

CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY SPRING, 2001

COLLEGE OF URBAN AFFAIRS

DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES

UST 250 - THE CITY IN FILM

Instructor : Norman Krumholz

Meeting Time : Tues.-Thurs. 10:00 am - 11:50 am

Meeting Room : MC 437

Instructor's

Office : UR 224

Phone : 687-6946

Office Hours : By appointment

### Course Description

This is an experimental course. It is based on the fact that architecture, urban planning, and urban design are visually-oriented professions, and that learning about them should contain a strong visual component. It is also based on the pedagogical premise that film - an enormously popular art form - has in the past and continues to influence public attitudes toward American urbanism and urban issues.

Film (both commercial and documentary) does not always give us an unbiased view of urban life. For example, during the 1980s, Hollywood portrayed life in Manhattan as sophisticated and filled with opportunity and far preferable to life as a "country yokel." Later films presented cities as environments filled with violence and intrigue. Both visions are current to some degree, but each exaggerates an aspect of city life and shapes our perceptions in the process.

This course should be FUN as well as educationally enriching. It will present a sweep of urban issues primarily in the form of videos & films, but supported by textbooks and supplementary readings. Students will view and discuss the films and readings, write reviews and papers, and discuss related problems of urban politics, history, suburbanization, architecture, the environment, immigration, and race. The approach will be interdisciplinary and will present the various perspectives of the many fields which build and interpret the city.

### Course Objectives

The course should familiarize students with the historical and political evolution of cities and urban areas, their major attractions, problems, and opportunities for future development. It will provide the student with alternative views of these issues and with various attempts to research the basic causes of urban problems and resolve them. In such films as Roger & Me and City of Hope, students will also learn how some contemporary American urban institutions operate, and they will contrast how things are supposed to be with how they actually are.

## Course Methods

This course will consist of one film or videotape to be screened in each of the 15 weeks of the semester. Each screening will then be followed by a discussion of the issues raised in the film and the assigned supplementary readings. Outside experts with particular knowledge of an issue, may be invited to speak perhaps in a "Siskal and Ebert" two-commentator format. For example, an architect might be invited to discuss with the class alternative theories of futuristic urban design; an artist might be invited to examine the imagery of the city as a work of art; a politician might discuss the workings and inevitable compromises of urban politics. Students will maintain a written Screening Diary and write a review of each screening to help transform what might be a passive viewing experience into an active synthesis of ideas. Screening diaries will be handed in and graded. Students will also write 2 short papers and take a final exam.

## Course Requirements and Grading

Grades will be based on four elements:

I. Two Screening Diaries: One set of diaries to be handed-in at the end of week #7, and the second set to be handed-in on the last day of class. A sample Screening Diary form is included with this syllabus.

### **Max. Points:**

2 sets of Screening Diaries @ 15 pts. each = 30 pts.

II. Two short essays: The first to be handed-in at end of week #7, the second to be handed-in the last day of class.

### **Max. Points:**

2 short essays @ 15 pts. each = 30 pts.

III. A final exam with questions drawn exclusively from films & videos.

**Max. Points:** 30 points

IV. Classroom participation and discussion

**Max. Points:** 10 points

**A = 100-90 pts.**

**B = 89-80 pts.**

**C = 79-70 pts.**

**D = 69-60 pts.**

**F = below 60 pts.**

How To Pass The Course

1. Attend classes & participate in class discussions.
2. Hand in your screening diaries and short essays on time. Late papers will be downgraded.
3. Enjoy the films and videos.

NOTE: Papers with excessive spelling and/or grammatical errors will be downgraded.

Course Materials

There is one textbook for this course: Robert Sklar. 1994. Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies. N.Y.: Vintage Books. In addition, students will find copies of supplementary readings on reserve at the second floor secretary's office, opposite Room 224, College of Urban Affairs, 1717 Euclid Ave. These readings will amplify the basis for each class discussion, so keep up with the readings. The quality of the discussion will depend as much on the student's preparation as on the professor's.

Attendance Policy

Students will be expected to attend all classes and keep up with all reading assignments. Students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet.

University Policies

Refer to the undergraduate CSU Bulletin for procedures on course add/drop and withdrawal, grading, and incomplete procedures.

