Course Description

This course examines the many ways that people make urban life meaningful. How do people create a sense of place, of community, of urban identity? What are the historical, political-economic, and socio-cultural contexts that frame the opportunities, constraints, and uncertainties of urban life? In addressing these questions, we will explore the core concepts and conceptual frameworks that sociologists and anthropologists use to understand the lived experience of cities. Our study of social and cultural urban processes emphasizes the relationship of space to identity and power. We will examine aspects of identity, including race and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, class, family, community, and citizenship. In each city, we will grapple with conflicts, struggles, and celebrations that are embedded in and emerge from specific historical, socio-economic, and political contexts. We will examine cities as physical and imagined spaces, exploring how spatial and social life are mutually constitutive, and how the meanings of cities are multiple and contested by different groups and actors with often incompatible agendas.

Students will be introduced to qualitative research methods - primarily ethnography (also known as participant observation) - which offer important tools for the comparative study of urban life. How do we learn from the everyday lived experience of cities and the stories people tell about themselves and their city? An ethnographic lens allows us to study detailed, local accounts of city life, while a comparative approach enables us to theorize about the diverse perspectives and experiences that characterize urbanism. We will discuss the possibilities and limitations of employing ethnographic methods, and how, over time, anthropologists have adapted ethnographic methods and
theoretical perspectives to understand local, regional, national, transnational, and global processes that converge (and diverge) in cities.

Acknowledging cultural diversity and the heterogeneous perspectives and assumptions about the world and its inhabitants is a crucial dimension of the anthropological lens. Students will enhance their awareness of their own cultural assumptions and be encouraged to take distance from them in order to make space for different ways of being in and imagining the world.

Course Objectives
• To introduce students to analytical and methodological tools for studying cultural and social dimensions of urban life;
• To explore articulations of politics, socio-economics, identity and culture that are ethnographically located in particular urban contexts, yet resonate theoretically toward a comparative understanding of cities and urban life;
• To challenge students to engage with inhabitants, existing knowledge and institutions in each city in reflexive and substantive ways (trying to understand them from their own point of view), both through assignments and in their daily experiences.

Course Materials
Readings are intended to augment your observations, experiences, and learning in the cities we visit. They are critical resources for clarifying concepts and deepening your understanding of what you are experiencing. Students are expected to prepare for class discussions as well as reference the readings in their assignments. Readings for this course will mainly be comprised of ethnographic work conducted in the cities we visit, with occasional readings on methodology. Additional readings tailored to your individual needs (e.g., for your Comparative Analysis project) will be made available upon request. In addition, students are encouraged to make use of the in-country libraries and to investigate local resources, including news media.

Course Requirements

Class Participation (20%)
A significant portion of the grade for this course is determined by participation. Participation means informed participation. Being prepared entails not only reading the materials carefully, but also coming to class having already given thought to how the material relates to site visits, guest lectures, and other things we have read and experienced. All students are expected to be present at every class session, with the only exceptions being illness (written note required from a non-program adult, e.g. homestay parent, or preferably, health care professional). All students are expected to come to class on time. Unexcused absences and habitual lateness will result in penalties reflected in your participation grade. Please inform me in advance if you expect to be late.
Assignments

São Paulo: Investigating Urban Expression and Identity
(15%)
The purpose of this assignment is to develop your ‘anthropological lens’ through careful observation and critical, analytical thinking. Choose a subject for observation that is illustrative of the theme urban expression and identity (e.g., street art/graffiti, lunch practices and social class, work attire and the performance of gender/class). Following a one hour (minimum) observation period, describe the social and material dimensions of what you have observed. Evoke the place/people/event through detailed and specific descriptive writing. Submit illustrations and/or other visual evidence if you wish. Review Emerson (1995) for a discussion of ethnographic writing. (600-800 words).

Cape Town: Making Sense of Place/Space/Home
(35%)

EITHER

1. How do people make places meaningful? Listening to the stories that people tell is an important way of learning about a place. This assignment focuses on the stories people tell about their neighborhood including what it used to be like and how it has changed over time.

