

GEO4930-3/5934-4
Dead Cities
Fall 2012, Bellamy 0002
Tuesday/Thursday, 11:00-12:15

Instructor: Joseph Pierce
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Course Description

This course poses the question: how can we understand urban decay and decline? Using examples from the U.S. (Detroit, Flint, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, New York, Los Angeles) and abroad (Rio, Paris, etc.), students will explore the differences between "conventional" urban poverty (which may be a necessary part of successful cities), systematic urban decline, new suburban poverty, favelas and shantytowns, etc. We will also examine recent strategies to "reclaim" failing cities, including urban farming and removing streets from the city grid. Students will explore two core questions as we move through the semester:

- 1) **What are the causes and impacts of urban poverty and decline?** and
- 2) **How is urban decay/decline today changing, and what are its implications?**

Students will be expected to work both individually and in groups to develop responses to these cases that attempt to answer the two questions above, using the approaches that we will introduce over the course of the semester.

Course Objectives

Objective 1: Students will be able to **discuss key theorizations of urban decline.**

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated regarding this objective through *class discussion* and *reading response journals*.

Objective 2: Students will be able to **recognize and evaluate patterns of decay and decline,** including differences in pattern between sites, regions, and eras.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated regarding this objective through *class discussion* and *reading response journals*.

Objective 3: Students will be able to **apply their understanding of urban decay and decline** by choosing appropriate theories from the course materials to justify specific (hypothetical) interventions.

Evaluation: Students will be evaluated regarding this objective through the *mid-semester report*, *pre-final presentation*, and the *final paper*.

Prerequisites and Fulfillment of Requirements

There are no explicit prerequisites for this course. It is an upper-level course, however; the reading and writing requirements expect a high level of performance. **You should expect assignments to be difficult and require your full, intensive attention.** You have been warned.

Required Readings

There is no required textbook for this course.

Reading materials will be provided in-class or (primarily) via Blackboard. Some of the readings are “real world” documents that are not designed to clearly state their point of view on our in-class themes. As a result, it is your responsibility to link the readings to the specific themes of lectures and discussions from week to week.

Certain readings are listed in **bold**: these are mandatory for graduate students and optional for undergraduates. Any readings that are in any other form of text are required of all students. If you have any questions about whether or not you are expected to complete a reading, please ask! You will be held accountable for it.

Assignments and Grading

There are three types of assignments in this course (defined below). These, along with your participation in class discussion, form the portfolio which will be assessed to produce your grade. All written assignments should use the following format: 12 point Times New Roman, double spaced, 1 inch margins, with a single-spaced heading that includes the assignment name, date turned in, and your name on the first line, with the title of the piece on the second.

Reading Response Journal: The reading reaction journal is a cumulative journal of reactions to **all assigned readings**. The journal is *not* for summaries; I have read these pieces and do not need you to explicate them. Each week’s response should be 1-2 pages and should (a) *identify the major theme* in the readings, and (b) *discuss your reaction* to the readings as a set. Journal entries are due on Blackboard *before* Tuesday’s class *each week*. I will grade them as sets approximately four times over the course of the semester unannounced at my discretion. To reiterate: **you are required to submit the coming week’s journal reaction every Tuesday before we discuss them in class.**

25% of grade

One Short Mid-semester Report: The mid-semester report is a 5-page (plus bibliography) report on the state of decline of a city of your choice at a time in history of your choice. (NOTE: The reports are individual, but you must find another student who will cover the same city. See presentations, below. Historical or contemporary cities are eligible. All reports will include a case introduction and an explanation of the nature of poverty/decay/decline in that city. A report may also include maps, models, charts, etc. as

needed (these do not replace text length, but if they are clarifying may indeed improve your grade). More detailed instructions will be given as the due dates approach (see course outline below).

20% of grade

One Late-Semester Presentation: Pairs of students will give a late-semester report on the state of decline of the city identified in your midterm, and what you propose to do to address that decline. Presentations will run approximately 5-10 minutes and should refer to theory as developed in the class discussion. More detailed instructions will be given as the due dates approach (see course outline below).

10% of grade

One Final Paper: Each student will write an 8-10 page paper on justifying the intervention identified in the presentation, above. Students should identify an actor, propose a detailed intervention, and speculate on how that intervention would play out. More detailed instructions will be given as the due dates approach (see course outline below). **GRADUATE STUDENTS: See instructor for alternate paper requirements.**

22.5% of grade

Ongoing Class Participation: Student participation in class discussions and in-class project processes is critical to the function and success of this course. We will often move back and forth between small group discussion and full-class discussion. Being in class, on-time, prepared and in an appropriate head space to actively engage in learning is an important element of your evaluation. In addition to discussion of the readings, there will be in-class opportunities to present (usually in small groups) your written projects to one another.

22.5% of grade

Quizzes: I reserve the right to insert reading verification quizzes into the course at any time of my choosing. Quizzes, if proctored, will be brief short-answer or multiple-choice instruments at the beginning of class, in class, and will each account for 2.5% of your total grade. Other assignments will be proportionally reduced in grade value.

