

PLDV 426: History and Development of Cities  
4 units, Fall 2000

**Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Associate Professor David Sloane

**Time and Classroom:** Monday and Wednesday, 12:00-1:50

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:**

How have cities changed in the last 5000, 500, or 50 years? This course introduces students to the sweep of urban history by examining shifting patterns of development, expansion, social relationships, and economic activities. We trace the evolution of the city's form and development through the ancient world, medieval Europe, and modern America. Examples are taken primarily from the Western experience.

Within the context of that chronological evolution, we are going to examine the current polemical discussion around city form, represented by the term "sprawl." Many policymakers and urban reformers are convinced that the current urban structure sets the stage for ecological disaster and social alienation. By looking at the evolution of the city as a place, perhaps we can better understand the roots of this reform movement, as well as the historical context for the contemporary form of the city.

Students will be asked to read a series of articles, book chapters and books about the historical development of the city. The class structure will be lecture and discussion, with regular class participation by students regarding the readings and their views on the issues raised by the lectures and readings.

Students will be required to complete a final examination and two written assignments along with regular participation in the class. The first assignment is related to Italo Calvino's novel Invisible Cities. The second is a short research project on sprawl in contemporary America.

**REQUIRED TEXTS AND READINGS: (All readings are required)**

Calvino, Italo. Invisible Cities. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1974.

Calvino sets the stage for the class. The novel relates a series of conversations between Marco Polo and the Kublai Khan through which Calvino dissects our understanding of the physical and social relationships within the city.

Findlay, John M. Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Finlay's wonderful book examines post-World War II American cities, specifically those in the American West. Through chapters on such topics as Disneyland and Silicon Valley,

Findlay explores the historical context of the postwar city, raising issues such as the influence of the West on American culture and the reasons for current urban forms.

Jukes, Peter. *Shout in the Street*.

Kunstler, John Howard. *Home From Nowhere: Remaking Our Everyday World for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. New York: A Touchstone Book, 1996.

Kunstler is a popular advocate of New Urbanist concepts. I was tempted to use the new Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation*, but it is still only available in hardback. Kunstler is much easier to read, less technical, and remarkably evocative. You may not agree with him, but he will engage you.

Olsen, Donald J. *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.

I love Olsen's book. Few urban histories do a better job of relating form and society. The book plays an important part in this class because virtually every current critic of the city looks back nostalgically to (1) small town America and (2) large city Europe for their paradigms. Olsen beautifully conveys the development of that European city.

PLDV 426 Reader (RD).

The Reader will contain excerpts from a variety of sources, including some classics in the urban history and city planning literature, such as Witold Rybczynski Spiro Kostof, Lewis Mumford, Peter Hall, James Vance, and Peter Gordon and Harry Richardson.

These readings serve as tastes of classics that I hope you will go out and read on your own. I have consciously chosen them (mainly) as exemplars of various approaches to telling the story of the city. Mumford wrote the classic book, *The City in History*, while Hall and Vance have tried to follow his footsteps. Kostof, the brilliant architectural historian, left us two wonderful chronicles of the city, *The City Assembled* and *The City Shaped*.

Rybczynski and Gordon/Richardson are more directly related to our sprawl theme, with the former being an advocate for change and the latter critics of the reformers.

### **COURSE FORMAT**

The class is lecture and discussion with considerable participation required. Attendance is mandatory. I have not set aside specific days for discussion, but I will try to give you some notice of when I expect us to have a focused discussion of the readings. Try to keep up with the readings. The final exam will cover much of the semester's readings, and trying to go back and read books you were supposed to read weeks ago in preparation for a final is unpleasant.

Assignments consist of a weekly question from readings, two writing assignments, a debate, and a final examination. We will discuss the readings relatively frequently. If you are consistently unprepared, it will affect your grade. The weekly questions are due on Wednesday of each week. On occasion, I will ask the class to read their questions and we will use them for discussion, so the better the questions, the better the discussions. The two written assignments will be explained in full in class, but basically the first asks you to draw a map of your neighborhood and analyze that map using Calvino as a guide. The second requires you to search the web for materials on sprawl and discussion those materials regarding some questions I will pose. The debate will center on the issue of sprawl, with students taking sides on its importance and potential ways to combat it. The final examination will, as noted above, cover much of the semester's readings, although the focus will be on the last half.

