

CITIES IN HISTORY

NJIT-Rutgers, Newark: Spring 2006
Undergraduate Course: History 377-002
Time: Mondays 2:30—3:55 and Wednesdays 1:00—2:25
Location: Kupfrian Room 104

Instructor: Prof. Neil Maher
Federated Department of History NJIT-Rutgers University, Newark

Office Hours:
Wednesday, 3:00-5:00 PM and by appointment
Cullimore Room 325

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course provides an introduction to the history of the urban environment. In it we will explore the ever-changing relationship between American cities and urban and exurban nature. While I have organized the course chronologically in an effort to trace this relationship between the city and its natural environment from colonial times to the present, we will examine the environmental history of urban America through four thematic lenses. First, we will analyze how society used nature in a variety of ways to construct cities across the American landscape. Second, we will focus on how these urban areas in turn transformed nature both within cities and beyond their borders, often in unintended and hazardous ways. Third, we will turn to the various ways urbanites responded to the environmental threats associated with living in an American city. And finally, we will conclude by examining urban environments after World War II, when suburbs spread across the American landscape. Class meetings will consist of a mixture of lectures, discussion, group readings of primary historic documents, and films clips. You can find a copy of this syllabus online at the WebCT page for this course at <http://webct.njit.edu>.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Class Participation: These are not optional. No unexcused absences will be tolerated. This is especially important since 15% of your grade depends on your

class participation. Such participation should involve active listening and engagement — more than simply showing up or sheer volume of oral output.

Readings: Reading assignments will average between fifty and seventy-five pages per week, and will consist of books, articles, and primary historical documents. You are expected to have completed the reading assignment BEFORE class, since our discussions will often draw on the readings for that week. When reading, try not only to understand the factual information being presented, but also to think critically about the author’s argument. Please try to purchase the books for the class; there are only three and all are available at the NJIT Bookstore in inexpensive paperback editions. Any assigned articles will be on reserve at Van Houton Library and available for in-library reading or photocopying. We will also be reading a variety of primary documents, which I will hand out, during our class meetings.

Short Papers: Throughout the semester you will be required to write three short papers no longer than four pages in length. The papers will be in response to the three books we are reading during the term. For each assignment I will provide a question beforehand, which you will then go on to answer in your paper. You will be graded on both your ideas and your writing.

Mid-Term and Final Exams: This course on the urban environment will include an in-class mid-term and final exam. Both will draw on material from lectures, discussions, films, the assigned readings, and primary historical documents. Each exam will consist of three different types of questions: identification questions in which you will be asked to define a given term, event, or person; short answer questions involving a one or two sentence description of a given concept; and longer essay questions for which you will be expected to use the course materials to make analytical arguments.

GRADING:

Attendance and Participation:	15%
Short Papers:	45%
Mid-Term and Final Exam	40%

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866.*
Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States.*
Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary Indiana, 1945-1980.*

COURSE SCHEDULE:

INTRODUCTION

January 18: **Defining the Urban Environment**
Required Reading:
None

PART I: PRE-INDUSTRIAL URBAN AMERICA

January 23: **Native American Cities**
Required Reading:
Joel A. Tarr, "Urban History and Environmental History in the United States: Complementary and Overlapping Fields," *H-Environment: Historiography Series in Global Environmental History* (November 30, 2000).

Available on-line at:

<http://www.h-net.org/~environ/historiography/usurban.htm>

January 25: **Colonial Urbanites**
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 1-39.

January 30: **Cradle of the American Revolution**
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 40-81.

PART II: MAKING URBAN AMERICA

February 1: **Early Industrialization**
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 82-98.

February 6: **Making Room for Immigrants**
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 99-132.

- February 8: **Transportation Transforms Urban Space**
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 133-172.

Film: NYC Subway
- February 13: **Urban Machine Politics**
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 175-212.
- February 15: **Discussion: Charles Rosenberg's *Cholera Years***
Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 213-234.
- February 20: **Quenching Urban Thirst**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 3-44.
- February 22: **Powering the City**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 45-72.

Assignment: First Paper Due
- February 27: **Western Cities**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 73-102.

PART III: URBAN CONSEQUENCES AND CLEANUP

- March 1: **Urban Pollution**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 103-137.
- March 6: **Review for Mid-Term Exam**
Required Reading:
Crabgrass Frontier, 138-171.

- March 8: **MID-TERM EXAM**
- March 13: **NO CLASS — SPRING BREAK**
Required Reading:
None — catch up on reading.
- March 15: **NO CLASS — SPRING BREAK**
Required Reading:
None — catch up on reading.
- March 20: **Urban Progressive Reform**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 172-218.
- March 22: **Urban Parks and the City Beautiful Movement**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 219-245.
- PART IV: CITIES BETWEEN THE WARS**
- March 27: **The Roaring Twenties**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 246-271.
- March 29: **Discussion: Kenneth Jackson’s Crabgrass Frontier**
Required Reading:
Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 272-305.
- April 3: **The Harlem Renaissance**
Required Reading:
Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 1-45.
- Film:** *Without Fear or Shame*

April 5: **The Great Depression and the New Deal**
Required Reading:
Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 46-76.
Assignment Due: Second Paper

April 10: **City Change During World War II**
Required Reading:
Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 77-110.

PART V: POSTWAR URBAN ENVIRONMENTS

April 12: **Suburbanization**
Required Reading:
Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 111-135.

April 17: **City Civil Rights**
Required Reading:
Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 136-174.

April 19: **Discussion: Hurley's Environmental Inequalities**
Required Reading:
Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, 175-182.

April 24: **The War on Urban Poverty**
Required Reading:
None

Film: *Newark's War on Poverty*

April 26: **Review for Final Exam**
Required Reading:
None

Assignment Due: Third Paper

May 1: **FINAL EXAM**