

Urban Politics and Development (P+D) DVST 3500 (4 Credits)

International Honors Program Cities in the 21st Century

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

*...it takes a lot of things to change the world:
Anger and tenacity. Science and indignation,
The quick initiative, the long reflection,
The cold patience and the infinite perseverance,
The understanding of the particular case and the understanding of the ensemble:
Only the lesson of reality can teach us to transform reality
Bertolt Brecht*

Western democracies are only the political façade of economic power. A façade with colours, banners, and endless debate about sacrosanct democracy. We live in an era where we can discuss everything. With one exception: Democracy. She is there, an acquired dogma. Don't touch, like a museum display. Elections have become an absurd comedy, shameful, in which the participation of the citizen is very weak, and governments represent the political commissionaires of economic power. There isn't democracy, only the appearance of democracy. We live in a simulation. If we want real democracy, we will have to create it ourselves.

José Saramago

Course Description

This course will examine the legacies of racial capitalism in four sites uniquely positioned to do this. Jackson, New York City, Johannesburg and Cape Town represent four case studies to understand how cities formed by colonial expansion, the trade in enslaved peoples and global trade are today inhabited by politics shaped by these origins. Organised party politics, urban social movements and the relationship between urban citizens and the state, form the core content for this course.

The Urban Politics and Development course is designed to equip you with tools to understand how the cities we study have developed as they have, and to critically engage with the challenges which they face. The current health, economic and political crisis reveal an opportunity to unpack the shortcomings of the political and economic organization of cities. In this sense, crisis reveal the type of society that we have, not the society that has been represented to us. In the course of the semester, we will pay particular attention to these guiding questions:

- What economic, social, and political factors (local, national, and international) shape the development/organization of unequal cities?

- How are different actors involved (or excluded) in the creation, maintenance, and functioning of urban environments? Whose knowledge/voices are considered relevant in the discussion of what the city could/should be?
- How the current crisis reveal the structural nature of urban inequities and promises opportunities to challenge and act/organize around issues of governance, democracy, economic well-being, and solidarity?
- How are people constructing alternatives in their daily practices that aim to re-define the terms of the type of city they/we want?

In order to understand how global historical processes have been shaping the cities we will visit, this course will focus on the current expression of global capitalism. Particularly, we will emphasize the types of political frameworks deployed to naturalize and justify current notions of (urban) development. While we will discuss a variety of issues during the semester (social and spatial inequalities, governance, democracy, citizenship, etc.), the “neoliberal project” will be a common thread that will unite the cities we will visit and provide us with a lens for ‘reading’ the city and critically assessing promises, failures, and possibilities. In this sense, this course will provide broad frames of analysis that will help us ask questions and understand that forms of social inequality and barriers for people to improve the basic living conditions are not natural occurrences but deeply contested processes that we hope will permit you to ‘read’ beyond the surface. Similarly, we will explore the motivations and implications of insurgent actions in efforts to build more just and equitable cities. The goal is not necessarily ‘finding the solution’, but to understand the historical complexity of the problems and the strategies and practices people deploy.

Understanding Urban/ Global Inequality and Insurgency

We live in times of astounding wealth production and grotesque social and economic inequities. According to the director of OXFAM International, 42 individuals control the same amount of wealth as 3.7 billion people or roughly half the world’s population (Byanyima, 2018). About 736 million people live on less than \$1.90 per day, considered extreme poverty (World Bank, 2015). This is not limited to the ‘global south’. In the United States, 41.4 million people (12.7% of the population) do not have enough resources to have access to basic necessities according to the 2017 census. This expression of inequality is also expressed on the ongoing health crisis. According to the CDC “death rates among Black/African American persons (92.3 deaths per 100,000 population) and Hispanic/Latino persons (74.3) that were substantially higher than that of white (45.2) or Asian (34.5) persons”. This has to do with the legacy of segregation and the current socio-economic inequalities when it comes to access to education (and disproportionate rates of incarceration), decent wage employment, affordable housing and health care. The impact of the health crisis goes beyond the immediate health burdens, and touches on the social and economic implications of the crisis. According to the Pew Research Center “Some 61% of Hispanic Americans and 44% of black Americans said in April that they or someone in their household had experienced a job or wage loss due to the coronavirus outbreak, compared with 38% of white adults”.

