Course Description

America is an urban nation today, yet Americans have long had deeply ambivalent feelings toward the city. This seminar will explore the historical origins of that ambivalence—and how historians have interpreted it over time—by tracing several overarching themes in American urban history from the eighteenth century to the present. Topics will include race and class relations, design and planning, gender and sexual identity, immigration, politics and policy, violence and crime, religion and sectarian disputes, and environmental concerns. Discussions will revolve around these broad themes as well as regional distinctions between American cities. In particular, since this course is an intermediate history seminar, we will focus on two goals: how to assess scholarly works, and the different ways that historians evaluate sources.

We will approach urban history from at least three different perspectives. First, how have diverse Americans (and different historians) defined “urban” or “the city” in American history? Second, how have attitudes toward cities changed over time and how have these attitudes shaped our nation’s cultural, social, and political foundations? Third, how have human ideas, activities, and technologies affected the physical development and social life of American cities, and what have been the consequences of those changes? Our readings and discussions will doubtless add still more questions.

The central purpose of this course is to improve your ability to think historically and conceptually while broadening your knowledge of American urban history. Historical thinking does not come naturally. It is hard, difficult work that includes learning to recognize the complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty in human affairs; developing a critical eye toward sources of information about the past (and present); and understanding that events occur sequentially and that order matters. Placing events and details in context is a key to thinking historically. Imposing order on the messy, numerous, and sometimes contradictory information from the past is neither easy nor quickly learned. Thinking historically, then, requires learning details, accounting for discrepancies in sources, placing events in context and applying this knowledge to support your interpretation in a scholarly, persuasive manner.

Readings

I expect students to have a basic grasp of American history, but I will begin each week with a brief overview of the period and themes. Interested students may want to look at one of two collections of interpretative essays that chart some of the historical terrain we will navigate this term: The New American History (2nd edition), edited by Eric Foner (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997) or American History Now (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), edited by Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr. Copies are on reserve at Hawthorne-Longfellow Library. For texts specific to American urban history, students may find these other titles, also on reserve, to be helpful:

Mary Corbin Sies and Christopher Silver, eds. Planning the Twentieth-century American City (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)  

Required books are available through Bowdoin’s Chegg site at http://www.chegg.com/bookstore/bowdoin, or through Amazon.com. All titles are also on 2-hour reserve at H-L Library, along with other relevant titles.

George Chauncey, Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940  
Alison Isenberg, Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It  
Paul E. Johnson, A Shopkeeper’s Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837  
Catherine McNeur, Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City  
George J. Sánchez, Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945  
Kevin M. Kruse, White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism

Electronic reserve readings for HIST 2260

Additional documents will be on electronic reserve via Blackboard or the Bowdoin College Library Gateway. There may be, from time to time, handouts or additions to supplement the weekly assignments. For example, I will sometimes distribute primary sources during class to supplement our discussions. In addition, you should pay attention to current periodicals, web sites, and literature for contemporary urban disputes that may inform class discussions.

Students should note that while the reading load for this course is substantial, averaging 250-275 pages per week, it is a reasonable amount for a college-level history seminar at a school of Bowdoin’s caliber.

**Course Requirements**

There will be two short critical response papers, an oral presentation, and a longer research paper for this course. You will also be responsible for participating in our weekly discussions. Students must complete all assignments in order to pass the course. In addition to the requirements listed below, there will be periodic in-class assignments. These will be graded pass/fail, but they are mandatory.

1. **Class presentation and leading discussion (20% course grade):** Students will present their work for the short critical response paper (see #3) in conjunction with a peer in summary form as a way to spark weekly discussion. Students will distribute reading questions by email before each meeting and then briefly summarize the major historical themes or events for the period. Presentations should last 10-15 minutes. I strongly encourage you to use additional materials—handouts, Power Point, video, music, objects, etc.—to enliven your presentations and spark debate. You are encouraged to use Blackboard to distribute potential reading questions and promote discussion beforehand as well. I will lead the second discussion each week, but with your help and guidance.

2. **Three short (3-5 pages) critical review essays (10% each, 30% course grade):** Each paper should critically review the reading for a selected week while incorporating one or more of the supplemental readings (see the list posted on Blackboard) and making connections to other readings from the course as appropriate. Students should try to incorporate at least one full-length monograph from the supplemental readings list. Essays should analyze the biases of the author(s), their evidence, and their argument; I will give you detailed guidelines later this term. One of your papers must accompany your class presentation; the other two will be on a book (or portion of one) and associated themes you select. However, you must write one of the three essays before
Spring Vacation. Papers will be due after the week you select, but no later than the following Tuesday at 5 p.m. except for the week when you lead discussion, when your paper is due the following Thursday at 5 p.m.

