

# CITIES IN GLOBAL CONTEXT

Northeastern University  
FALL 2020

10:30am – 11:35am, Mon, Wed, Thurs

Instructor: Zoltán Glück  
Email: [zgluck@northeastern.edu](mailto:zgluck@northeastern.edu)  
Office: Renaissance Park, 215M

Course Number: INTL 3200  
Course Location: Remote (Zoom)  
Office hours: Monday 9:30-11:30am  
*by appointment*

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Cities today are caught in processes of massive upheaval and global social transformation. Some cities are awash in capital as global finance injects massive amounts of cash into urban real estate markets transforming cities in the image consumption, luxury condos, and rampant gentrification. Other cities are awash in violence, caught in the nexus of war, insurrection, and expanding security infrastructures. Across the world, dynamics of urban segregation, exclusion, and apartheid which manifest today have deep historical roots which need to be excavated. And conversely, cities are today (and have historically been) important sites of rebellion, protest, insurrection, and revolution. Everywhere climate change threatens to radically transform society and the urban fabric of our world. This course takes the social and political questions surrounding these volatile dynamics of contemporary urban transformation, focusing-in on several cities and zooming-out to analyze the broad axes of power (race, class, capital, security and environmental crisis) through which cities across the globe are being transformed. Drawing on readings in urban anthropology, sociology, and critical geography, we will ask how cities are being radically restructured in the contemporary period. Broadly, we will develop an analysis of how power works in and through the city – that is, how the urban fabric itself becomes a medium through power operates. More narrowly, the course will ask: How is urban space produced? Who has the right to shape the city? How is urban exclusion and segregation maintained and reproduced over time? How are divisions of race, class, gender, and historical patterns of marginality reproduced in the city? How do political imaginaries shape the city? And what can contemporary urban forms and processes tell us about the future of urban life on the planet?

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Help students analyze cities, urban spaces and urbanization from a variety of theoretical perspectives in anthropology and related disciplines such as geography, sociology, and history.
- Introduce students to several major theoretical concepts and currents in critical urban studies such as global cities, the production of space, planetary urbanization, and abolitionism.
- Develop an analysis of how power works in and through the city—particularly through the axes of race, class, gender, security, and environmental crisis.
- Cultivate a writing practice through substantive weekly reading responses.

## REQUIRED BOOKS & READINGS

- Samuel Stein (2019) *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*. Verso: New York.
- Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor (2019) *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Ananya Roy (2003) *City Requiem, Calcutta: Gender and the Politics of Poverty*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis

*\*All additional readings will be made available on Canvas*

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are four requirements for this course: (1) Class Participation, (2) Weekly Reading Responses, (3) two Keyword Papers, and (4) a Final Review Essay.

### 1. Participation 20%

This is a discussion based seminar in which everyone is expected to participate in the conversation. For this reason, participation in class discussions is a major part of the grade for the course. Students are expected to come prepared, having read the material and prepared two questions or comments on the readings for the class. Each week we begin class by collecting a few of these questions and comments. This way we will cultivate a practice of critical reading, analysis, and collective conversation over the course of the semester structured around a set of questions and interests arising from students' own interests and concerns.

### 2. Reading Responses 30%

Each week, students are expected to write a reading response of 600-1000 words. These responses are DUE by 5pm on Wednesdays. Responses should engage substantively with readings. This substantive engagement with the readings is a vital part of the seminar. By doing so students build a practice of engaging with texts through writing. This is an important intellectual practice for any scholar. And doing so helps students build an archive and record of their own ideas, critiques, and notes on texts which they can draw upon in the future. In class, we will collectively draw upon these Reading Responses in our discussions of the texts. And ultimately, these Reading Responses will be an important resource for students in composing their Final Review Essay. I am asking for a specific format for these responses, so please include:

- a) a few sentence summary of the argument(s) being made in each book, article, or book chapter
- b) another few sentences (or so) explaining what makes the argument novel, important, and/or a contribution to the study of cities, space, power, capitalism. Please pay attention whether the piece's novelty comes from the methods used, the question asked, the answers reached, or the analytic framework utilized.
- c) a brief comparison of how this piece differs from /builds on/ aligns with the other piece(s) read for the week. (Or for weeks when we are reading one author's book, please discuss the book chapters in relation to previous articles, theories, and frameworks that we have read together)
- d) And then, taking all of the pieces read for this week and identify the questions, thoughts, ideas, come to mind when you read all of the pieces together. This is the response, while the other pieces are the summary.