Either in Langa or in Bo-Kaap have two conversations about the neighborhood, one with someone who is about your age and another conversation with someone who is your parents’ age or older. You must choose two individuals who can talk about the neighborhood through their own experiences, perhaps because he or she has been running a business there for a number of years, or has always lived there, or has returned to the neighborhood after an absence. We will discuss how to develop the conversation in class. Write the story of the neighborhood from the perspective of the stories of these two people, remembering to ‘position’ the speakers. (1200-1500 words)

OR

2. This assignment will examine family organization and the uses of home-space cross-culturally. It is intended as an exploration of the concepts of family and household through the process of mapping both kinship relations and household space. One part of the assignment will involve drawing kinship diagrams using anthropological kinship symbols and terminology. For this exercise, you may use your own family and one of your host families OR compare your two host families. The second part will involve drawing a floor plan of each of the residences chosen. The third and final section will be a brief essay on what you have learned from this comparison of family organization and uses of home-space.
**Hanoi: Ethnographic Vignette**

Develop a description and interpretation of an event or social situation that you have observed and/or experienced while in Hanoi.

**Part 1.** Write your recollection of the event in a couple of paragraphs: describe the event and people involved, the time of day and the place, the surrounding atmosphere, passersby, etc. (300-400 words)

**Part 2.** Write a paragraph that describes the process you went through to interpret the event or situation. Ask a series of questions of yourself and locals to determine the meaning of the event you have observed. What are your assumptions for interpreting the event or social situation? How did the locals’ interpretation differ from yours? (300-400 words)

**Part 3.** Analyze the vignette with the conceptual tools you have learned over the semester. Use this experience to speak to broader issues being discussed in Hanoi. Support your analysis with information gleaned from readings, guest lectures, site visits, etc. (800-1000 words)

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**Detailed instructions for all assignments, including due dates and evaluation criteria, will be provided in each country.**

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**Course Chronology:**

**NEW ORLEANS, USA** 19 - 30 August 2013

**Session 1—Introducing Culture, Identity/Ethnicity & Ethnographic Methods**


**SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL** 2 - 27 September 2013

**Session 2—Space and Place in São Paulo**

Session 3—Identity: Race, Class, Ethnicity


Session 4—Reconfiguring the City and its Citizens

  o Introduction: 1-10.
  o Chapter 1: The Dream Class is Over: Home-Ownership, Consumption, and (Re)definitions of Middle Class Identity. 27-45.

Session 5—Citizenship & Migration


Week 5—Vacation ………. Enjoy! 28 September – 4 October

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA 5 October – 1 November 2013

Session 6—Remaking the City in Post-Apartheid South Africa??

Session 7—Place-Making, Memory and Identity


Session 8—Youth and the City


HANOI, VIETNAM

December 2013

Session 9 —State, Space and Citizenship in Urban Vietnam


Session 10—Middle Class Lifestyles and Landscapes: Housing, Consumption, and Mobility


Session 11—Popular Culture Under Doi Moi


Film: *The Rebel*

Week 16—Program Wrap-up: Retreat and Final Presentations

**THEMATIC READINGS (available on request)**

*Introducing Culture and Identity*


*Ethnographic Methods*


*Inequality & Other ‘Discriminations’*


**Understanding Globalization**


**Globalization and the City**


**Globalization and the State**

• Chalfin, Brenda 2006 ‘Global Customs Regimes and the Traffic in Sovereignty. Enlarging the Anthropology of the State’ *Current Anthropology* 47(2): 243-276

**Globalization & Transnationalism**

Citizenship and Belonging


Migration


NeoLiberalism


Consumption


Love/Intimacy

Religion


Violence


Comparison


Sao Paulo/Brazil


Cape Town/South Africa


Hanoi/Vietnam

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Faculty will give grades in the form of points and will return assignments with written comments. Faculty will describe the range of points received for the assignment so that a student will know how his/her work compares with the rest of the class. At the end of the semester, your cumulative point score will be calculated in order to determine the final letter grade for the course. Point grades on individual assignments are not directly correlated to letter grades. The final letter grades will be determined on the basis of cumulative points on assignments completed across countries.
For final grades in program courses it is useful for both faculty and students to think of letter grades in the following way. An "A" represents truly outstanding work that exemplifies thorough analysis, superior insight, and crystal clear presentation. A "B" signifies highly competent work that accomplishes the task at hand very well, through considerable thought, reasonable analysis, and an organized presentation. A "C" represents adequate work that meets basic requirements but demonstrates no distinction in terms of analytical insight or organization. A "D" is characterized by poorly or partially completed work that reflects a lack of initiative, inconsistent analysis, and/or erratic presentation. Plus and minus indicate relatively better or poorer work within each category. There is no A+.

**Late work:** Papers handed in late will drop one point per day, unless permission is granted otherwise. Course assignments are due at the beginning of the day.

**Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook** for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.