A word about grading: As is true for many of my colleagues, I try to guide students regarding what qualifies as good without setting an outer bound for what is excellent. We will discuss in further detail what I am seeking in each of these assignments as they approach, but what I value most is your creative engagement with reading materials and the various assignments as a vehicle for learning. I urge you to make assignments your own by *discussing with me* outside of class whether your proposed approach will satisfy the requirements of the assignment.

Numeric grades on assignments will translate to letter grades on the following scale:

92 to 100.0% = A	77 to 79 = C+
90 to 92 = A-	73 to 76 = C
87 to 89 = B+	70 to 72 = C-

83 to 86 = B	60 to 69 = D
80 to 82 = B-	0 to 59 = F

Class Policies

Classroom Ground Rules: Every student deserves an academic environment in which they are free to intellectually explore and participate in discussion safely and comfortably. All students are expected to abide by basic ground rules and avoid disparaging or inflammatory comments to their classmates.

Classroom Technology: Mobile phones, texting, email, messaging, facebook, etc.—any personal communication or use of technology for non-classroom purposes—is not permitted. I reserve the right to prohibit the use of laptops, tablets, etc. in the classroom if I have concerns regarding focus and attention to class activities. Classroom technology is a privilege! Don't ruin it for your classmates.

University Attendance Policy: Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. That said, keep in mind that the right to evaluate and accept or decline documentation of illness or crisis ultimately remains the decision of the instructor.

Assignment Submission: All assignments should be submitted electronically via Blackboard.

Late Work: Timely submission of assignments is key to the smooth functioning of the class. Late work must be excused by the instructor, should reflect a serious, documented excuse, and will be marked down 10% per day. No assignments will be accepted more than 1 week late. Grade disputes must be addressed to the instructor *within two weeks* of the grade being posted online; you are responsible for keeping up with your grades as they are posted to the course website.

Academic Honor Policy: The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

Free Tutoring from FSU: For tutoring and writing help in any course at Florida State University, visit the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) Tutoring Services' comprehensive list of tutoring options - see <http://ace.fsu.edu/tutoring> or

contact tutor@fsu.edu for more information. High-quality tutoring is available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. These services are offered by tutors trained to encourage the highest level of individual academic success while upholding personal academic integrity.

Americans With Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center
874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
sdrc@admin.fsu.edu
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

Syllabus Change Policy: Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Syllabus continues with course schedule on the following page.

Course Schedule for Dead Cities

Each week we meet twice except as interrupted by holidays. You are expected to have read all of the assigned material before the first class session; any written assignments are due *before* the beginning of the first session unless otherwise noted. In other words, if you turn in a reaction paper for week three, you must hand it in before I begin addressing the class on the Tuesday of that week.

NOTE: I often add one or two brief current events-based readings a week ahead. *Please check Blackboard for additional readings.* These *will* be included in class discussion and are eligible for inclusion in your Reaction Papers.

SEGMENT ONE: What is the Urban Context?

Week One: Introduction (Aug 28, 30)

Key Questions: What is on the syllabus? What is a city? What is urbanism?

Readings [For Second day of Class]:

- Jacobs, "Introduction," pp 5-36, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, The Modern Library 1993[1961].

Week Two: The Good (Living?) City (Sep 4,6)

Key Questions: What makes a city good? How has that changed over time?

Readings:

- Jacobs, "The Peculiar Nature of Cities," pp 37-186, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, The Modern Library 1993[1961].
- Calthorpe, "Communities of Place," pp 31-41, in Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, Island Press, 2001.
- Wirth, "Urbanism as a way of life" *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 44, No. 1. (Jul., 1938), pp. 1-24.

Week Three: Thinking About Decay, Decline, and Collapse (Sep 11,13)

Key Questions: What are our initial assumptions about bad urban trends?

Readings:

- Diamond, "The Maya Collapses," pp 157-177, in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Penguin Books, 2005.
- Diamond, "Why Do Some Societies Make Disastrous Decisions?," pp 419-440, in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Penguin Books, 2005.
- Davis, "The Prevalence of Slums," pp 20-49, in *Planet of Slums*. Verso, 2007.

SEGMENT TWO: 20th Century American Urban Poverty

Week Four: Decline as Growth (Sep 18,20)

Key Questions: How have 20th century urbanists understood the role of decline/decay in growth?

Readings:

- Burgess. “The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project” pp 150-157 in Legates and Stout *The City Reader* 4th edition.
- Harvey. *The Urban Process Under Capitalism: a framework for analysis.* (1978) pp. 14
- Smith. “New City, New Frontier: The Lower East Side as Wild, Wild West” pp 61-93 in Sorkin, *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space.* Hill and Wang, 1992.
- Wilson and Kelling. “Broken Windows.” pp 256-265 in Legates and Stout *The City Reader* 4th edition.

Week Five: Suburbanization and the “Inner City” (Sep 25,27)

Key Questions: How are 20th century suburbanization and urban poverty linked?