### 3. Keyword Papers 15%

There will be two "Keyword Papers" due on days where the class cannot meet synchronously. In place of a regular synchronous meeting, you should use the regular class time to complete your Keyword Paper assignment. Directions: Please assemble a list of 4 to 6 key words, concepts, or terms from the course readings (these may be taken from any week or topic we have covered). Students must submit a roughly

600-1000 words (total) defining these key words and concepts. You must reference particular passages and quotes from texts we've read (though avoid overly-lengthy block quotes). Secondly, in a few paragraphs please explain the importance or significance of each keyword or concept in relation to the broader themes the class. The first Keyword Paper is due by **5pm on October 15<sup>th</sup>**. The second Keyword Paper is due by **5pm on November 12<sup>th</sup>**.

- Keywords can include (but are not limited to): *gentrification, global city, planetary urbanization, the production of space, right to the city, settler colonialism, racial capitalism, ethnography, the real estate state, abolition, etc.*

### **3. Final Review Essay 35%**

For the final, students must write a Review Essay addressing three books (10-12 pages). The first two books can be chosen from the required book list, or from among the other books which we read together in class. The third book (or up to TWO of the books) can be chosen from the list of "Books for Review" below. This **Final is due by 5pm on December 15<sup>th</sup>**.

#### **Books for Review**

- Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*
- Aimee Meredith Cox, *Shapeshifters: Black Girls and the Choreography of Citizenship*
- Savannah Shange, *Progressive Dystopia: Abolition, Antiracism, and Schooling in San Francisco*
- Ato Quayson, *Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism*
- Nikhil Anand, *Hydraulic City: Water and the Infrastructures of Citizenship in Mumbai*
- Clyde Woods, *Development Drowned and Reborn: The Blues and Bourbon Restorations in Post-Katrina New Orleans*
- Naomi Klein, *The Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*
- Ashley Dawson, *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*
- Deborah A. Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation*
- Christian Parenti, *Tropics of Chaos: Climate Change and the New Geography of Violence*
- Setha Low, *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*
- Setha Low, *Spatializing Culture*
- Amaka Okechukwu, *To Fulfill these Rights: Political Struggle Over Affirmative Action and Open Admissions*
- Austin Zeiderman, *Endangered City: The Politics of Security and Risk in Bogota*
- Yarimar Bonilla, *Aftershocks of Disaster: Puerto Rico Before and After the Storm*
- Aseel Sawalha, *Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar City*
- Li Zhang, *In Search of Paradise: Middle Class Living in a Chinese Metropolis*
- Antina von Schnitzler, *Democracy's Infrastructure: Technopolitics and Protest After Apartheid*
- Kristin Monroe, *Insecure City: Space Power and Mobility in Beirut*
- Neil Brenner, *New Urban Spaces*
- Amy Starecheski, *Ours to Lose: When Squatters Became Homeowners in New York City*
- Carwil Bjork-James, *The Sovereign Street: Making Revolution in Urban Bolivia*
- Brett Story, *Prison Land: Mapping Carceral Power Across Neoliberal America*
- Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis and Opposition in Globalizing California*

- Melissa Checker, *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Southern Town*
- Stephen Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*
- Catherine Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City in the American 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

## COURSE CONDUCT & EXPECTATIONS

**1. My availability:** I will be available for “office hours” virtually, by appointment. My regular hours will be Mondays 9:30am – 11:30am. Please send me an email to reserve a 15-minute time slot. If you are unable to attend my office hours, please email me and we will find a time to meet that is convenient for you. I encourage all students to meet with me during the semester, although I strongly encourage you to do so if you are having any difficulties with the course.

**2. Attendance:** As a seminar course, attendance and participation matter. If you are going to be absent, you must email me before the class session. If you must leave a class session early, then please mention it to me before class begins. If you are aware that you will miss class because of religious holidays, please inform me in advance to avoid an unexcused absence.

**3. Cell Phone and Computer Protocol:** Turn off or put away all cell phones before coming in the classroom. (the same protocol applies for phones during digital class meetings over Zoom)

**4. Plagiarism:** I take plagiarism very seriously and will report any suspected cases. As noted on the library website, the NU Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "intentionally representing the words, ideas, or data of another as one's own in any academic exercise without providing proper citation." Examples of plagiarism include:

- Quoting someone's words from the Internet, a printed article, or an interview, without acknowledging the author.
- Copying part of the content of a work into one's own paper without citing the source.
- Copying or buying a paper and handing it in as one's own.
- Falsely creating a citation that doesn't exist.
- Failing to credit and cite someone else's thoughts or ideas when paraphrasing.
- Paraphrasing in a way that relies too heavily on another's language or syntax.

