” <https://goo.gl/NMoVjC>.
Planetary gentrification: solutions, occupation, resistance
Wainwright. “Gentrification is a global problem. It’s time we found a better solution.” <https://goo.gl/4y8Mfi>.
Watts. “Resistance! São Paulo’s homeless seize the city.” <https://goo.gl/bAKxrp>.
Whither the state?
Coughlan. “Are cities the new countries?” <https://goo.gl/f564Gb>.
- 4/25 **Research presentations/discussion**
- 4/29 **Research paper due, 11:59 pm**