History 295: European Urban History

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Course meetings: T-TH 12:45-2:05, Science 1302
Office Hours: M 10-11:30 a.m., W 1:15-2:15 p.m., TH 9:30-11 a.m.

While the existence of cities stretches back to antiquity, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are fundamentally associated with urban life. This course analyzes the transformation of the European urban landscape and European urban life from the nineteenth-century explosion of urbanization and industrialization to the present day. We will concentrate on London, Paris, Vienna, and Berlin, although the course is not a comprehensive history of any of these cities. Particular attention will be devoted to several key themes: the emergence of urban planning, from Baron Haussmann’s work in mid-19th-century Paris to the “New Towns” of post-World War II England and France; the aesthetics of urban life, from the historicism of the Ringstrasse in Vienna to the twentieth-century triumph of the “International Style” and the particular aesthetics of Fascism; the advent of urban “modernity” (and “modernism”) as expressed in politics, art, and a nascent mass consumer and leisure culture; the personal experience of war, poverty, and immigration in the city; and the connection between the urban landscape, political legitimacy, and memory.

Course Requirements

1. Discussion (20%)

All students are expected to do all of the course readings at the time they are indicated on the syllabus, and to actively participate in class. Our class meetings are mandatory. While you may miss two meetings for any reason, any further failure to attend will have a negative impact on your participation grade unless this absence occurs due to a medical condition or a family emergency. In addition, I reserve the right to not issue a passing grade to any student who misses more than six class sessions (again barring medical or family emergencies).

As part of your participation grade, you will – in groups of three – be responsible for one 15-minute oral presentation over the course of the semester, on dates indicated on the syllabus. Your group will do (minimal) outside research on the assigned topic (see “Presentation Schedule”), and will then present your findings in class. (You can be as creative as you would like with the form of the presentation, as long as you all speak and address the topic at hand).
2. Papers (60%: 15% for the two 5-page papers, and 30% for the 8-10 page paper)

You will submit three essays over the course of the semester. The first two will be 5-page papers, in response to one of several designated questions distributed several weeks in advance. The final paper, 8 to 10 pages in length and due near the end of the semester, intended to give you the opportunity to write about a particular topic or question encountered during the course that you found most particularly engaging. This is not necessarily a primary-source paper (although you have plenty of possibilities in the context of this course); you must, however, go beyond the readings on the syllabus to supplement our class readings. Your paper should give careful attention to previous historiographical approaches to the topic and offer your own analysis and argument about your chosen sources.

You will also note that you must submit an (ungraded yet mandatory) paper proposal and preliminary biography four weeks ahead of the final paper due date; this consists of a two-paragraph statement of what you intend to write about and the sources you plan on using for the project. You also must submit a two-page paper two weeks later detailing your argument, a sense of the historical “problem” you are approaching, and an outline for the rest of the paper.

3. Final Exam (20%)

You will have a take-home final examination dealing synthetically with the overall themes from the course.

Texts and Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the Grinnell College Bookstore. While I will attempt to place a copy of each on reserve at Burling Library, I would strongly recommend that you purchase them for your own convenience and to look incredibly well-read when you carry them around campus or display them prominently on your bookshelf.

Mehdi Charef, Tea in the Harem (London: Serpent’s Tail, 1989)

The following readings are required and available on PioneerWeb:

Michel De Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1984), 90-110


Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier), *The Radiant City* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964, orig. 1933), 90-142


Michael Minden and Holger Bachmann, eds., *Fritz Lang’s Metropolis: Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear* (Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2000), 82-105


Paul Silverstein and Chantal Tetreault, “Postcolonial Urban Apartheid,”

http://riotsfrance.ssrc.org/Silverstein_Tetreault/
Schedule of Readings and Assignments

Part I: Industrialization, Urbanization, and the 19th-Century City

Week 1
January 20    Introduction: Theorizing the City (de Certeau, 90-110)
January 22    The City in History (begin reading for next week)

Readings:
Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

Week 2
January 27    London and Paris: Enlightenment, Revolution and Industrialization
               (Jones, 173-262; Sheppard, 205-260)
January 29    Manchester: Shock City of the Age (Engels, 68-109; Briggs, 88-133)

Readings:

Week 3
February 3    Paris Reshaped (Jones 263-343)
February 5    London, the “Utilitarian City” (Hall 657-705)
Presentation #1

Readings:
Jones, Paris; Peter Hall, “The Utilitarian City,” in Cities in Civilization

Week 4:
February 10   The Department Store and Haussmannized Paris (Zola, part I)
February 12   Consumer Society in 19th-Century Europe (Zola, part II)
Presentation #2

Readings:
Emile Zola, The Ladies’ Paradise

Week 5
February 17   Vienna and the Ringstrasse (Schorske, 24-110)
February 19   Politics in a New Key? (Schorske, 116-175)
Presentation #3

PAPER #1 DUE FEB. 20, MEARS 212, 5 P.M.