Avoid plagiarism by learning how to cite. When in doubt, ask for help. Become familiar with documentation guidelines, such as APA, MLA, etc. When quoting or paraphrasing ideas, theories, data or words that were created or authored by someone other than you, make sure that you both cite them in the text, and document them in the "works cited" or bibliography at the end of your paper.

**5. Course Conduct and Community:** We are a community of learners. Our class – whether on the ground or online – functions as a community, and as such, it's vitally important that our community be inclusive, welcoming and committed to dismantling systems of oppression such as racism, ableism, cissexism and others. Within this course, we will take a pluralistic approach to discussions, which is to say that all voices are welcome. This kind of learning environment features: open discussion; collective confrontation of difficult questions and controversial ideas; and respect for cultural and intellectual diversity. While it is sometimes appropriate to share our beliefs, personal experiences, and opinions, a goal in this course is to inform or support them through careful, thoughtful, and organized evidence-based thinking, research, writing, and presentations. Be respectful of one another. We will be having difficult conversations about topics that are sometimes challenging to discuss. We will therefore be adopting a practice of *generous*

*reading* and *kindness* with one another as we grapple with these topics. Be kind when responding to your fellow classmates.

Mutual respect does not mean that you must agree—in fact, disagreement often fuels the best discussion—but rather that the terms of disagreement are centered around the material discussed rather than the individuals discussing them. Learning happens most effectively in classes where **mutual respect and a spirit of generosity is expected** and maintained. This involves regular attendance with preparation so one can participate in discussions effectively; turning in all assignments and doing so on-time; bringing a seriousness of purpose to your examination of the materials and issues; being an attentive listener when others are sharing ideas (including not doing other things on your computer or phone while others are speaking); being open to new ideas, evidence, arguments, and points of views; and being receptive to constructive feedback.

It also involves being cognizant of trying to **avoid replicating systems of privilege and oppression within our class community**. While disagreement and passionate debate are encouraged, you must always remain respectful during class discussions. Diverse opinions and experiences are welcome and encouraged. There is however a very hard line: under no circumstances will any hate speech, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, islamophobia or other forms of denigration of social groups be tolerated. If any class discussion or comments by fellow students have made you feel uncomfortable, please do contact me after class or during office hours. Ultimately, this is a discussion-based seminar and relies on the good will of and solidarity between class participants. By following these general guidelines for course conduct, my hope is that we will foster deeper conversations and a sense of collectivity as we navigate important and complex social problems.

As a general rule, **behaviors and activities that are problematic in classroom meetings are problematic as well in online and hybrid contexts**. This includes things like using disrespectful language, inviting others to class without permission, recording class without permission, having conversations with other people while class is going on, dressing inappropriately, checking your phone/texting/browsing websites during class, carrying weapons, etc.

Some things that are particular to online meetings are muting your mic when you are not speaking, keeping your camera on when possible (and when it does not compromise privacy – Note: I’m actually very understanding on this point – so just let me know if for any reason you need to attend class without your camera on), and not using distracting or inappropriate backgrounds. Please also try to **provide yourself with the best learning environment that you can under the circumstances**. If there are any challenges or barriers to your being successful in this class due to its format or your situation, please let me know.

It is also important to remember that we are meeting online and in hybrid formats because **these are challenging and transformative times**. We are all trying to do the best we can under non-ideal circumstances full of uncertainty. We are all of us learning how to do this in real time. We need to be generous and understanding with each other.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1. Introductions: Cities, Space, Power

#### Readings:

- David Harvey. 2003. "The right to the city." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27: 939–941.
- Setha Low. 1996 "The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City" *Annual Review of Anthropology* (25): 383-409
- Setha Low. 2017. "The Social Production of Space" Chapter 3 in *Spatializing Culture*. (pp 34-67)

**September 9<sup>th</sup>** \*NO CLASS MEETING\*

**September 10<sup>th</sup>** First Class Meeting 10:30am – 11:35am

### Week 2. The Global and the Urban

#### Readings:

- Saskia Sassen. 2005. "The Global City: Introducing a Concept" *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 11(2): 27-43
- Neil Brenner. 2019. "Planetary Urbanization: Mutations of the Urban Question" Chapter 9 in *New Urban Spaces* (pp. 300-333)
- Deborah Cowen. 2019. "Following the infrastructures of empire: notes on cities, settler colonialism, and method" *Urban Geography*

**September 14<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**September 16<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**September 17<sup>th</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

