

**URBS 009 302 2008A**  
**Critical Writing Seminar in Urban Studies: Design and the City**

Spring 2008  
TR 4:30-6 PM  
Williams 205

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This course will explore the role of design in the city--but not primarily in the sense of urban design. Rather, we'll explore how the idea of design is shaping the notion of urbanity. For instance, what role does design play in creating the shopping experience? How is design being integrated into personal identity? What function does design play in social policies, city economies, local politics, and what it means to be an urbanite? Seeing the city as a design landscape, but also as an experience designed, and ultimately as a market for the symbolic capital of the idea of design, we will investigate the city as ethnographers, observing behavior, affect, décor, and decorum; participating in meaning, consumption, valuing, and contesting; and questioning assumptions through writing, analyzing, and re-presenting. Assignments will include several short position papers, field notes, peer review, a mid-term and a final portfolio.

This is primarily a writing course, but it is also an urban studies course taught by an anthropologist. The goal is for you to become a better writer, and thus we will write every week, engage in peer review, and thereby learn to become more effective, versatile, and confident writers. But we will also be exploring the territory covered by anthropologists as cultural interlocutors, exploring the methodology of participant-observation, the role of critical analysis, and the politics of re-presentation – all while looking for the significance of design in the city.

### **Required Texts**

1. Benjamin Chesluk and Maggie Hopp, *Money Jungle: Imagining the New Times Square* (Rutgers University Press)
2. Elain Maimon and Janice Peritz, *A Writer's Resource* (McGraw-Hill)
3. Valerie Ross, ed., *The Practice of Writing, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Revised* (Pearson Custom)  
(AVAILABLE at Penn Book Center, 130 S. 34<sup>th</sup> Street)

### **Reserve Readings**

Additional reading assignments will be available through the URBS 009 303 Blackboard site, in the section labeled [READINGS]. To access these readings, point your browser to <http://courseweb.library.upenn.edu/> and log on using your Pennkey. On dates where we are scheduled to discuss reserve readings, you are responsible for bringing either detailed notes or a printed copy of the reading material to our class meeting.

## COURSE RESPONSIBILITIES

As a member of this class, you will be responsible for the following:

- 1.) *Attendance.* Regular attendance is a basic requirement of this seminar. Should you miss more than TWO classes without a valid excuse (a doctor's note, a verified family emergency), I will reduce your final grade by one increment for each additional absence (i.e, from "B" to "B-" after three unexcused absences; from "B-" to "C+" after four). More than fifteen minutes late, individually or cumulatively, will equal one unexcused absence.
- 2.) *Preparation.* The success of our class depends on your being prepared for peer review sessions, in-class exercises, and discussions. You are expected to be attentive to your classmates, to contribute to group discussions, and to participate in writing exercises. *All of your writing assignments, including descriptive outlines, are due on the dates listed below.* Because our schedule calls for continual exchange and peer review, extensions will be granted only in the most serious of circumstances. Readings should be completed by the date they are listed on the syllabus. From time to time, I will also ask you to complete short online exercises in preparation for an upcoming class meeting.
- 3.) *Peer review.* During the semester, you will write and exchange at least seven descriptive outlines of your classmates' essays. The feedback that you provide to your peers is an essential component of the course, both in helping to create a community of writers and in helping to develop your ability to review and revise your own work.
- 4.) *Personal journaling.* Throughout the semester, you will keep an online journal using Blackboard's "Course Journal" feature. The writing that you do in these journals will not be graded, although I will be checking to make sure that you are keeping up with your commitment. You should aim to produce 2 pages of double-spaced entries per week. Each week, I will select examples of journal writing to post to the shared course blog where others may read and respond to it. Be assured that I will not post journal entries for the purposes of criticism, but should you wish to keep something that you have written in your journal private, write "PLEASE DO NOT POST" at the end of the entry. See the folder in the [ASSIGNMENTS] section of Blackboard for examples and more about journals.
- 5.) *Portfolio reviews.* There will be both a mid-term and final portfolio, which will be reviewed by me, and a random group of other critical writing professors. The mid-term portfolios will contain various drafts of your own papers, descriptive outlines, and peer reviews, and the final portfolio will contain the mid-term portfolio, plus another group of paper revisions, descriptive outlines, and peer reviews. The critical writing faculty will review your portfolios according to a set rubric, and will then provide a grade. We will discuss the details of this later, with handouts.
- 6.) *Final project.* As a final presentation for our last class, you give a 3-5 minute powerpoint presentation summarizing your work in this class, and provide a draft of this presentation along with a final textual analysis. This could be a presentation of findings; a proposal for further research based on analysis of your work thus far; or a more theoretically inclined assessment of ideas you played with during the semester; or something else. We will discuss this later as well.

## Course Grading

*Provided that you demonstrate a satisfactory level of competence as a writer*, fulfillment of all the responsibilities outlined above will earn you at least a “B” for the semester. During the semester we will collectively determine what should constitute “A” work for individual writing assignments and for the final portfolio. Note that to fulfill the University Writing Requirement, you must earn at least a “C-” for the course.

The primary goal of this course is to help you develop as a writer. Because one of the most important aspects of this development is learning to be a critic of your own writing, it is important that you take responsibility for your own improvement. The comments that I make on drafts should not be regarded as exhausting the possibilities for revision, nor should you regard point-by-point attention to my comments as a guarantee of receiving a higher grade.

