



## URBANISM: MAKING THE MODERN AMERICAN CITY

This course is an introduction to thinking critically about the built environment. Its aim is threefold:

The first aim is to shed some light on the extraordinary, exciting complexity of the contemporary American city by looking at the social, economic, and political processes that have influenced it. The goal here is to train students to see the city as a palimpsest: an open text on which the partial legacies of a thousand urban plans, policies, visions, and ideologies can be gleaned.

The second aim is to encourage students to think about how we define, represent, and engage American Cities. In lectures and in open discussions, we will ask: What is a city? What (if anything) is unique about American Cities? What sorts of tangible effects (if any) does the metropolis have on mental life? On politics? How has the American city been represented in film? In literature? What methods have artists, architects, planners, and sociologists employed to understand the city? What tools have they used to shape it?

The third aim is to identify and debate contemporary urban dynamics. Following Rem Koolhaas's quip that it is sometimes "important to find out what the city is - instead of what it was, or what it should be," we will look at today's profusion of complex, contradictory urbanization processes, and the equally profuse array of urban phenomena that accommodate them.

### **Schedule**

The class meets on Thursday from 1:00 - 3:45 in Brunting 460.

### **Format**

The class will combine elements of a seminar, a studio, and a lecture class. Classes will usually begin with a slide lecture, and conclude with a discussion. At two points in the semester, students will present and discuss their work from the two interpretive mapping exercises that will be assigned.

### **Materials**

This class is reading intensive. In addition to excerpts from books and essays, we will watch numerous clips from film and television.

### **Assignments**

Students will be expected to complete two interpretive mapping exercises, one short presentation, two short papers, and a final.

### **Attendance**

Attendance at every class is mandatory. All absences must be excused by the professor. More than two absences will result in a lowering of your grade.

### **Grading**

Final: 30%, Paper 1: 10%, Paper 2: 30% Mapping Exercises: 25%, Presentation: 5%

### **Professor**

Daniel D'Oca may be reached at [ddoca@mica.edu](mailto:ddoca@mica.edu). He will be holding office hours in Bunting 409 on Friday at noon.



### **A.D.A. Compliance**

In MICA's effort to provide the highest possible quality educational experience for every student, MICA maintains compliance with the requirements of the ADA Section 504. Any student who has, or suspects he or she may have, a disability and wants to request academic accommodations should contact Dr. Kathryn Smith at the Learning Resource Center 443-695-1384, email [ksmith@mica.edu](mailto:ksmith@mica.edu) immediately.

### **Health And Safety**

MICA has developed policies and practices to ensure a healthful environment and safe approaches to the use of equipment, materials, and process. It is the mutual responsibility of faculty and students to review health and safety standards relevant to each class at the beginning of each semester. Students should be aware of general fire, health, and safety regulations posted in each area and course specific policies, practices, and cautions. Students who have concerns related to health and safety should contact Quentin Moseley, Environment Health and Safety Coordinator at 410-225-0220 or email at [qmoseley@mica.edu](mailto:qmoseley@mica.edu)

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without acknowledgment. Submitting work containing plagiarism is grounds for failure of an assignment or failure of the course. Repeat offenses will be brought to the attention of the Chair. To be responsible when summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting, include a citation like:

"I read in yesterday's New York Times that..."

"As Simone de Beauvoir famously asserts: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.'"

"My roommate Pete noticed that..."

Document your citations in a bibliography at the end of your paper and follow standard guidelines such as MLA or Chicago manual style. Familiarize yourself with these guidelines in Diana Hacker's A Pocket Style Manual, and always check with your instructor before turning in questionable work.

### **H1N1 Pandemic Information: From the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)**

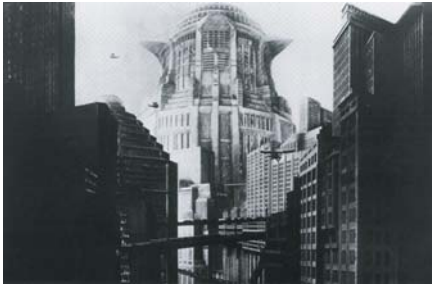
What to do if I get sick?