We also live in times in which mainstream political narratives emphasize the stability of the architecture of democracy, but have difficulty explaining the persistence of inequalities. In spite of the evidence of a political economy that benefits and privileges certain sectors of society, we still believe on the imaginaries of benevolent globalization, responsive institutions, participatory (liberal) democracy, and the endless opportunities of capitalism (de Sousa Santos, 2017). If we want to live in more just and equitable cities, we need to better understand the historical and structural causes (and material outcomes) of global inequities, and the underlying logic that informs the reproduction of narratives and political institutions that insist there are no alternatives. In order to understand why and how this has been happening we cannot rely simply on the current ‘façade’ of cities, but need to understand the historical processes and forces that shaped cities.

In addition to the analysis of the social/spatial (re)production of inequalities, this course aims to highlight and explore the variety of political and economic alternatives which are being practiced around the world. These range from broad bold ideas to build a different world, institutional reconfigurations, and radical practices. These practices –ranging from holding government accountable to their constitutional mandates to challenging the status quo through occupation of abandoned buildings– come from people that because of their situation or condition have been forced to develop creative alternative practices for managing their resources, spaces and communities. (Simone & Pieterse, 2017). As such, cities are not only important sites for discussing social and economic dynamics across the planet, but also sites from which residents challenge the current political and economic order: the demands for truly inclusive and democratic forms of citizenship; the inherent promise of cities to access to collective consumption goods/services; and the everyday practices that inform alternative urban spaces. These are some of the basic frameworks that allow us to locate cities such as Jackson, New York, Johannesburg, and Cape Town both in terms of issues that connect them and those that make them unique.

Learning Outcomes

The Urban Politics and Development course comprises 16.5 classroom hours of instruction (4 credits). The total amount of classroom hours will be complemented with neighborhood and site visits, debriefings, and synthesis sessions that will allow us to connect formal classroom discussions with your own experiences. This is what we call **experiential learning**. Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- To **build an analytical framework** in order to discuss how intellectual current of analysis that become a political project, and how political projects that become common sense have material implications in the spatial/social organization of cities --or the normative ideals of what cities should be and do.
- To develop critical assessment and analytical skills to **connect theory to practice to outcomes** in order to formulate one's own position on course-related concepts, including development, democracy, and citizenship.\
- To learn to critically understand how seemingly 'marginal', 'radical' or "innocuous" **practices provide powerful insights into thinking about alternative policy/political frameworks.**
- To experience, observe, understand, and respond to the **multi-scalar impacts and manifestations** of government policy, citizen action, and regional and global forces on the development of the city.
- To **engage with people and places** through discussion, dialogue, and observation in reflective and substantive ways, towards effectively evaluating multiple, often contradictory sources;
- To **interrogate our political positionality** as we learn about the choices and challenges other actors face in their particular historical contexts. This means that while we are learning about "others" we are aiming to draw lessons about our own social contexts.

Instructional Methods

The course will use a combination of lecture presentations, seminar discussions, group work, and individual projects. The intention is to create a learning community where students actively contribute ideas and questions, and everyone helps and challenges everyone else to learn. The readings are designed as a springboard to frame in-class discussions about what we experience in a particular city. The course aims to make the most of the richness and variety of the classroom and experiential learning opportunities. The assignments involve looking at particular political and social issues in the cities visited as a way for gathering and analyzing primary data from field sources.

**Please be aware that topics and site visits may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs*

SESSIONS AND READINGS

Jackson, Mississippi

Session 1: Introduction to studying urban inequities: capital and democracy

The promises of capitalism and liberal democracy have been the principal forces shaping urban imaginaries in the United States. It is through these frameworks that we imagine what is possible and necessary for cities; what the city is for and for whom. In this session we will begin a semester long discussion about how these forces have been shaping cities and how these pillars have been transforming.

- Dubey, Madhu. 2002. "Postmodern geographies of the U.S. South". *Nepantla: Views from South*. Vol. 3, No. 2, Pp. 351-371.
- Nickerson, Michelle & Darren Dochuk (eds.) 2011. *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Space, Place, and Region*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Dochuk, Darren. 2010. *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Zavella, Patricia. 1984. "The impact of 'Sun Belt industrialization' on Chicanas". *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*. Vol. 8, No. 1, Pp. 21-27.

