

**Contemporary Urban Issues**  
UST 302 [501]  
Undergraduate Program  
Spring Semester, 2011

Dr. L. F. Keller, Instructor  
Glickman-Miller Hall 352  
Levin College of Urban Affairs  
Cleveland State University

## **Syllabus**

This is an upper level undergraduate course that addresses the black/African American experience in American cities. (Conceptually, black is a racial identification and African American an ethnic one. The latter will be used in the course and cover both aspects.) The course focuses on how current issues directly and indirectly affect African Americans. To understand both the issues and their outcomes, history as well as contemporary analysis will be consulted.

The course satisfies the General Education requirement for the *African American Experience*, GenEd 08, and the skill areas of *critical thinking* and *information literacy*. In addition, the course also fulfills the *Writing across the Curriculum* requirement. Information on all these requirements are available on the CSU website.

## **Focus**

African American experiences in the American city is the primary concern of study. This will be a comprehensive overview of the urban outcomes of the dynamics of American society. In addition, the course will examine how academics and other researchers have viewed this experience, in particular researchers in the field of Urban Studies.

## **Scope**

The course focuses on current outcomes in American cities. Primarily, the focus is on the larger cities and the metropolitan complexes in which they are often embedded. Though a significant number of African Americans live in rural and small towns, the course looks at the urban experience only.

## **Course Procedures**

The course is a web based study. Blackboard is the web application for the course. As a web application, it can be accessed from any computer. Be aware that some organizations may have software that can interfere with the full function of Blackboard. If you want to access the course from a workplace, it would be prudent to check with an appropriate official to be sure that is permissible and that there are no software or other impediments to its use.

All materials except for the required textbook will be found on Blackboard. The required textbook is available in the CSU Bookstore. New materials may be posted at any time and thus students need to check the course on Blackboard frequently.

The course meets initially on Tuesday, 18 January, at 10:00 AM. The meeting is in UR 106. The College of Urban Affairs (UR) is housed in the Glickman-Miller Hall at 1717 Euclid Avenue. This session is the only required meeting of the semester. The session will end at 11:30 AM. **It is a required meeting.**

In addition, two other sessions will be scheduled at that first session. These will meet just before the Spring Break and the Final Examinations. These sessions are optional ones so that questions can be asked in person, especially before the Final Examination.

The Final Examinations will be available on Blackboard. The test must be completed on Blackboard. There is no midterm examination as required Book Review replaces it.

All contact with the teacher and all assignments that are to be submitted shall be through Blackboard. Blackboard has an E-Mail component and any member of the class as well as the teacher can be sent a message there. There is also an assignment area. Assignments are to be submitted in this area. Graded assignments will be returned there. Blackboard records all the grades and these can be checked at any time.

Finally, Blackboard permits announcements and other course information. As all relevant information will be posted on Blackboard, it is not possible to be unaware of requirements. Failure to consult Blackboard frequently is no excuse. If any posting on Blackboard raises questions, be sure to ask, either by using the E-Mail area of Blackboard or a relevant Class Discussion Area on Blackboard.

### **Course Requirements**

The course has a **Final Examination** which will be available the week of final examinations. This will be a multiple choice examination and once started will be timed. It must be completed within the stated time.

There are five (5) required **Discussions**. These discussions are organized around questions for the topics the discussions cover. A student must post at least one response to the question. These discussions are graded on the quality of the analysis displayed in the response. Length of response is not an important criterion and often demonstrates a lack of focus. Think about the question before you respond. You may find it useful to read other responses to the question before you respond; or to write a second response as a response by another student may provide a new approach that you had not thought about.

Two other discussion areas will also be available. One will be for general questions about the topics of the course. The topics and the required readings for each topic in the *Order of Study Section* in the Syllabus.

Each student will also write a **Think Paper**. A Think Paper is an essay on a specific topic covered in the course. A Think Paper is to be two (2) to three (3) pages, one inch

margins and double spaced. In a Think Paper you analyze the topic, looking at it from a perspective or perspectives that illuminate it for you. The **Syllabus** has more details about Think Papers in a *section* below.