Readings:
Carl Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna
Week 6:
February 24  Women in the Metropolis (Walkowitz, 542-574; Ross, 1-39 and 45-71)

Part II: From Urban Management to Modernist Planning
February 26  The Garden City and the Suburb (Howard, 29-57, 89-117; Horsfall, 1-34)

Readings:

Week 7:
March 3  WWI as Urban Experience (Healy, 31-121)
Presentation #4
March 5  Modernism, part I: Bauhaus (Gropius, 19-66)
Presentation #5

Readings:
Maureen Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*; Walter Gropius, *The New Architecture and the Bauhaus*

Week 8:
March 10  Le Corbusier and the International Style (Le Corbusier, 90-142)
March 12  The European City in the Colonies (Celik, 58-77)

Readings:

SPRING BREAK!

Week 9
March 31  Interwar Berlin (Hall, 239-278; Jensen, 79-101)
Presentation #6

APRIL 1  FILM NIGHT: *METROPOLIS* (Dir.: Fritz Lang, 1927), 7 p.m., venue TBA
April 2  Discussion of Metropolis (Minden, 82-105)

PAPER #2 DUE APRIL 3, MEARS 212, 5 P.M.

Peter Hall, “The Invention of the Twentieth Century,” in *Cities and Civilization*; Erik Jensen, “Crowd Control: Boxing Spectatorship and Social Order in Weimar Germany;” Michael Minden and Holger Bachmann, *Fritz Lang’s Metropolis*
Week 10
April 7 The “Red Belts” of Paris and Vienna (Gruber, 45-80; Downs, 205-241)
April 9 Authoritarian Urban Solutions (Miller Lane, 185-216; Benjamin, 217-251)

Presentation #7
PROPOSAL FOR FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS

Readings:

Part III: The Implementation of Modernist Fantasies (the Postwar City)

Week 11
April 14 World War II as Urban Catastrophe (Andreas-Friedrich, 1-78, 214-256)
April 16 Reconstructing Berlin, Reconstructing Europe

Presentation #8

Readings:
Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, *Battleground Berlin, 1948-1948*

Week 12
April 21 Building Suburbia: From the HLM to May 1968 (Jones, 426-456)

TWO-PAGE ARGUMENT/HISTORICAL “PROBLEM”/OUTLINE SECTION DUE IN CLASS

April 23 Immigration and the Re-Definition of Suburbia (Charef)

Presentation #9

Readings:
Jones, *Paris*; Mehdi Charef, *Tea in the Harem*

Week 13
April 28 Cold War Berlin Collapses (Till, 1-105)
April 30 Commemoration and Commerce in the New Berlin (Till 161-228)

Readings:
Karen Till, *The New Berlin*

Week 14
May 5 Violence and Tension in the 21st Century Metropolis (Silverstein/Tetrault; Jones, 456-474)

FINAL PAPER DUE MAY 5, MEARS 212, 5 P.M.
Readings

**FINAL EXAMINATION DUE AT THE END OF THE NORMALLY-SCHEDULED EXAM PERIOD, AT 5 P.M. ON MAY 15.**

Additional Ground Rules:

1. Deadlines are to be taken most seriously. I will automatically grant you one extension on any of the three papers. You must e-mail me 48 hours before the paper is due; you do not need to explain the circumstances necessitating the extension. The extension will be for 72 hours. Barring exceptional emergency circumstances, I will not grant you an extension on another paper. Normally, I take off 1/3 of a letter grade for every 24 hours a paper is overdue.

2. Papers must be double-spaced and have one-inch margins, and should not employ anything larger than 12-point font.

3. All written work at Grinnell College is subject to the Student Handbook. If you have questions as to how a particular assignment relates to the Student Handbook, please consult with me in advance of that assignment’s due date.

4. All written work submitted for a grade must be completed in order to pass the course. In addition, any student who misses more than six classes (again, barring exceptional emergency circumstances) will not receiving a passing grade.

5. If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Dean for Student Academic Support and Advising, Joyce Stern, located on the third floor of the Rosenfield Center (x3702).