

Geography 228 Urban Geography

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MWF 9:05-9:55am
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For the first time in human history over half of the world's population lives in cities, and by all accounts the world is everyday becoming a more urban place. Cities usually contain the best and the worst that a society has to offer. They are places of freedom and opportunity, as well as constraint and marginality. How are we to make sense of the diversity and complexity which characterize urban spaces? Urban geography is a rich body of work that can help us to interpret the breadth of the urban experience. In this class we will ask the following kinds of questions: why do cities change; what are the current problems confronting cities; and, can great cities be planned? In order to delve into these questions we explore relevant aspects of urban history, theories of urbanization, select contemporary urban problems, and aspects of urban politics, planning, and governance. We cover a wide range of themes such as migration patterns, globalization, race and segregation, the growth of slums, the suburbanization of America, and inner-city revitalization.

Course objectives

- Read, understand, and critique various theories, policies, and ideas concerning cities and patterns of urbanization
- Understand the major challenges facing today's cities and the range of policy options
- Connect your own experiences in cities with the academic literature on urban development
- Develop and articulate (in written and verbal communication) your own ideas about urbanization and potential policy responses