Session 2: From civil rights to radical democracy

The struggles for more just and equitable cities reflect how actors conceive of political opportunities and the meaning of social justice. In this session we will interrogate the idea(l)s of social justice in the context of two particular historical moments of social action in Jackson.

- Heynen, Nik, Dani Aiello, Caroline Keegan & Nikki Luke. 2018. "The enduring struggle for social justice and the city". *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*. Vol. 108, No. 2, Pp. 301-316.
- Lake, Robert W. 2018. "Locating the Social in Social Justice". *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*. Vol. 108, No. 2, Pp. 337-345.
- Salter, John. 2011 [1979] *Jackson, Mississippi: An American Chronicle of Struggle and Schism*. Bison Books.
- Akuno, Kali & Ajamu Nangwaya (eds.). 2017. *Jackson Rising: The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi*.

Session 3: The promises, expectations and manipulations of democracy: the tension between politics and political

The historic construction of political schisms in the US have had profound implications for the social construction of the individual and the collective. (Just think of the recent debates about the –individual-right to break the quarantine.) This session will serve a bridge to connect Jackson and NYC and will focus on The tension between institutionalized forms of democracy and the democratic ideals and practices of 'those who are not counted'.

- Swyngedow, Erik. 2018. *Promises of the Political: Insurgent Cities in a Post-Political Environment*. MIT Press.
- Lassiter, Matthew. 2013. *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*. Princeton University Press.
- Rancière, Jacques. 2001. "Ten theses on politics". *Theory & Event*. Vol. 5, No. 3,

New York City

Session 4: governance and its implications

The transformation of the global political and economic infrastructure has had a profound impact on the structure and organization of cities throughout the world. In this session, some of the main ideas that will guide our discussions during the semester will be presented: inequalities and inequities; capitalism and its relation to urban space, the implications of (post)Fordism on urban transformations. We will connect two seemingly disconnected phenomena: the transformation of many areas of NYC into attractive centers of consumption and entertainment, and the implications for those left outside of the imaginary of leisure urban consumption.

- Harvey, David. 2001. "From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism". In *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography*. Routledge. Pp. 345-368.
- Vormann, Boris. 2015. "Toward an infrastructural critique of urban change: Obsolescence and changing perceptions of New York City's waterfront". *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*. Vol. 19, No. 2-3, Pp. 356-364.
- Phillips-Fein, Kim. 2017. *Fear City: New York's Fiscal Crisis and the Rise of Austerity Politics*. Metropolitan Books.
- Moody, Kim. 2007. *From Welfare State to Real Estate: Regime Change in New York City, 1974 to the present*. New Press.

Session 5: Power brokers: the manufacturing of a mirage of prosperity

The current expressions of inequalities in NYC (and Jackson) are not natural manifestations of the market or politics as usual. Instead, the material and social expressions of inequalities are the outcome of outright appropriation of political institutions for the benefit of certain sectors of society. In this session, we will how the logic of certain actors have come to define the organization (inequalities) manifested in NYC.

- Busà, Alessandro. 2017. *The Creative Destruction of New York City: Engineering the City for the Elite*. Oxford University Press.
- Stein, Samuel. 2019. *Capital City: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*. Verso.
- Fitch, Robert. 1995. *The Assassination of New York*. Verso.

Session 6: Social and spatial implications: service delivery

According to the ideals of democracy, we are all equal under the law. This means that, in principle, we all have access to the services the State provides (education, health care, social security, etc.) Now we know this is not the case. In this session, we will compare and contrast the type of service delivery to different Boroughs and neighborhoods of NYC. We will also begin to analyze the reason for and implications of the disparities.

- Hum, Tarry. 2014. *Making a Global Immigrant Neighborhood: Brooklyn's Sunset Park*. Temple University Press.
- Jackson, John. 2001. *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Rothstein, Richard. 2017. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. W. W. Norton.

Session 7: Local responses: between resistance and creation

In the context of deep inequalities and profound crisis, the ways in which people resist oppressive institutional frameworks and create locally viable alternative represent the future of democratic ideals and practices. In this session –and reflecting on the discussion in Jackson- we will reflect on the potentials and limitations of direct action in challenging the institutional (democratic) order.

