Urbanization in the Global South: Theories, Histories and Methods

This course is an advanced level graduate seminar designed for students at the masters and Ph.D. levels who are interested in topics related to the global dimensions of urban planning, with a specific emphasis on cities of the global South. The investigation of modern metropolises of the global South presents great challenges for both urban theory and practice. This seminar addresses some of these challenges by adopting a multidisciplinary perspective.

First, it adopts a historical frame. Modern metropolises are things that have been made and things in the making. Thus, the course explores some of their main transformations through examining major cities from Haussmann's remaking of Paris in the 19th century to the impact of the global colonial enterprise and neocolonial practice under the “American century,” to the contemporary re-makings of cities everywhere as we close the American century and enter the so-called “Asian century.” But as it tracks changes, it also highlights continuities: recurring crises, persistent segregations, slums, as well as utopias, inventions, and spectacles.

Second, the course explores global metropolitan formations epistemologically. In other words, cities are also objects of study that must be constructed through academic discourse. As such, this course challenges the ways that global South cities are understood most often solely in reference to models and theories of planning that originate from North Atlantic cities of Western Europe and the US. Therefore, pedagogically the aim of the course is not simply to expand or widen the scope and perspective of planning topics and questions that originate from the “great” cities of the global North and disseminate to the global South. Rather, the course aims to fundamentally shift students’ perspective so that they can begin to see global South cities as their own centers capable of producing urban theory and practice that is as foundational to the field as their Northern counterparts. This methodological inversion allows students to question and unsettle long standing theories about urbanization originating in the global North and begin the work of destabilizing hegemonic concepts in the field at a moment when the majority of the globe’s urbanization on a planetary scale will occur in global South cities.

Third, the seminar considers metropolitan formations as tense processes that bring together both institutional agents identified with the production and regulation of space (state governments, corporations, planning departments, political parties, and so forth) and citizens that not only use cities but also produce them with their own (often unregulated) means. Indeed, modern metropolises are spaces of contestation, innovation and creativity as much as they are spaces of exploitation and segregation. The course is organized around some key classic texts to address the first goal of the course, but then quickly shifts its focus to examine emerging and contemporary work from scholars of global South cities.
COURSE FORMAT, REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

The class meets once a week for three hours. It is organized as a seminar. It is expected that students attend class regularly, do the weekly readings before the class meeting, and actively participate in the class discussions of the assigned readings.

All readings will be available as a PDF on the course canvas website.

Students are also expected to initiate the class discussions a few times during the semester. To initiate a discussion means to present on the week’s readings to guide conversations in class, ask key questions. Students may choose to bring questions in writing with copies for everyone. Additionally, students may bring visual materials that complement/illustrate the cases being analyzed. The commentaries will count for 35% of the final grade and the initiation of discussions will count for 15% of the grade. Typically each week, two or three students will be presenting on readings as a group.

Students are expected to write a one-page commentary about the required readings every week and post to the course discussion section on the canvas website before class. Students presenting that week must create a discussion post and a discussion thread by Sunday 11:59pm which also contains their commentary and initiates a class discussion. They can post on a topic of their choosing that addresses all of the week’s readings. Each presenting student that week is to produce a unique discussion thread. Once the two to three discussion threads are posted, the remainder of students must respond to discussion posts within that thread by Tuesday evening 10pm. The purpose here is to generate online discussion between students about readings prior to class.

Each student is expected to write a research paper (approximately 4500 words) related to the course themes. The paper must address one or a number of the themes addressed during the course. Students should submit a one-page description of their topics on February 12th. The final paper is due March 16 in Word or PDF format and submitted as an attachment on the Canvas website.

Office Hours: My office hours are Mondays 12-2pm by appointment. You can go to this link to sign up for a time: https://tinyurl.com/t4fmyfj6. If you cannot make a Monday appointment, please email the professor to schedule a different date/time: hunkim@uci.edu.
COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1 | Course Introduction
Thurs, Oct 1
• Introductory Lecture: 21st century urbanization and globalization

WEEK 2 | The Global and the Urban as a Problem
Thurs, Oct 8:

WEEK 3 | High Modernism and the City
Thurs, Oct 15:

WEEK 4 | Colonial Cities
Thurs, Oct 22

WEEK 5 | Global Forms, Speculative Capital and Real Estate
Thurs, Oct 29

WEEK 6 | Informality, Aesthetics and Ambiguity
Thurs, Nov 5:

WEEK 7 | City Infrastructure: Materiality and Sociality
Thurs, Nov 12

WEEK 8 | Eco-Cities and Cities Affected by Climate
Thurs, Nov 19

WEEK 9 | The Walled City
Thurs, Dec 3

WEEK 10 | Planning and (Structural) Violence
Thurs, Dec 10