Each student will write a **Book Review** on a book listed in the *Reading List for Book Review Selection Section* of the Syllabus. The Book Review will be from four (4) to six (6) pages in length. More details about Book Reviews are in a *section* below, *Effective Reading and Book Critique*. The main section of the Book Review will focus on what the book means for African Americans in particular. There is a *Urban Classics* bibliography at the end of the Syllabus. Relevant books from this list may be reviewed also. **Check with the teacher before selecting from this list.**

Each student will write an **Urban Analysis Paper**. This will be a paper in APA style format and ten (10) to fifteen (15) pages in length. The paper will examine an urban problem and specifically note how it affects African Americans. More details on this paper is in a separate *section* below.

A power point summary of the **Urban Analysis Paper** will be posted on Blackboard. The summary should have no more than six slides including a title slide with the name of the student on it. Every student will have access to the Power Point file and thus all of the student research done in the course. This will be very useful information for understanding the dynamics of cities and how they affect African Americans.

### **Textbooks and Readings**

The required textbook is listed below and available in the CSU Bookstore. All other required readings will be available on Blackboard.

Wendy Kellogg, **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century American City: Race, Ethnicity and Multicultural Urban Life**

### **Grading**

The final grade will be a weighted average of the following items with the following weights.

Required Discussions	10%
Think Paper	10%
Book Review	20%
Urban Analysis Paper (Includes Power Point File)	30%

Final Examination

30%

For purposes of calculating the final course grade, all letter grades are turned into numeric scores according to **Scale 1** below. The course numeric average is turned into a letter grade according to **Scale 2** below.

### **Scale 1**

A+ = 99, A = 95, A- = 91, B+ = 89, B = 85, B- = 81, C+ = 79, C = 75, C- 71, etc., with F = 59 and less.

### **Scale 2**

92.5 and above = A, 89.5 - 92.4 = A-, 87.5 - 89.4 = B+, 83.5 - 87.4 = B, 79.5 - 83.4 = B-, 77.5 - 79.4 = C+, 73.5 - 77.4 = C, 69.5 - 73.4 = C-, etc.

### **Office Hours**

The office of the teacher is located in UR 352. I will be in the office on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 2 to 4 PM.

### **Effective Reading and Book Critique**

Reading a book is reading a mind. A classic book is a "recorded mind" that has seen and is sharing a new world. Thus, to understand effectively a book one must be able to stand in the shoes of the author.

Carefully reading the Preface is an effective way to ascertain the author's purpose. Most authors briefly summarize what they are trying to do and some even why they did it.

Once you grasp the purpose, note the names and order of the chapters. The perspective and overall view of the author is disclosed by chapter order and content. Similarly note subsections within chapters and how these relate to the chapter. Finally, note how the author explains people and events. Does she see these as outcomes of human action? If so, how does she explain human action? Does she capture the psychology as well as the sociology, that is, the thoughts that prompt action as well as the social setting of the actor? What role is assigned chance? Does her outcomes appear to follow logically her causes?

When analyzing a book that involves research, be sure to identify the following. These, along with the information above, should be incorporated into a well written narrative.

- (1) Discuss the primary issue(s) addressed in the book;
- (2) Identify the research question or hypothesis the author presented;
- (3) Indicate the author's thesis or primary argument;
- (4) Identify the segment of the population primarily affected by this issue;
- (5) Indicate the social context or setting within which the issue occurs;
- (6) Discuss the current status of public policy relative to the issue presented in the book;

- (7) Discuss the type of analysis, if applicable, conducted in the study (i.e. quantitative (statistical) or qualitative (interviews));
- (8) What type of data the author used to support his position;
- (9) Discuss notable quotes and/or data/information presented in the book;
- (10) The author's conclusions, recommendations, and the policy implications;
- (II) Your critical analysis of the author's work;
- (12) Supporting evidence for your position.

By using the above criteria, you should be able to understand and critique any author intelligently. Reading time should be reduced while comprehension increases. Who knows, you may even write a book yourself someday.

### **Writing an Urban Analysis Paper**

For this paper, a student will select a major issue and analyze its dynamics. The focus is on how the issue plays out in city life and how it affects citizens, particularly African Americans. In the paper, sources must be cited according to the APA format. At least five (5) sources must be cited that are from relevant literature not used in the course. Do not cite Wikipedia; you can use Wikipedia to help find sources. Cite the original sources themselves.