**Special needs:** Anyone anticipating needing special accommodations to take exams or complete assignments must identify themselves to the instructor by the end of the second week of classes. These include accommodations for physical handicaps, learning disabilities, and English as a second language.

UST 250 Topics and Screening Schedule - Spring 2001

For Readings: Text = Movie-Made America

Supp = Supplementary on Reserve

Week 1 Topic: Urban History; Industrialization and Class Struggle.

Film : Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927, 120 min. b/w) Futuristic, inhumane city of the machine age.

Startling designs & suggestion of class struggle.

Read : U.S.: Alfred Kazin, "Fear of the City, 1783-1983", American Heritage, Feb. 1983.

Text : Chapter 1

Week 2 Topic: Urban Design & Architecture.

Film : Arcosante (30 min.) by Paolo Solari &

The City by Lewis Mumford.

Read : Supp: P. Goldberger, "Architectural Visions, Celluloid Frames", N.Y. Times, Jan.7, 1996.

Text : Chapter 2

Week 3 Topic: Transportation.

Film : Taken for a Ride, FMBUR Video 02294 @ CSU, 55 min.

Read : U.S.: Fred Barnes, "In Praise of Highways", Weekly Standard, April 27, 1998.

U.S.: Rob Gurwitt, "The Quest for Common Ground", Governing, June, 1998.

Text : Chapter 3

Week 4 Topic: Environmental issues and water politics in

Los Angeles, wrapped inside a murder mystery.

Film : Chinatown. Roman Polanski, 1974, 131 min.

Oscar winner for best screenplay; one of the

100 best films of the century.

Read : Supp: Michael Sorkin (ed) "See You in Disneyland" from Variations on a Theme Park: N.Y.: Hill & Wang.

Text : Chapter 4

Week 5 Topic: Immigration & Suburbanization.

Film : Avalon, Barry Levinson, 1990. The "old"

immigration around 1900 & bittersweet success & disillusion.

Read : U.S.: James Kunstler, "Home From Nowhere", Atlantic Monthly, Sept. 1996;

U.S.: Rybcznski & Linneman, "Shrinking Cities", Wharton Real Estate Review, Fall, 1997; Supp: Avalon, Movie Review, Nation, Nov.5,1995.

Week 6 Topic: Racial Issues

Film : Do the Right Thing (Spike Lee, 1989, 120 min. Depiction of life and a long, hot day in the neighborhood. Color Adjustment. How T.V. deals with race.

Read : Supp: Goldsmith & Blakeley, Separate Societies, chapt. 1, 1992; Supp: M. Frady, "Children of Malcolm". New Yorker, Nov. 12, 1992.

Week 7 Topic: Recreation

Film : "Claiming Open Spaces", CSU Prof. Austin Allen, 86 min.

NOTE: PAPER #1 DUE: Using Taken For A Ride & Avalon as backdrops, discuss what you think of suburban sprawl. Since many are concerned about the loss of green space and pollution that accompanies sprawl, why hasn't more been done about it? (approx. 5 pages). ALSO NOTE: Screening Diaries due.

Week 8 Topic: Economic Development; Success and Failure.

Film : Roger and Me. Michael Moore, 1990, 87 min. Industrial decline and redevelopment in

Flint, Michigan. Ironic documentary film about General Motors' plant-closing and the

city. Also, Poletown Lives, 60 min.

Read : Supp: Norman Krumholz, "Equity & Local Economic Development", Economic Development Quarterly, Nov., 1991; U.S. "America's Cities": They Can Yet Be Reconstructed", The Economist, Jan. 10, 1998; "The Poletown Dilemma", Harvard Business School.

Week 9 Topic: Crime

Film : The French Connection.

Read : James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows", Atlantic Monthly, March, 1982; Tamar Jacoby, "Mandate for Anarchy", New Democrat, May, 1998.

Week 10 Topic: Urban politics

Film : City of Hope. John Sayles, 1991, 129 min. Gritty, despairing tale of corrupt politics, economic development, and a tragic urban love story.

Read : U.S.: Blaine Harden, "Rejuvenation of Cities...", Washington Post, March 15, 1998.