3. A medium-length research paper, 20-25 pages (40% course grade): This assignment is your opportunity to synthesize the material learned in this course through your own engagement with the assigned readings and your own research on a particular sub-field or tradition within American urban history. Papers should incorporate one or more of the broader themes of the course and integrate your chosen topic with several of the supplemental readings. We will discuss topics and supplemental outside readings later this term, and I will distribute more information about the paper then. In addition to using relevant secondary sources, students are expected to incorporate, as necessary, relevant primary sources—diaries, newspapers, fiction, maps, photographs or government reports—to help advance your argument. We will discuss each rough draft in class during the week of April 26 in peer review groups, and I will review any additional drafts you submit before the due date. Finally, students will share their paper findings in a short PechaKucha-style (approximately 7 minutes) presentation to the class. More details on this assignment later.

- Select topics by Thursday, February 11
- Short annotated bibliography (1-2 pp.), preliminary thesis and introduction (1-2 pp.) due Friday, February 27
- Discussion of bibliography, thesis and introduction in class on Thursday, March 3
- Complete first draft due Friday, April 22
- Discussion of drafts in class with peer review groups on Tuesday, April 26
- Short PechaKucha-style presentation based on your final paper on Monday, May 10
- Final paper due Friday, May 20

4. Class participation (10% course grade): Out of courtesy to your peers, I expect you to attend all classes and arrive prepared to discuss the readings for that week. Additionally, there may be several non-graded in-class assignments that will also count toward participation. Participation, however, is more than speaking up in class. It is also coming to see me during office hours, joining on-line discussions and contributing to the overall dynamic of the class.

Attendance and Student Responsibilities
It is your responsibility to come to class having done the reading in advance. You are expected to discuss the reading questions as well as come with questions of your own. Furthermore, while this syllabus is not likely to change too much, I may make adjustments as the semester proceeds. I will announce changes in class on a week-to-week basis, well in advance of any deadlines. However, if you are not in class, it is your responsibility to find out about any changes. Finally, remember that attendance is a major part of your participation grade. If you do not come to class, you cannot pass the course.

Ultimately, this is your course and I am here to help you make the most of it. One thing that you can do to succeed is to take risks, both during discussion and in your papers. By its very nature, the study of history cuts against received wisdom, undermines cherished assumptions, and erodes stereotypes. Studying history allows us to learn how past circumstances can touch people in the present while giving them a voice to critique political, social, and cultural conditions that shape their lives today. In this class, we will debate the meanings of texts, the judgments of authors, the contexts in which they wrote, and the voices that were excluded. As a result, our discussions about the past can become heated when talking about important issues. I look forward to such times; real learning often occurs then. But I ask you to treat one another with dignity and civility no matter what the situation. I will endeavor to do the same. To repeat, all ideas are open to challenge, even my own, because history is all about interpretation.

Finally, I hope that you will make the time to meet with me outside of class. Getting to know your professors is one of the most rewarding opportunities of attending a school like Bowdoin. I am happy to meet with you almost any time; my door is open and when it is not, we can find another occasion to talk.
But please schedule your meeting in advance (or come to office hours) so we can make the most of our time together.

**A Note on Email**
Like many instructors, I use email to communicate with students individually or collectively. Please get in the habit of checking your Bowdoin email account frequently. If you write to me, I usually reply within a reasonable amount of time, often no later than 24 hours. But please do not expect an instant response.

**Statement on Personal Digital Devices in the Classroom**
Unless you have a documented accommodation from the Dean for Student Affairs, I do not allow laptops, cell phones, or tablet computers in the classroom. Ample scientific evidence suggests that digital devices detract from learning. The one exception to this rule is when certain assignments or in-class activities may require you to use laptops. In these instances, I will give you advance warning.

**Grades and Late Assignments**
I will convert numerical grades to letter grades according to the following rubric. However, I do not grade on a curve and I reserve the right to raise your final course grade by as much as 1/3 (from a B to a B+, for example) for exceptional performance or improvement.

| 94-100=A | 87-89=B+ | 77-79=C+ | 60-69=D |
| 90-93=A- | 80-82=B- | 73-76=C | 60 and below=F |
| 83-86=B | 70-72=C- |

I will read and comment on late assignments, but all of the papers have clear deadlines and, unless arrangements were made beforehand, late assignments will be marked down 1/3 of a grade per day (e.g., B+ to B), including weekends. I rarely grant extensions beyond two circumstances: personal illness or family emergency.

**Citation of Sources**
In your written work, when referring to sources (primary or secondary) on which you have drawn, you should provide a complete citation including author, title, publisher, place and date of publication and page numbers. I ask that you use footnotes or endnotes for citations from assigned texts in our course or from articles in the reader. (Do not use parenthetical references!) Good reference works for citation include *The Chicago Manual of Style* or Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. There is also information posted on the Bowdoin College Library Gateway about citation, for quick reference, as well as Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement, a Dartmouth College publication that Bowdoin has reproduced for its students. The History Department web page lists several relevant sites that explain research methods, citation styles, and plagiarism: http://academic.bowdoin.edu/history/resources/. All are available via the course Blackboard page.