Two useful sources for general information is the **Encyclopedia Britannica (EB)** and the **Oxford English Dictionary (OED)**. The former is available as home software at a relatively low cost. Don't use other Encyclopedias as they do not use scholars to write the materials. All the articles in the **EB** are written and signed by respected scholars. **OED** traces the roots and origins of all words used in the English language. The knowledge of the roots can be very insightful as what labels and words are used to describe a phenomenon illustrate how it is perceived. Perception is how information is processed and the processing is the root of knowledge. Thus fields of study such as Urban Studies develop distinctive perceptions for the study of phenomena. As a student you need to understand these perspectives.

For example, race is a critical concept in the study of cities. Learning how this is defined illuminates how race is perceived and thus studied scholarly. The study can help understand how race is perceived generally, that is, how researchers in Urban Studies look at it and the consequences of such perceptions.

The following are examples of topics for an urban analysis. Others can be selected with the consent of the teacher.

1. Urban Education policy, such as No Child Left Behind
2. Hip Hop versus Civil Rights generations
3. Healthcare reform and urban medical services
4. Poverty and the working poor
5. Digital divide and effects of technology on race and class
6. Economic segregation
7. Housing policies, such as the mortgage crisis
8. Diversity and relationships among classes and races

## **Writing A Think Paper**

A think paper takes one of the concepts developed in the course and applies it to a different situation, a student's own past, etc. It is not a research paper and requires no extra reading. Rather the conceptual material encountered in the course is applied or critiqued, that is, analyzed in terms of its utility for understanding urban, and particularly minority, life. In essence, the paper is an opportunity to re-conceptualize the city, some of your or your family's past, current concerns, dynamics in a diverse Republic, etc. For example, you can think about why some neighborhoods are well kept while others, with home owners of similar economic status, are less well kept. Another topic is why certain locations are more prestigious than others even if the homes in the former are not as nice or spacious as in the latter.

You need to use concepts and theories to avoid "conventional wisdom." Conventional wisdom is what people accept as a conclusion with little or any evidence to support it. Often no thought is even applied; people just accept a statement as valid. An educated person questions any conclusion and examines why it was reached. Applying concepts and theory determines what evidence is needed to support a conclusion.

For example, streets in one neighborhood may be better maintained than in another neighborhood. The neighborhood with the less maintained streets may have a majority of black residents and the neighborhood with the better maintained streets a majority of white residents. On the surface, the disparity in street maintenance appears racially based. However, it may reflect that nature of the streets, that is, how the streets are classified for purposes of maintenance. Streets that are state and/or national routes may have additional funding for maintenance. Thus, the classification of the street may drive the outcome.

Note that the disparity may still be seen as discriminatory. Analysis has two (2) stages or components. One is descriptive and examines what factors work to create a particular outcome. In the example above, street classification relates to available funding for maintenance and thus streets that may seem similar may have different levels of care. This descriptively states why the disparity occurs.

To determine if the disparity is discriminatory, value analysis is needed. This type of analysis applies norms to assess the "goodness" of the situation. Descriptive analysis finds "what is" and normative analysis assesses "what should be." Normative analysis should only be performed after a situation is descriptively understood. An educated person can lay aside values while analyzing descriptively. Normative analysis is then done if the descriptive analysis is adequate, that is, explains what is. Uneducated people tend to be normative in orientation and do little preliminary descriptive analysis. They lack the tools - concepts and theories - for doing effective descriptive analysis.

The tools for analysis, both descriptive and normative, are the primary benefits of a liberal arts education.

## **Hints at Effective Study**

In all too many cases students waste considerable time and effort in study. (Students

who do not study are irrelevant.) The waste is inexplicable given that students pay, or borrow, a minor fortune to attend college. Fortunately, effective study does not require a major change in the time spent for most students and, in fact, for many it will mean a decrease in time spent at study.

The first skill for effective study is to learn how to read. The section above deals with that topic. The second skill is to learn to think conceptually. Conceptualization is organizing reality according to some basic categories. A student with this skill can readily comprehend a new "thing" by placing it in the context of other things. (Note that many philosophers, most notably Immanuel Kant, found the organization of the world to result from categories in our minds. Thus, how well we categorize determines how successfully we cope with the world.)

An example of a concept is an economy. Learning is not assigning names in a rote fashion; rather it is using the concept to explain things. Economy means there is an incentive system, a set of rewards and punishments for action. Thus, one can attempt to explain actions of people by how they perceive and act within a system of incentives; that is, the type of economy they experience. Economists believe that people will do only those things for which they receive adequate rewards. Furthermore, people will engage in relationships only because they expect to receive sufficient value from the interaction. Therefore, an economic perspective explains the "why" of human behavior with the use of concepts relevant to an incentive system.