Week 11 Topic : Social Class & Lifestyles in the city

Film : Guess Who's Coming To Dinner? Stanley Kramer, 1967, 108 min. (Racial and class issues gently explored by Poitier, Hepburn and Tracy). Oscar winner for story and screenplay.

Read : U.S.: Ingrid G. Ellen, "Welcome Neighbors?" The Brookings Review, 1997. U.S.: Eyal Press, "Division Street", Lingua France, March, 1998.

Week 12 Topic : Neighborhood Development

Film : Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street; Building hope

Read : U.S.: George W. Liebmann, "Three Good Community-Building Ideas From Abroad", American Enterprise, Dec., 1996; U.S.: Barry Yeoman, "Left Behind in Sand Town", City Limits, Jan., 1998.

Week 13 Topic : Poverty & Welfare

Film: Breakfast at Tiffany's. (1961). Audrey

Hepburn imaginatively adrift in New York City.

Read : U.S.: Dreier & Atlas, "The Mansion Subsidy", New Democrat, Jan., 1997;  
U.S.: P. Nichols, "Public Housing in Atlanta...", Philadelphia Inquirer, June 4, 1998.

Week 14 Topic : Low-rent housing Film :

Down the Project, 60 min. film. Read : U.S.: Dreier & Atlas, "The Mansion Subsidy", New Democrat, Jan., 1997; U.S.: P. Nichols, "Public Housing in Atlanta...", Philadelphia Inquirer, June 4, 1998.

Week 15 Topic : The City of the Future as Urban Dystopia

Film : Bladerunner Director's Cut, Ridley Scott, 116 min. 1992; the 21<sup>st</sup> Century "future" set in L.A. complete with decaying environment & murderous replicants. Alternative film includes Brazil if the class prefers.

Read : U.S.: "Futureville", The Economist, Feb. 3,

1996; Fred Siegel, "Back From The Brink", New Democrat, Oct., 1997.

NOTE PAPER #2 DUE: Select one of these two topics: (1) With "Broken Windows" & our class discussion of crime as background, discuss whether you believe the "broken windows" approach has led to the sharp decline in crime in NYC & elsewhere. What reasons do you suggest for the drop? (2) What steps would you take to improve education in urban public school systems? (approx. 5 pages).

### **The City IN Film: UST 250**

### **SOME MAJOR EVENTS IN URBAN AND SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT**

1848 The beginning of mass immigration (heavily Western European) into the United States.

1850 The population of New York City reaches 515,547.

1869 Olmstead and Vaux after designing Central Park in New York City, design the first

American planned suburban community-Riverside, Illinois.

1870 The inventions of the elevator and the steel-framed building allows cities to grow upwards with the high rise.

At this time, 15 American cities had populations exceeding 100,000.

1880 New York City becomes the first American city to exceed 1,000,000.

The national rail network at this time is composed of 93,000 miles of track.

1885 The trolley was born in the United States in Baltimore, Maryland.

First film studio is built in Edison's laboratory due to the popular response of Kinetoscope (peep show) "parlors".

1896 The first motion picture is shown in the United States at Koster and Bail's Music Hall in New York City. It is here, that Thomas Edison introduces the *Vitascope*.

1897 First American subway opened in Boston.

1899 The Garden City Association formed to promote Ebenezer Howard's ideas on communities Garden Cities: small self-sustaining towns in rural environments.

1900 The population of the US reaches 75,994,575.

1903 Edwin S. Porter created *The Great Train Robbery*.

1907 US. sets a record in the number of immigrants let into the country in one year- 1,285,000 (most from Eastern and Southern Europe).

Foundation of Hollywood as filmmaking center (USA).

1908 The assembly line is perfected and the famous model T Ford is introduced by Henry Ford. After this time, workers were increasingly employed on production lines. The low cost of mass production begins to make cars affordable to most Americans.

1908 The Comprehensive Plan of Chicago is published. First Comprehensive City Plan.

1910- The Russell Sage Foundation builds *Forest Hills Gardens* in Long Island, New York to

1913 test the neighborhood design concept originated by Raymond Unwin.

Paramount releases its first movies.

Zoning Code is created, setting a precedent for comprehensive zoning ordinances in the

US.