Readings:

- Savitch. How suburban sprawl shapes human well-being. *Journal of Urban Health* (2003)
- Smith. Toward a theory of gentrification a back to the city movement by capital, not people. *Journal of the American Planning Association* (1979) vol. 45 (4) pp. 538-548
- Wilson. “From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos” pp 110-119 in Legates and Stout *The City Reader* 4th edition.
- Wylie. Continuity and Change in the Restless Urban Landscape. *Economic Geography* (1999) pp 309-338

SEGMENT THREE: Contemporary Global Urban Poverty

Week Six: Rio’s Favelas (Oct 2,4)

Key Questions: What is different about urban poverty in the Brazilian context?

Readings:

- Diken. *City of God.* City (2005) vol. 9 (3) pp. 307-320
- Dader, “The Most Unjust Country in the World,” pp 164-170, in *Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism.* The New Press, 2007.

- Krueckberg and Paulsen, “Urban Land Tenure Policies in Brazil, South Africa, and India: an Assessment of the Issues” pp 1-12. Lincoln Land Institute Report, 2000.

Week Seven: Banlieues / Paris (Oct 9,11)

Key Questions: What is different about Paris’ urban poverty?

Readings:

- Leiken, “A French Intifada?”, “A French Revolt,” pp 17-58 in *Europe’s Angry Muslims: The Revolt of the Second Generation*. Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Wacquant, Intro, Chap 5, Chap 6, pp 1-12 and 133-197, in *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. Polity Press, 2008.
- Gilbert. Place, Space, and Agency: Moving Beyond the Homogenous "Ghetto". *Urban Geography* (2010) vol. 31 (2) pp. 148-152.

Week Eight: (Hiding) Urban Poverty in China (Oct 16,18)

Key Questions: Is urban poverty in Chinese cities a temporary cost or a permanent condition?

Readings:

- Broudehoux, “Delirious Beijing: Euphoria and Despair in the Olympic Metropolis,” pp 87-101, in *Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism* The New Press, 2007.
- Diamond, “China, Lurching Giant,” pp 358-377, in *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Penguin, 2005.

SEGMENT FOUR: The Decline and Fall of American Cities?

Week Nine: Baltimore (Oct 23,25)

Key Questions: How does Baltimore’s process help illustrate urban decay?

Readings:

- Levine. Downtown Redevelopment as an Urban Growth Strategy: A Critical Appraisal of the Baltimore *Journal of Urban Affairs* (1987)
- Merrifield. The struggle over place: redeveloping American Can in Southeast Baltimore. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* (1993) pp. 102-121
- Simon and Burns, “Chapter Two,” pp 57-120, in *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*. Broadway Books, 1997. **NOTE:**

This is one of the more intense readings of the semester; prepare appropriately.

Due: Midterm short papers (Oct 25 before class begins).

Week Ten: Los Angeles (Oct 30, Nov 1)

Key Questions: Gang wars in Los Angeles and Compton?

Readings:

- Davis. "Part Three: Riot City" pp 205-303 in *Dead Cities*. The New Press, 2002.
- Wolch. Green urban worlds. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* (2007)

Week Eleven: Detroit (Nov 6,8)

Key Questions: What is a hollow city?

Readings:

- Boyle. The Ruins of Detroit: Exploring the Urban Crisis in the Motor City. *The Michigan Historical Review* (2001) vol. 27 (1) pp. 109-127
- Binelli, "City of Strays: Detroit's Epidemic of 50000 Abandoned Dogs," in *Rolling Stone* March 2012.
- Hollander and Németh. The bounds of smart decline: a foundational theory for planning shrinking cities. *Housing Policy Debate* 21 (3).

Week Twelve: Flint and the De-infrastructure Wager (Nov 13,15)

Key Questions: What is de-gridding?

Readings:

- The Economist (editorial), "Smaller is more beautiful: Many other cities are battling problems almost as acute as Detroit's" *The Economist* Oct 22 2011.
- Schilling and Logan. Greening the rust belt: A green infrastructure model for right sizing America's shrinking cities. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 74 (4) 2008.
- Young. "The Incredible Shrinking American City: What Dan Kildee wants America to learn from the sorry tale of Flint, Mich." *Slate* July 16 2010.

Week Thirteen: (Nov 20*) TBD

Key Questions: TBD

Readings: TBD

Week Fourteen: Presentations (Nov 27,29)

Key Questions: What do you propose to do?

Due: Presentations, clearly.

Week Fifteen: The (Urban) World Without Us (Dec 4,6)

Key Questions: How do we understand what comes next for cities?

Readings:

- Davis, “Dead Cities: A Natural History,” pp 360-399, in *Dead Cities*. The New Press, 2002.
- Weisman, “The Tools,” pp 91-157, in *Gaviotas: a Village to Reinvent the World*. Chelsea Green Publishing, 1995.
- Weisman, “Unbuilding our Home,” pp 15-38, in *The World Without Us*. Thomas Dunne Books, 2007.

Due: Final papers (Dec 6 before class begins).