If you are sick consider the following:

- Limit contact with other people as much as possible. **DO NOT GO TO CLASS!** Seek medical attention at Mount Royal Medical Assoc. (410) 225-8855 but please call ahead
- Students who are sick should self-isolate for at least 24 hours after any fever is gone.
- Make sure to get plenty of rest and drink clear fluids to keep from being dehydrated
- Avoid normal activities including work, school, travel, shopping, social events, and public gatherings

Reporting Procedures:

- Contact the Office of Student Affairs at 410-225-2422 who will assist with plans for self-isolation, arranging for meals, and any other necessary support
- Contact any faculty whose class you anticipate missing and inform them of your illness. Work with them to make arrangements for catching up on any missed work. If you have difficulty reaching your faculty or if your illness lingers to the point where you will miss two or more of any one class contact the Office of Student Affairs.



### 09.03. Introduction

### 09.10. Anti-Urban Sentiments

Throughout his life, Thomas Jefferson expressed a strong aversion to the city. "Those who labor in the earth," he wrote, "are the chosen people of God." Such anti-urban sentiments are unfortunately more the rule than the exception, as America has a long-standing tradition of city-hating. In this class and the next, we will look at the ways in which the anti-urban sentiments of Jefferson, Thoreau, and Ruskin persist through to the present day.

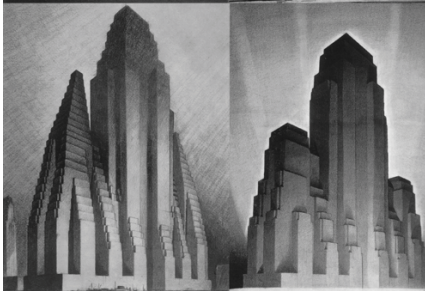
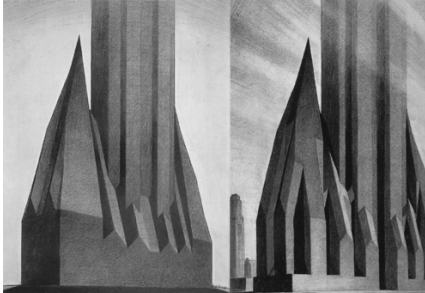
Readings:

"Community Building," from: Frug, Gerald E.. *City Making: Building Communities without Building Walls*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

Excerpts from Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia"

Excerpts from: White, Lucia, and Morton Gabriel White. *The Intellectual Versus the City: From Thomas Jefferson to Frank Lloyd Wright*. Oxford: Oxford Univ Pr (T), 1977.

Excerpts from: *Escape From New York, Death Wish, Omega Man* (films)



### 09.17. Making The Industrial City

Nowhere was the growth of industrial centers more rapid and spectacular than in the United States. The spectacular growth of American cities in the nineteenth century was driven by the development of manufacturing industries, (particularly in mass production), immigration, and the rapid growth of a North American consumer base. However for many, conditions in these cities were brutal beyond imagination. In this class we will look at these conditions, as well as consider some of the notable efforts to describe the deplorable conditions of the workers.

Readings:

"Industrial Convergence on a New England Town," from: Rae, Douglas W. *City: Urbanism and Its End*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Excerpts from: Riis, Jacob. *How the Other Half Lives*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2007.



### 09.24. Making the City Beautiful

Our focus here will be on the birth of the City Planning profession as a response to the deplorable conditions documented by people like Riis. We will consider the tenement reform, the Settlement House Movement, the Parks Movement, and the City Beautiful Movement.

Readings:

"Beyond the Tenement," from Richard Plunz, from: Plunz, Richard. *A History of Housing in New York City*. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1990.

Jane Addams, from *20 Years at the Hull House*. Addams, Jane. *20 Years at Hull House*. Denver: Buccaneer Books, 1992.