In a course, the key to easy learning is to grasp the purpose of the course and how the lectures and the readings relate to the purpose. Purpose in this sense is similar to the theme of a musical piece or literature. In essence, a course should argue (in a technical sense) that a phenomenon can be understood best by a particular perspective and demonstrate why that is so. By understanding the purpose and grasping the relations among the lectures and the readings, a student can quickly put any specific bit of information into a useful pattern. This makes new material easy to understand as its place in the pattern can be determined.

More importantly, all that one needs to remember is the pattern. This avoids getting lost with facts, seeing only trees and not the forest. Finally, learning to conceptualize should make daily life more understandable.

Ideally, you should be able to "see" a different world than when education started. If this is not happening in this or any other course, be sure to ask questions until you can grasp the pattern and organize the facts. You have a "live" professor (presumably; at least on most days) so that you can ask questions and engage in a dialogue. Take advantage of that situation.

## **Honor Code**

The Urban Studies Program does not have a formal Honor Code. Often, a program requires students to sign such a Code which details the ethics that should guide behavior of both Faculty and students. Any questions about the Code should be asked prior to engaging in any behavior that one thinks may be under its provisions. The Professor will enforce an Honor Code that includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Each student shall treat all students and their opinions with respect.
2. Each student shall diligently complete all assignments.
3. A student shall do his or her own work. Any work taken from others will be correctly footnoted and acknowledged.
4. All problems with any aspect of the class or with any other student shall be reported to the Professor in a timely fashion.
5. The Professor shall clearly state course goals and how these relate to professional needs.
6. The Professor shall treat all students in a similar and just fashion, varying any treatment to meet course goals and/or the specific needs of a student.
7. The Professor shall timely return all assignments, complete with explanation of why they received the grades they did.
8. The Professor will answer all relevant and appropriate questions and be available to meet with students at stated times.

Punishment for failure to comply with the above provisions will be fair, formal and clear. In the case of rule 3, conscious plagiarism, the unacknowledged use of another's materials as one's own with the intent to do so, a second violation **will result in a F for the course**. The first violation is a F for the specific assignment. The punishment reflects the nature of the crime; it is repugnant to academic and personal integrity.

### **Assignments and Dates**

First Required Class Meeting 10:00 – 11:30 AM, Tuesday, 18 January, UR 106

Second Optional Class Meeting, To be determined

Third Optional Class Meeting, To be determined

Required Discussions, approximately every 2 to 3 weeks.

**Think Paper**, two to three (3) pages, one inch margins, double spaced, due Monday, 7 March

**Book Review**, four (4) to six (6) pages, one inch margins, double spaced, due Monday, 18 April.

**Urban Analysis Paper**, ten (10) to fifteen (15) pages, one inch margins, double spaced, due Monday, 2 May.

Spring Break, 13 - 20 March

Last Day to Withdraw from the Course, 1 April

Last Day of Classes, 6 May

Final Examination Week, 7 – 13 May



## Order of Study

### **Part I: Background Theory**

#### **Topic 1 – Paradigms, Concepts and Theories**

##### *Readings*

Science: Process and Substance

#### **Topic 2 – Complexity and Dynamics**

##### *Readings*

Complex Systems: Introduction and Overview

Holland, **Hidden Order**, Preface and Chapter 1

### **Part II: Governing the City**

#### **Topic 3 – Governing American Style**

##### *Readings*

Basic European Philosophies at the Time of the Founding of the Colonies and their Derivatives

Philosophical Structure of American Government

#### **Topic 4 – State Government, Local Governments and the City**

##### *Readings*

Units and Types of Local Governments

Brennan and Keller, **Governance of the Metropolis**

#### **Topic 5 – Forms of Local and Municipal Government**

##### *Readings*

Forms of Municipal Government

**Topic 6 – Citizens, Interests and Policies**

*Readings*

Wendy Kellogg, **The 21<sup>st</sup> Century American City**, Introduction and Chapter 3  
(hereinafter Kellogg)

**Part III: Public Policies**

**Topic 7 – Infrastructures**

*Readings*

**Topic 8 - Education**

*Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 4

**Topic 9 – Housing**

*Readings*

**Topic 10 – Healthcare**

*Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 5 (Fixico)