1917 The United States enters World War I.

1918 The War Industries Board declares moving pictures an essential industry.

1920 Women given the right to vote in US. Cleveland is 6<sup>th</sup> largest city in U.S.

1921 Federal Road Act creates the Bureau of Public Roads to plan a highway network to connect major cities.

1922 The Standard Zoning Enabling Act is published by U.S. Dept. of Commerce. It is *very* popular.

1923 10 Million automobiles are registered in the US.

1926 Release of *Metropolis* by Fritz Lang.

1928 Construction begins at Radburn, a New Jersey planned settlement that was influenced by English garden city theories.

Warner Brothers introduced the first all-talking feature production.

Walt Disney creates his first Mickey Mouse cartoon--*Steamboat Willie*.

1929 The stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression!

1931 Release of *City Lights* starring Charlie Chaplin.

1932 President Herbert Hoover creates the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

National focus on housing issues in part by the need to stimulate economic recovery.

1937 The US Housing Act of 1937 allowed state to use its power of condemnation while being financially supported by the federal government. This was the first time the federal government took responsibility for the construction of low income or "public" housing.

1941 United States enters World War II.

1944 Servicemen return home from the war and new housing is needed. Servicemen's Readjustment Act creates VA mortgage program, making it easier for households to purchase a house.

1946 The television is introduced to America.

1947 Levittown, a 17,000 unit subdivision is built in Long Island, New York by Abraham Levitt and Sons. Other giant developers adopt similar building techniques.

1948 President Truman integrates the U.S. Armed Forces by Executive Order.

1949 The Housing Act of 1949 is signed by Harry Truman. This act was meant to bring about "Urban Redevelopment."

1950 The Majority of the African-American population of the U.S. now lives in urban areas.

A major environmental movement began that focused on resources--air, water, and land--that would enhance the quality of life.

1951 Eckert and Mauchly develop a line of computers that can be made available commercially.

1956 The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 helps accelerate "white flight" to the suburbs by creating the Interstate Highway System.



1959 The Housing Act of 1959 provides matching funds to localities to prepare Community Renewal Plans.

1963 Two privately developed new towns are begun--Reston, Virginia and Columbia, Maryland.

1964 The National Wilderness Preservation System is created.

1965 The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development is created by Congress.

1967 150,000 US people march to protest against the Vietnam War.

1970 The Housing and Development Act of 197 promotes racially segregated communities on the urban fringe areas. The beginning of this decade also sees more minorities entering the American middle class.

An era of new interest begins in our environment and in curbing pollution from toxic chemical wastes.

1978 American steel and auto industries rocked by foreign competition lose market share.

1980 Census shows that 38 metropolitan areas had populations of 1 million or more persons.

Crack cocaine becomes the "drug of choice".

1985 The World Health Organization declares AIDS an epidemic.

1986 57% of the nation's office stock was located outside of the central business district, mostly in "Edge-Cities".

1989 The Internet begins general use.

1995 Urban Sprawl becomes a "hot" urban/suburban issue.

2000 The population of the U.S. passes 275 million.

UST 250 - THE CITY ON FILM

SAMPLE SCREENING DIARY

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE OF FILM \_\_\_\_\_

STUDIO/DIRECTOR \_\_\_\_\_

YEAR RELEASED \_\_\_\_\_

1. PLOT (Ideas that drove the film)

2. HISTORICAL SETTING

3. URBAN ISSUES DISCUSSED

4. RESOLUTION OF ISSUES

5. WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THE FILM?

## 6. WHY DID YOU LIKE IT OR NOT?

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Mumford, Lewis. The Pentagon of Power. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, 1970.

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White, E.B. One Man's Meat. New York: Harper & Row, 1944.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. The Living City. New York: Mentor Books, 1958.

#### Also See The Following Websites

1. Housing density & urban sprawl: <https://www.teleport.com>

(a) [https://www.yahoo.com/social\\_science/urban\\_studies/](https://www.yahoo.com/social_science/urban_studies/)

2. Urban policies: <https://www.hud.gov/>

3. Urban Neighborhoods: <https://www.journalism.wisc.edu>

(A) <https://www.gallup.com/>

4. Urban Issues, the Urban Institute: <https://www.urban.org/>