- Goyens, Tom (ed). 2017. *Radical Gotham: Anarchism in New York City from Schwab's Saloon to Occupy Wall Street*. University of Illinois Press.
- Hamm, Lisa, Frederick Douglass Opie, & James Perales, 2015. *Upsetting the Apple Cart: Black-Latino Coalitions in New York City from Protest to Public Office*. Columbia University Press.
- Eizenberg, Efrat. 2013. *From the Ground Up: Community Gardens in New York City and the Politics of Spatial Transformation*. Ashgate.
- Latour, Jane. 2008. *Sisters in the Brotherhoods: Working Women Organizing for Equality in New York City*. Palgrave.
- Parson, Sean. (2019). "The homeless fight back: the politics of homeless resistance". In S. Parson (ed.) *Cooking up a Revolution: Food Not Bombs, Homes Not Jails, and Resistance to Gentrification*. University Press.

CASE STUDY: URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NEW YORK CITY

Johannesburg

Session 8: Cities of the 'global south' in context

As you will experience during the semester, cities of the 'global south' share many similarities with US cities. However, there are also historical particularities that define each city. In this session, we will build on the discussion about the transformation to a post-fordist (1970s) system of production as a way to establish some of the common trends (policies, actors, etc.) that have shaped cities in the so-called global south or third world.

- Sheppard, Eric. 2014. "Globalizing capitalism and southern urbanization". In S. Parnell & S. Oldfield (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*. Routledge. Pp. 146-154.
- Caldeira, Teresa. 2017. "Peripheral urbanization: Autoconstruction, transversal logics, and politics in cities of the global south". *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*. Vol. 35, No. 1, Pp. 3–20.
- Sarah Nuttall & Achille Mbembe (eds.) 2008. *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis*. Duke University Press.
- Bénit-Gbaffou, Claire. 2018. "Beyond the policy-implementation gap: How the city of Johannesburg manufactured the ungovernability of street trading". *The Journal of Development Studies*. Vol. 54, No.12, Pp. 2149-2167.
- Pieterse, Edgar. 2019. "Urban governance and spatial transformation ambitions in Johannesburg". *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 41:1, 20-38.
- Murray, Martin. 2011. *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg*. Duke University Press.

Cape Town

Session 9: Promises, hopes, and deceptions: post-Apartheid urbanism

With the formal end of Apartheid (or the start of democracy) in 1994, many South Africans hoped and expected that with the abrogation of institutionalized discrimination better living conditions would ensue. However, the promise of a more just country (and cities) are still to materialize, giving way to deceptions. In this session we will discuss the tensions and contradictions between the expectations of

an inclusive and just city, and the so called “realities” of building an efficient and competitive Cape Town.

- Oldfield, Sophie & Saskia Greyling. 2015. “Waiting for the state: a politics of housing in South Africa”. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*. Vol. 47, No. 5, Pp. 1100-1112.
- de Satgé, Richard & Vanessa Watson. 2018. “Struggles for shelter and survival in post-apartheid South African cities: The case of Langa”. In R. de Satgé & V. Watson (eds.) *Urban Planning in the Global South: Conflicting Rationalities in Contested Urban Space*. Palgrave Macmillan. Pp. 63-93.

Session 10: The struggle for a democratic city: direct action and demanding intuitional responses
Weaving the discussion we had about the tensions between politics and the political, and the promises of democratic institutions and practices, we will discuss the struggles of democratic ideals that recognizes the histories of each city/country, the urban imaginaries of residents (what the good city looks like), and the specific political economic situations.

- Oldfield Sophie & Kristian Stokke. 2006. “Building unity in diversity: Social movement activism in the Western Cape anti-eviction campaign”. In R. Ballard, A. Habib & I. Valodia (eds.) *Voices of Protest: Social Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Pp. 111-132.
- M Langford, B Cousins, J Dugard, & T Madlingozi (eds.). 2013. *Socio-economic Rights in South Africa: Symbol or Substance?* Cambridge University Press.
- Bond, Patrick. 2017. “Limits to South Africa’s ‘right to the city’: prospects for and beyond urban commoning”. In S. Hall & R. Burdett (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of the 21st Century City*. Sage Publications. Pp. 236-255.
- McFarlane, Colin & Jonathan Silver. 2017. “The poolitical city: ‘Seeing sanitation’ and making the urban political in Cape Town”. *Antipode*. Vol. 49 No. 1, Pp. 125-148.

