Environmental Geography and the City
Fall 2014

HOD 2690
Dr. James Fraser

Tuesday & Thursday 11:00-12:15
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Course Description
This course examines the production of urban environments and the ways in which human and non-human components affect each other. Taking 20th century U.S. cities as the vehicle for our inquiry, the course will cover material on how cities became the way they appear now, how different groups of people experience the city, and what we would like our cities to become. A good portion of the course will cover material on urban planning and geography, the built environment, and the political, economic, and cultural forces that shape these. The substantive topics we will cover include but are not limited to housing, neighborhood environment, transportation, city infrastructure, water and soil, natural resources and green spaces, food systems and security, and social justice. The course will also have an applied component where students will choose issues that are relevant to cities today and explore potential lines of action and policies to address them.

Course Expectations, Assignments & Grading
Attendance: This class will be conducted with a focus on in-class discussions and activities. Because of this format, you are expected to attend all classes for the full scheduled time. Excessive tardiness will be counted as an absence. You can miss up to two classes throughout
the semester without penalty, but you must turn in assignments ahead of time and arrange to get notes from a colleague. Your final grade will go down by 5 points (out of 100) for each additional class missed. Finally, if you fail to show up for a scheduled meeting with the professor or TA without canceling 24 hours in advance, your final grade will be docked by 5 points.

**Reading:** Complete all readings (and other assignments) **prior** to the class meeting for which they are scheduled. You must bring your book or copies of the readings to each class. See the course outline below for weekly readings.

**Participation:** Through communication, ideas are formed, revised, borrowed, and developed. It is through argument, description, explanation, and improvisation – within a community – that individual learning flourishes. This course requires full participation (including active listening, facilitating, note-taking, and question-asking) to create an environment of open and shared learning. An effective participant is not someone who simply talks frequently, but someone who reliably offers thoughtful insights that help others to learn.

**Technology:** Laptop computers and other portable technologies should be used in class only as learning-facilitation tools. During class, it is not acceptable to play games, answer email, surf the web, answer cell phones, text message, or engage in other non-class-related activities. Your participation grade will be penalized if you break this rule. Why? Not only do these practices negatively affect your learning and participation, but they also distract others and create an environment of disrespect.

**Academic Honesty:** In order to avoid plagiarism, your assignments must provide full citations for all references: direct quotes, summaries, or ideas. While you are encouraged to develop your thinking with your peers, you cannot use their material without citing it. Work from other courses will not be accepted in this course. Allowing your writing to be copied by another student is also considered cheating. Please review the Honor Code for complete guidelines on academic honesty: [http://studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/](http://studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/).

**Gender-Fair Language:** Language structures thought and action. Biases in language can (and do) naturalize inequalities. Imprecise language also signifies un-interrogated values and sloppy thinking. For all of these reasons, the use of gender-fair language is expected in this course. For example, do not use words like “mankind” or “men” when referring to people in general; alternate between “she” and “he” instead of always using “he,” or construct sentences in the plural instead of the singular so you can use “they” or “them” and avoid the problem altogether.

**ESL/LD Students:** Course requirements can be adjusted to serve the needs and capabilities of ESL and LD students. Please speak with the professor during the first two weeks of class to make arrangements. Students may be advised to attend additional sessions during the professor’s office hours so they can draw comparable value from the course.

**Grading**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays (5)</td>
<td>75%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project (1)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Essays:** The five essays need to be uploaded on the due date (anytime). These writings should be creative and not simply a review of the material. You should demonstrate that you have a grasp of the main ideas in the set of readings, and how you are thinking through the issues we are covering. The essays will be three to four pages in length, and not more. The essays will be graded based upon clarity, accuracy, and insightfulness.
Final Project: The final paper project will be based on a topic of your choosing that Nashville is facing today related to environmental issues, writ large. We will discuss topics in class and I will approve them before you begin. These “white papers” will address include a statement of the problem, literature review on how other cities have addressed the issue that Nashville faces, and then policy suggestions that could be approved by city council and implemented. They will also include an executive summary of your findings and policy suggestions. These papers will be 7-10 pages. Each student will present the paper to the class.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (August 21)
Introduction
Thursday

Week 2 (August 26 & 28)
What is Nature? What is a City?
Tuesday

Thursday

Week 3 (September 2 & 4)
City/Nature; Spaces of Urbanism
Tuesday


Thursday
1. Nashville Next Presentation & Discussion of Student Projects

2. Review the Nashville Next Website: http://www.nashville.gov/Government/NashvilleNext.aspx

3. Essay #1 Due
Week 4 (September 9 & 11)
Sustainable Cities
Tuesday

Thursday

Week Five (September 16 & 18)
(Urban) Political Ecology
Tuesday


Thursday

Week Six (September 23 & 25)
Global Scales of City-Nature
Tuesday


Thursday

2. Essay# 2 Due
Week Seven (September 30 and October 2)
Cities/Design/Nature
Tuesday

Thursday

Week Eight (October 7 & 9)
Case Study on Nature and the City
Tuesday

Thursday
No Class: Work On Essays

Week Nine (October 14 & 16)
Case Study on Nature and the City
Tuesday
1. Discussion of Gandy’s Book Continued

2. Essay # 3 Due

Thursday:
Fall Break

Week Ten (October 21 & 23)
Water and City Infrastructure
Tuesday

Thursday

Week 11 (October 28 & 30)
Water and City Infrastructure
Tuesday
Thursday
1. Discussion of Karvonen’s Book Continued


4. Essay #4 Due

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**Week 12 (November 4 & 6)**

Soil and Environmental Behavior

**Tuesday**


**Thursday**

No Class: Work On Essays

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**Week 13 (November 11 & 13)**

**Tuesday**

**Thursday**

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**Week 14 (18 & 20)**

**Tuesday**

**Thursday**
Week 15 (December 2 & 4)

Tuesday
1. Presentations

2. Essay #5 Due

Thursday
1. Presentations

2. Final Paper Due