### Week 3. World City, Colonial City, and Abolitionist Futures

#### Readings:

- Jennifer Robinson. 2002. "Global and World Cities: A View from off the map" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26(3): 531-554.
- Wangui Kimari. 2020. "The story of a pump: life, death and afterlives within an urban planning of "divide and rule" in Nairobi, Kenya" in *Urban Geography*
- Wangui Kimari and Jessica Parish. 2020. "What is a river? A transnational meditation on the colonial city, abolition ecologies and the future of geography" in *Urban Geography*

**September 21<sup>st</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**September 23<sup>rd</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**September 24<sup>th</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

#### **Week 4. Global Capital and the City: New York, Part I**

Readings:

- Sam Stein. 2019. *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*. Verso: New York (Chapters 1, 2 & 3)

**September 28<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**September 30<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**October 1<sup>st</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

#### **Week 5. Global Capital and the City: New York, Part II**

Readings:

- Sam Stein. 2019. *Capital City* (Chapter 4, 5 and Conclusion)

**October 5<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**October 7<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**October 8<sup>th</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am **\*Guest Speaker Dr. Sam Stein**

#### **Week 6. Gender and the Politics of Urban Poverty, Calcutta, Part I**

Readings:

- Ananya Roy. 2003. *City Requiem, Calcutta: Gender and the Politics of Poverty*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis (Preface & Chapters 1 & 2)

**October 12<sup>th</sup>** **Indigenous Peoples Day – No Meetings**

**October 14<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**October 15<sup>th</sup>** **\*NO CLASS – Keyword Paper Due at 5pm\***

## **Week 7. Gender and the Politics of Urban Poverty, Calcutta Part II**

### Readings:

- Ananya Roy. 2003. *City Requiem* (Chapters 3, 4, 5 & Postscripts)

**October 19<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**October 21<sup>st</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**October 22<sup>nd</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

## **Week 8. Environmental Crisis and Urban Life, Part I**

### Readings:

- Naomi Klein *The Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (“Introduction” pp. 1-31)
- Ashley Dawson. 2017. *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (Introduction & Chapters 1 & 5)

**October 26<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**October 28<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**October 29<sup>th</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

## **Week 9. Environmental Crisis and Urban Life, Part II**

### Readings:

- Ashley Dawson. 2017. *Extreme Cities* (Chapter 6, “Disaster Communism” pp.233-275)
- Naomi Klein *The Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, (Chapter 9. “Blockadia: The New Climate Warriors,” pp. 293-337)
- *Listen to:* Thea Riofrancos and Daniel Aldana Cohen interview on their book *A Planet to Win*, on the Dig: <https://www.thedigradio.com/podcast/planet-to-win-with-thea-riofrancos-and-daniel-aldana-cohen/>

**November 2<sup>nd</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**November 4<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**November 5<sup>th</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

## **Week 10. Racial Capitalism and Urban Housing, Part I**

### Readings:

- Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor (2019) *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. University of North Carolina Press. (Introduction & Chapters 1 & 2; *plus skim chapter 3*)

**November 9<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**November 11<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**November 12<sup>th</sup>** \*No Class – Keyword Paper 2 Due at 5pm\*

## **Week 11. Racial Capitalism and Urban Housing, Part II**

### Readings:

- Keeanga-Yahmatta Taylor (2019) *Race for Profit*: University of North Carolina Press. (Chapters 4, 5, 6 & Conclusion)

**November 16<sup>th</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**November 18<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**November 19<sup>th</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

## **Week 12. Thanksgiving Recess – No Class**

**November 23<sup>rd</sup>** Available for individual meetings: Office Hours 9:30-11:30am

**THANKSGIVING RECESS NOVEMBER 25<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>**

## **Week 13. Security Urbanism, Policing, and Abolition**

### Readings:

- Manissa Maharawal. 2017. “Black Lives Matter, Gentrification and the Security State in the San Francisco Bay Area” *Anthropological Theory* 17 (3), 338-364.
- Peris Jones & Wangui Kimari. 2019. “Security Beyond the Men: Women and their Everyday Security Apparatus in Mathare, Nairobi” *Urban Studies* 56(9): 1835-1849.
- Zoltán Glück. 2017. “Security Urbanism and the Counterterror State in Kenya” *Anthropological Theory* 17 (3), 281-296.
- *Listen to Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “The Case for Abolition” on Intercepted:*  
<https://theintercept.com/2020/06/10/ruth-wilson-gilmore-makes-the-case-for-abolition/>

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>** Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

**Week 14. Conclusions**

**December 7<sup>th</sup>** Reading Responses Due at 5pm: (Reflection piece on what you've learned this semester)

**December 9<sup>th</sup>** Wrap-up discussion -- Class Meets 10:30am – 11:35am

**\*\*Final Book Review, Due December 15<sup>th</sup> at 5pm\*\***