Session 11: Thinking and acting for/in the future

After 4 months and 4 cities, the question remains, what can we do with all that we’ve learned and experienced? Are we more hopeful or pessimistic about the role of cities in shaping the kind of society we want? What kind of cities do we want? The city we want may or may not share the principles, processes and/or outcomes of the people you met during the semester. How do we negotiate that? And, probably most important, where do we stand/fit in these processes?

- UN Habitat. 2016. *The Future we Want, The City we Need*. United Nations.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2018. “Exploring ideas of emancipatory geographies for the Twenty-First century”
- Fraser, Nancy. 1996. “From redistribution to recognition? Dilemmas of justice in a post-socialist age”. In *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition*. Routledge. Pp. 11-39.
- Marcuse, Peter. 2011. “Whose right(s) to what city?” In Brenner, Neil, Peter Marcuse, Margit Maye (eds). *Cities for People, Not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City*. Blackwell. Pp. 24-41.
- Amin, Ash and Liza Rose Cirolia. 2018. “Politics/matter: Governing Cape Town’s informal settlements”. *Urban Studies*. Vol. 55, No. 2, Pp. 274-295.

Required Materials

Required readings are available to students via Moodle. Students are expected to complete the specified readings by each Politics and Development faculty session and to reference readings in discussions as well as essays. In addition, students are encouraged to make use of thematic readings (available upon request) and IHP in-country libraries and to investigate local resources, including news media. Reading newspapers (English-language resources included in CUI syllabus) regularly in each city offers a valuable

resource for understanding current issues and debates. Students are also encouraged to find supplementary resources.

Assignments and Evaluation

Jackson (25%).

New York City (30%)

Cape Town (30%)

Class participation (15%): Assessment of participation is based on the level of engagement during course activities. Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Showing up receives the minimum passing participation grade. Missing or being late to class will negatively affect your participation assessment. What qualifies as “good” participation? The short answer is intellectual engagement. This means active participation: critically reflective (think about what you have been experiencing), be intellectually present (listen to the comments of others and help in the production of a collective dialogue), and dynamically interactive (comments that relate to the readings and experiences).

Position paper

One of the biggest rewards of the IHP semester is to be able to interact with people and spaces, and to witness the type of conceptual/critical reflections we are readings about. This will have many dimensions during the semester: from discussion between students and with the people you meet (from how homestay families to residents); reflections on your CA research project, to discussion and debates in the classroom. Similarly, one of the biggest challenges of the semester will be to craft an argument based on the data/evidence you collect during the semester. The position paper will provide elements to accomplish two goals: 1) to provide the conditions to have a lively and meaningful discussion/debate during the P+D sessions; 2) to visualize and understand how authors from different academic disciplines craft arguments and present evidence to support it. This will be crucial for your CA research project.

The position paper will be a short (no more than one page) paper in which you take a stance in relation to the argument presented in one of the readings for a session. The basic elements of the position paper will be:

- What is the main argument made by the author(s)?
- Discuss the evidence presented in relation to the argument.
- Take a position (support – critique) the argument and explain why you take that position.

You will write **3 position papers** during the semester (at least 1 in each city: Jackson, NYC, Johannesburg or Cape Town). In order to avoid everyone submitting the paper for the same session, you will submit the position paper according to your number in the group. (The range of the numbers are next to the title of the session.)

You will upload the position paper in Moodle. Everyone, regardless whether you posted a position paper or not, will read over all the other position papers prior to class. This will be the basis for the discussion and debate: the different positions in relation to the arguments presented by the authors we read, and the type of experiences (site visits, guest lectures, your own CA research, etc.) we have been having in the particular city.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation: All students are expected to be present at every class session, with the only exception being illness (written note required from a non-IHP adult, e.g. homestay parent, or preferably, health care professional). Unexcused absences and habitual lateness will result in penalties reflected in your participation grade. Please inform the instructor if tardiness is anticipated. All students are expected to come to class on time.

Late work: In keeping with IHP policy, 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.

Plagiarism: All students are responsible for having read the IHP statement on plagiarism, which is available in the IHP Student Handbook. Students are advised that the penalty on IHP for plagiarism may be "...expulsion from the program or such other penalty as may be recommended by the Program Director, subject to approval by the Executive Director."

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook and the Program Dossier given to you at Orientation.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F