Frederick Law Olmstead, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns"

Daniel Burnham, from *Plan of Chicago*. Encyclopedia of Chicago, Interpretive Digital Essay: The Plan of Chicago (2006)



### 10.01. Making The Metropolis

The industrial city was crowded and dirty, but the Central Business Districts of cities like New York and Chicago were also capitals of capital and culture. The metropolis, so far from the Gemeinschaft ideal, was ushering in a new metropolitan way of life, the tenets of which will be explored in this class.

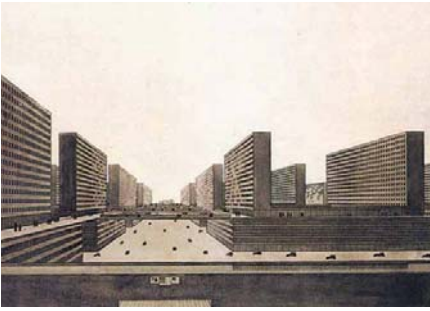
Readings:

Kenneth Jackson, "The Capital of Capitalism: The New York Metropolitan Region," in: *Metropolis, 1890-1940*. Ed. Anthony Sutcliffe. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984.

Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," in: Kasinitz, Philip. *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times*. London: NYU Press, 1994.

Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (film)

King Vidor, (Film)



### 10.08. Making The Modernist City

In 1922, the Swiss architect and urban planner Le Corbusier unveiled an incredibly provocative, modernist vision for the future of the world's cities. This vision—the tenets of which we will flesh out in this class—had a tremendous influence over the shape of the Post-War American city.

Antonio Sant'Elia and Filippo Marinetti, "Futurist Architecture," in Charles Jencks and Karl Kropf (eds.) *Theories and Manifestoes of Contemporary Architecture*. Chichester: Academy Press, 2006.

Le Corbusier, "A Contemporary City," from: Le Corbusier. *The City of To-morrow and Its Planning*. New York: Dover Publications, 1987.

James Scott, from *Seeing Like a State*. Scott, James C.. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (The Institution for Social and Policy St). New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.



### 10.15. Making The Modernist City 2

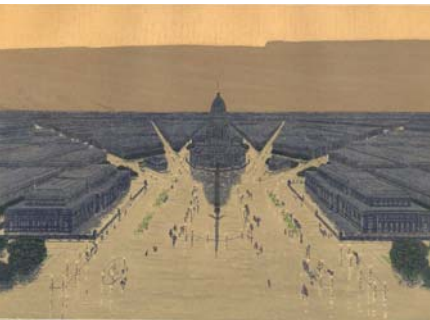
When asked to make a comment about the thousands of people that had to be displaced to make way for his Grand Concourse highway in the Bronx, Robert Moses famously said that "you have to break eggs to make an omelette." At some other point he likened the process of redevelopment in New York City to "swinging a meat ax." We will begin this class with a continuation of the discussion we began in the previous class about the vision of the modern city as advanced by Le Corbusier. We will then consider the ways in which powerful men like Robert Moses tried to turn this vision of the modern city into a reality by administering Federal programs like Urban Renewal, and how people like Jane Jacobs tried to stop it.

Readings:

"In the Forest of Symbols: Some Notes on Modernism in New York," from: Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. Boston: Penguin (Non-Classics), 1988.

Excerpts from: Anderson, Martin. *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1942-1962*. Michigan: MIT Press, 1964.

"Introduction" and "The Use of Sidewalks: Safety," from: Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Modern Library Series). New York: Modern Library, 1993.



### 10.22. Making The Suburbs

In our first of three classes on the suburbs, we will look at the origins of the American suburb in communities like Brooklyn Heights, NY, Llewellyn Park, NJ, Riverside, IL, and Radburn, NJ.

Readings:

"The Transnational Origins of the Elite Suburb," chapter 1 of *The Suburb Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Ebenzer Howard, "The Town-Country Magnet," from: Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*. London: The Mit Press, 1984.