**Topic 11 – Social Order**

*Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 2

## **Topic 12 – Economic Development**

### *Readings*

## **Topic 13 – Energy and Utilities**

### *Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 5 (Kellogg and Mathur)

## **Part IV: Outcomes and Community**

## **Topic 14 – Citizens and Politics**

### *Readings*

Robert Bellah et al, **The Good Society**, Introduction

## **Topic 15 – Citizens and the Economy**

### *Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 5 (Fitzpatrick and LaGory)

## **Topic 16 – Citizens and Social Equity**

### *Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 6 (Swanstrom et al)

## **Topic 17 – Citizens and the Future**

### *Readings*

Kellogg, Chapter 6 (Graham)



## **Reading List for Book Review Selection**

Michelle Alexander, **New Jim Crow**

Angelo Ancheta, **Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience**

Steven Gregory, **Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community**

Bakari Kitwana, **The Hip Hop Generation: Young Blacks & the Crisis in African American Culture**

, **Why White Kids Love Hip Hop: Wankstas, Wiggers, Wannabes, and the New Reality of Race in America**

Josh Sides, **L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present**

Similar books not listed may be selected with the consent of the teacher.

## URBAN CLASSICS

- Charles R. Adrian and Charles Press, **Governing Urban America** (any edition)  
Edward Banfield, **The Unheavenly City Revisited**  
and James Q. Wilson, **City Politics**  
Gunther Barth, **Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver**  
Peter Berger and Richard J. Neuhaus, **To Empower People**  
Robert L. Bish and Vincent Ostrom, **Understanding Urban Government**  
James Blish, **Cities in Flight**  
J. Bodnar, R. Simon and M. Weber, **Lives of their own: Blacks, Italians and Poles in Pittsburgh 1900 - 1960**  
Edward Bok, **The Americanization of Edward Bok**  
Christine Boyer, **Dreaming the Rational City**  
Carl Bridenbaugh, **Cities in the Wilderness**  
E. W. Burgess, R. E. Park and R. D. McKenzie, **The City**  
Theodore Caplow et al, **Middletown Families**  
Fustel De Coulanges, **The Ancient City**  
Robert Dahl, **Who Governs**  
Margaret Leslie Davis, **Rivers in the Desert: William Mulholland and the Inventing of Los Angeles**  
Peter Drucker, **The Post-Capitalist Society**  
Robert Fishman, **Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century**  
Herbert Gans, **The Levittowners**  
**, Urban Villagers**  
Constance McLaughlin Green, **The Rise of Urban America**  
Ebenezer Howard, **Garden Cities of Tomorrow**  
Robert Kusmer, **The Making of the Ghetto**  
LeCorbusier, **The City of Tomorrow and Its Planning**  
Elliot Liebow, **Tally's Corner**  
Norton Long, **The Polity** (Especially, "The Local Community as an Ecology of Games")  
Martin Mayer and Edward Banfield, **Politics, Planning and the Public Interest**  
Arthur Miller, **Time Bends**  
Lewis Mumford, **The City in History**  
**, The Culture of Cities**  
**, Golden Ages of the Great Cities**  
John H. Mundy and Peter Rusenberg, **The Medieval Town**  
Gordon Parks, **Voices in the Mirror**  
Neil Pierce with Curtis W. Johnson and John Stuart Hall, **Citistates : How Urban America can prosper in a Competitive World**  
Henri Pirenne, **Medieval Cities**  
Robert V. Presthus, **Men at the Top**  
Carl Rowan, **Breaking Barriers**  
Wallace Sayre and Herbert Kaufman, **Governing New York City**  
Arthur M. Schlesinger, **The Rise of the City**

Lincoln Steffens, **The Shame of the City**  
Wilbur R. Thompson, **A Preface to Urban Economics**  
A. J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman, **Small Town in Mass Society**  
Richard C. Wade, **The Urban Frontier**  
Sam Bass Warner, **Street Car Suburbs**  
**, The Private City**  
Adna F. Weber, **The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century**  
Morton and Lucia White, **The Intellectual Versus the City**  
William H. Whyte, Jr., **The Organization Man**  
William O. Winter, **The Urban Polity**  
Robert Wood, **Suburbia**  
Frank Lloyd Wright, **The Living City**  
Richard Wright, **Black Boy**  
Harvey Zorbaugh, **The Gold Coast and the Slum**

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