**Plagiarism and Adherence to the Academic Honor Code and Social Code**
All students are responsible for reading and heeding the statement on plagiarism, as well as reviewing and following the Academic Honor Code and Social Code, as written in the *Student Handbook, 2010-11*. If I suspect plagiarism, I will ask you to see me and, if unresolved at that point, I will refer you to the Judicial Board. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, you may re-read the Handbook or another printed source, contact a reference librarian, or ask me in person or by email.

**Intercollegiate Athletics**
Athletics are an important part of the Bowdoin experience, and student-athletes have to juggle a great many things during their time here. But sports should rarely, if ever, come into conflict with your studies. If your participation in intercollegiate athletics compels you to miss class, however, it is your responsibility to
inform me how you intend to make up missed work. I do not regularly check sports schedules or know team departure times. Therefore, it is your job to present me with that information, well in advance of your planned absence(s). If possible, I would like to know at the beginning of the semester exactly when you will be gone to head off any complications well in advance. I will not smile kindly on excuses offered at the last minute, or after the fact.

**Preliminary Schedule**
Please keep this syllabus handy—we may make changes during the semester!  
** = weeks available for leading class discussion

**Week 1**  
What is American urban history?  
Tuesday, January 26  
Introductions, in-class writing assignment

Thursday, January 28

**Week 2**  
Urban life in early America  
Tuesday, February 2  
Johnson, _A Shopkeeper’s Millennium_, all

Thursday, February 4

**Week 3**  
Cities in the nineteenth-century republic: politics, space, and nature  
Tuesday, February 9  
McNeur, _Taming Manhattan_, all

Thursday, February 11
• **Preliminary research paper topic and bibliography due today in class**

**Week 4**  
Gender and class in turn-of-the-century urban America  
Tuesday, February 16  
Chauncey, _Gay New York_, 1-121

Thursday, February 18

**Week 5**  
Creating and controlling urban space in modern America  
Tuesday, February 23  
Thursday, February 25

Friday, February 27
- Annotated bibliography, thesis, and introduction due by 12 noon via email—send copies to all of your peer reviewers and instructor

** Week 6 **
Immigration and reform in the twentieth century city
Tuesday, March 1
Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 3-128

Thursday, March 3
- Discussion of research paper introductions and annotated bibliographies in peer review groups

** Week 7 **
Racial and class politics in the mid-20th-century American city
Tuesday, March 8
Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*
- Group A: 129-50
- Group B: 151-70
- Group C: 171-87
- Everyone: 188-276

Thursday, March 10

** Spring Vacation—March 12-27 **

** Week 8 **
The post-WWII home front, plus reflections on writing and researching US urban history
Tuesday, March 29
- Come prepared to present on one primary source from the McEnaney article website

Thursday, March 31
NO CLASS – work on research papers
** Week 9  
Postwar urban politics on the left and right  
Tuesday, April 5  
Kruse, *White Flight*, 1-179  

Thursday, April 7  
Michelle M. Nickerson, “Politically Desperate Housewives: Women and Conservatism in Postwar Los Angeles,” *California History* 86 (June 2009), 4-21  

** Week 10  
The fire this time: inequality in the post-1960 metropolis  
Tuesday, April 12  
Kruse, *White Flight*, 180-266  

Thursday, April 14  

** Week 11  
Urban decline, renewal and redevelopment  
Tuesday, April 19  
Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 1-165  

Thursday, April 21  
  
  • Plus one of the responses in the July 2014 *Journal of Urban History* forum  

Friday, April 22  
Complete research paper due today by 12 noon via email—send copies to your peer group and instructor  

Week 12  
The art and craft of writing history  
Tuesday, April 26  
In-class discussion of research paper drafts—please come with typed comments for each person in your assigned peer review group  

Thursday, April 28  
NO CLASS—work on research papers  

** Week 13  
The present and future of American urban history  
Tuesday, May 3  
Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 166-318
Thursday, May 5
  • Clarence L. Mohr and Lawrence N. Powell, “Through the Eye of Katrina: The Past as Prologue?: An Introduction"
  • Ari Kelman, “Boundary Issues: Clarifying New Orleans’s Murky Edges”
  • Lawrence N. Powell, “What Does American History Tell Us About Katrina and Vice Versa”
  • One additional article, your choice, available via the website listed above
  • One of the four photographers’ audio slideshows available at http://www.journalofamericanhistory.org/projects/katrina/media/

Week 14 Final paper presentations and wrap-up
Tuesday, May 10
Short PechaKucha-style presentations on your term paper and course evaluations

** Dinner at Professor Klingle’s house during reading period, date and time TBA

Reading period Thursday, May 12-Sunday, May 15
Final exams Monday, May 16-Saturday, May 21

Week 15 Final paper
Friday, May 20
Paper due at 5 p.m., my office—please turn in all drafts with comments along with your final draft