PLEASE NOTE that we will frequently discuss examples of student writing in class. By enrolling in this course, you are joining a community of writers and agreeing to share your written work with others. Bear in mind that any writing you produce may be circulated within the class to serve as the focus for further discussion.

Incompletes will not be given unless there is a documented emergency and the course work has been substantially and satisfactorily completed before the incomplete is requested.

## Academic Integrity

All work produced for this class is assumed to be your own. No professional writer would consider a work finished without asking the opinions of readers. In this class, you will have many opportunities to receive suggestions from your peers about how to improve your essays. However, submitting final *work* that is not your own or failing to document the words of others is a violation of academic integrity. Taking credit for the work of others—including their distinctive language, phrases, or ideas—is plagiarism, and can result in serious consequences including failure on the assignment, failure in the course, or disciplinary action by the University. Please consult Penn’s Code of Academic Integrity, <http://www.upenn.edu/osl/acadint.html>, if you have questions.

## ***SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS***

**Bold text indicates assignments due.**

*(Subject to revision.)*

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|---|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| R | Jan 17 | <u>Course introduction</u><br><b>In-class writing diagnostic</b>                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| T | Jan 22 | <u>Designscapes and Destination Cities</u><br>Ross, 15-39 getting started<br>Hannigan: "Introduction" to Fantasy City                                                                                                                                |
| R | Jan 24 | <b>Draft of essay 1 (two reasons) and descriptive outline due</b><br><b>*Bring two paper copies of all 1st drafts</b><br><b>*Keep a copy of each peer paper you get</b><br>In class: peer review<br>Ross: 41-59 two reasons; 80-96 propositions      |
| T | Jan 29 | <b>Revisions of essay 1 and descriptive outline due</b><br>Ross: 147-174: constructive reading<br>Forty: "Design and Corporate Identity"<br>Julier: "Urban Designscapes and the Production of Aesthetic Consent"                                     |
| R | Jan 31 | <b>Draft of essay 2 (Nestorian order) and descriptive outline due</b><br>In class: peer review<br>Ross, 59-65 nestorian order; 96-111 reasons, examples                                                                                              |
| T | Feb 5  | <u>Consumption and "Cool"</u><br><b>Revisions of essay 2 and descriptive outline due</b><br>Clammer "Aesthetics of the Self"                                                                                                                         |
| R | Feb 7  | <b>Draft of essay 3 (straw man) and descriptive outline due</b><br>In class: peer review<br>Ross, 65-69 straw man; 131-137 assumptions                                                                                                               |
| T | Feb 12 | <b>Revisions of essay 3 and descriptive outline due</b><br>Ross: 137-145 style; 247-267 revising "action"<br>Shields: "Spaces for the Subject of Consumption"<br>Cohen: "A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America" |
| R | Feb 14 | <b>Draft of essay 4 (concession) and descriptive outline due</b><br>In class: peer review<br>Ross: 73-80 concession; 111-131 unity and coherence                                                                                                     |

T	Feb 19	<b>Revisions of essay 4 and descriptive outline due</b> <b>Descriptive outline of peer paper (your choice) due</b> McCoy: "Information and Persuasion" Gladwell: "The Coolhunt" Film screening: "The Merchants of Cool"
R	Feb 21	Midterm Portfolio Workshop Ross: 363 the "A" paper
T	Feb 26	<b>MIDTERM PORTFOLIOS DUE</b>
R	Feb 28	<u>Neoliberal Development</u> Ross: 269-289 voice Ruben: "Suburbanization and Poverty Under Neoliberalism"
T	Mar 4	Ross: 291-302 terms Ruben: "Penn and Inc."
R	Mar 6	Zukin: "Who's Culture, Who's City"
	March 8-16	SPRING BREAK
T	Mar 18	<u>Times Square Redevelopment</u> Chesluk, Front matter, Chapter 1 and 2
R	Mar 20	<b>Draft of essay 5 and descriptive outline due</b> <b>(Straw Man, Straw Man &amp; 1 reason, Concession, or Nestorian)</b> In-class peer review
T	Mar 25	<b>Revisions of essay 5 and descriptive outline due</b> <b>Outline of peer essay due</b> Chesluk, Chapter 3 Ross, 189-211 audiences
R	Mar 27	Chesluk, Chapter 4 and 5
T	Apr 1	<b>Draft of essay 6 and descriptive outline due</b> <b>(Straw Man, Straw Man &amp; 1 reason, Concession, or Nestorian)</b> In-class peer review
R	Apr 3	<b>Revisions of essay 6 and descriptive outline due</b> <b>Outline of peer essay due</b> Chesluk, Chapter 6 and 7

T	Apr 8	<b>Draft of essay 7 and descriptive outline due (Straw Man, Straw Man &amp; 1 reason, Concession, or Nestorian)</b> In-class peer review Ross, 223-229 using position papers (optional to 244)
R	Apr 10	<b>Revisions of essay 7 and descriptive outline due Descriptive outline of peer paper (your choice) due</b> Chesluk, Chapter 8
T	Apr 15	IN CLASS ESSAY
R	Apr 17	Benjamin Chesluk visit
T	Apr 22	Portfolio workshop/final presentations Ross: 356-322 reflection letters
R	Apr 24	Portfolio workshop/final presentations
T	Apr 29	<b>FINAL PORTFOLIOS DUE</b>
R	May 1	NO CLASS – Reading Day
M	May 12, 6-8 PM	NO CLASS – Final Exam Time