**GRADING**

A combination of attendance, participation, and the timely completion of written and oral assignments will determine your grade. The percentages of the grade are participation and questions (20%), two writing assignments (30%), the debate (20%), and a final exam (30%).

**OFFICE HOURS**

My office is in 313 Ralph and Goldy Lewis Hall. My office phone is (213) 740-5768, home phone (310) 837-5858. Please call me at home only after 10:00 a.m. and before 10:00 p.m. My email is dsloane@usc.edu. I check it pretty much every day. My office hours will be on Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:30, or by appointment.

School of Urban Planning and Development  
University of Southern California  
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**Class Schedule/Assignment Due Dates**

**Origins and Emergence of Cities**

1. Aug. 28	Introduction	8. Oct. 16	Streets and Consumption
None		Jukes	
Aug. 30	Cities, Good Cities + Sprawl	Oct. 18	Streets and Sexuality
RD: Rybczynski, Kostof		Jukes	
2. Sept. 4	LABOR DAY	9. Oct. 23	New Urban Forms
		Jukes, discussion	
Sept. 6	What is a City?		
Calvino, Invisible Cities			
<b>Map Due</b>		<b>Sub-urban to Rule Suburbia</b>	
		Oct. 25	20th Century City
		Findlay, 14-51	
3. Sept.11	Greek Synoecism	10. Oct. 30	Western Cities, Suburban Places
RD: Hall		Findlay, 265-304	
Sept. 13	Urban Rome	Nov. 1	Suburban Sights
RD: Mumford		None, keep reading	Findlay
4. Sept. 18	Rome: Ancient Sprawling City	11. Nov. 6	Suburb as Destination
RD: Mumford		Findlay, 52-116	
<b>Paper One Due</b>			
Sept. 20	Medieval Origins	Nov. 8	No Here, There
Rd: Vance		Findlay, 117-159	
<b>The Ideal Cities: London, Paris, Vienna</b>		12. Nov. 13	Walls Down, Gates Up
		Findlay, 160-213, 265-304	
5. Sept. 25	Urban Icons	<b>Paper Two Due</b>	
Olsen, EVERYONE, 9-34, 82-88; Half, 35-57;			
Half, 58-81		Nov. 15	Sprawl Debate
		None, prepare for the debate	
Sept. 27	City as Monument	<b>A Sprawling Society</b>	
Olsen, 89-177EVERYONE, material on London;		13. Nov. 20	Consequences of Sprawl
Half Vienna; Half Paris, NOT 178-88		Kunstler, 21-80; RD: Gordon and Richardson	
6. Oct. 2	Home Sweet Home	Nov. 22	Thanksgiving
Olsen, EVERYONE, 189-209; Half, 210-234;			
Half, 235-250		14. Nov. 27	New Urbanism
		Kunstler, 81-195	
Oct. 4	Colonial to Republican City	Nov. 29	Main Street Revival
Olsen, finish what you have not read		Kunstler, 196-233	
<b>Streets and Cities</b>			
7. Oct. 9	Streets as Memory	15. Dec. 4	Alternative Visions
Jukes		Kunstler, 234-274; RD: Gordon/Richardson	
Oct. 11	Streets as Transportation	Dec. 6	Future Cities
Jukes			

Kunstler, 275-302

Dec. 13 8am to 10am **Final Exam**

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**Associate Professor David Sloane**

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**READER**

1. Witold Rybczynski, "Why Aren't Our Cities Like That?," selection from, City Life: Urban Expectations in a New World (New York: Scribner, 1995): 15-34.
2. Spiro Kostof, "The City in History," selection from, The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History (Boston: Bulfinch Press Book, 1991): 29-41.
3. Peter Hall, "The Fountainhead: Athens, 500-400 B.C.," selection from, Cities in Civilization (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998): 24-68.
4. Lewis Mumford, "Megalopolis into Necropolis," selection from, The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1961): 205-242.
5. James Vance, "The Prince's Capital and the Merchant's Town," selection from, The Continuing City: Urban Morphology in Western Civilization (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990): 208-247.
6. Gordon and Richardson, What's Wrong With Sprawl?