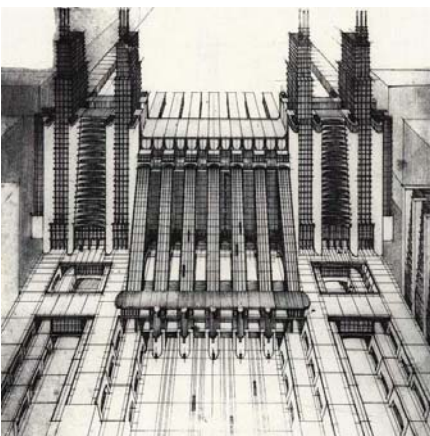
### 10.29. Making The Suburbs 2

Without question, the suburbs as we know them today could not have happened without massive Federal initiatives such as low-interest mortgage financing and the Interstate Highway Act of 1956. In this class, we will focus on how the suburbs were produced, with an emphasis on suburbanization's winners and losers.

Readings:

Kenneth Jackson, "Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream," from: Jackson, Kenneth T.. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 1987.

William Lass, "The Suburbs are Strangling the City," *New York Times Magazine*, June 18, 1950.





### 11.05. Making The Suburbs 3

Here we will consider the origins and culture of the Post-War, mass-produced, “cookie cutter” sitcom suburbs by looking at communities like Levittown, NY, and Lakewood, CA.

Readings:

Excerpts from: Hayden, Dolores. *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000*. New York: Vintage, 2004.

“Postwar America: Suburban Apotheosis,” Chapter 9 of: *The Suburb Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2006.



### 11.12. Deindustrialization and its Aftermath

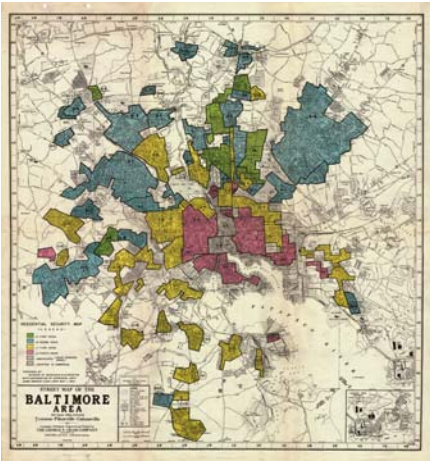
What happens to American Cities when the traditional, blue-collar jobs that are the backbone of the local economy disappear?

Readings:

Barney Warf and Brian Holly, "The Rise and Fall of Cleveland"

Dennis Judd, "Constructing the Tourist Bubble," in Dennis R. Judd and Professor Susan S. Fainstein (eds.) *The Tourist City*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

“The Creative Class,” from Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. New York City: Basic, 2002.



### 11.19. Race and The American City

In this class we will look at how private and institutional racism shapes the American city.

Readings:

“Detroit’s Time Bomb: Race and Housing in the 1940s,” from: Sugrue, Thomas J.. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.

“The Construction of the Ghetto,” from: Denton, Nancy, and Douglas Massey. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998.

### 11.26. Happy Thanksgiving

#### 12.03. The Postsuburban Region 1

What we find when we investigate the contemporary built environment in America is not a “Geography of Nowhere,” as some curmudgeonly commentators have claimed, but a profusion of complex, contradictory urbanization processes that result in an equally profuse array of urban phenomena. In this class, we’ll look at three journalistic descriptions of one major development in America, namely, the growth of the so-called “postsuburban region.”

Readings:

Robert Fishman, “Megalopolis Unbound,” in: Kasinitz, Philip. *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times*. London: NYU Press, 1994.

“The Search for the Future Inside Ourselves,” from: Garreau, Joel. *Edge City: Life on the New Frontier*. New York: Anchor, 1992.

David Brooks, “Patio Man and the Sprawl People.”



#### 12.10. The Postsuburban Region 2: Sprawl

What is sprawl? Why do so many people feel so strongly that it is terrible? In this class, we will look at the very impassioned debate about sprawl in America.

Readings:

“What is Sprawl, and Why?” from: Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. *Suburban Nation: The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream*. New York: North Point Press, 2001.

“Anti-Sprawl Remedies Since the 1970s,” from: Bruegmann, Robert. *Sprawl: A Compact History*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2006.

### 12.17. Final Exam