

University of California, San Diego

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Winter 2005  
CSB 002  
MWF 10-10:50

**HIUS 148/USP 103**  
**The American City in the Twentieth Century**

**Course Description:** This course is about the evolution of American cities from 1900 to the present day. We will investigate the origins and growth of the industrial and post-industrial city, the interaction between urban residents and their environments, and the impact cities made on the lives of ordinary Americans and the nation as a whole. Furthermore, we will explore such themes as spatial organization, migration and immigration, city life and cultures, urban politics, technology, urban infrastructure, and the tensions between the forces of centralization and decentralization. We will also examine the trajectory of regional urban development in the twentieth century; in particular, the course will consider the rise of “sunbelt” cities and the fate of older urban places. Over the course of the quarter, we will examine several different cities closely to explore how urban problems and solutions have manifested themselves in particular historical contexts.

**Course Format:** Learning and teaching in this course will occur through various means: lectures, readings, papers, and exams. When feasible, we may also have discussions in class, both in small groups and as a whole class. It is imperative that you come to class prepared, having read the required readings for that week.

**Required Readings:** (available at Groundwork Books and at Undergraduate Reserves)

Jon Teaford, *The Twentieth-Century American City: Problem, Promise, Reality*,  
2<sup>nd</sup> edition  
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*  
Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*  
HIUS 148 Course Reader (Available for purchase after the first several class meetings)

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

30% midterm  
30% “Reading San Diego” paper  
40% final exam

**Deadlines, punctuality, and attendance:** All assignment deadlines are firm. Papers are due by the end of class on the due date. Late papers will be penalized severely – so plan ahead, and hand in your assignments on time. Students are expected to arrive for lecture on time. Pagers and cellular phones should be turned off or switched to “silent” mode during lectures.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1. Jan. 3-7

Setting the Scene: Definitions, Precursors, and Theories

**Readings:** Teaford, ch. 1; Salter, "How to Read a City"; Gordon, "Capitalist Development and the History of American Cities"; Hays, "From the History of the City"; Gilfoyle, "White Cities."

WEEK 2. Jan. 10-14

Physical Order of the Industrial City: Technology and Urban Space

**Readings:** Teaford, pp. 7-30; Ihlder, "The Automobile and Community Planning"; Begin Sinclair, *The Jungle*.

WEEK 3. Jan. 19, 21

January 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

Social Order of the Industrial City: Immigrants, Workers, and the New Suburbanites

**Readings:** Finish Sinclair, *The Jungle*.

WEEK 4. Jan. 24-28

Making the Black Ghetto

"The Other Suburbanites"

**Readings:** Letters from *Journal of Negro History*; Kusmer, "The Great Migration and the Consolidation of the Ghetto"; Nicolaides, "Where the Working Man Is Welcomed."

WEEK 5. Jan. 31- Feb. 4

City People's Culture: Amusements, Recreation, and Contested Ground

Governing the Industrial City: Bosses and Reformers

**Readings:** Teaford, pp. 30-56; Nichols, "Suburban Subdivisions with Community Features"; Sanchez, "Familiar Sounds of Change."

WEEK 6. Feb. 7-11

**Feb. 7: Midterm**

The Martial Metropolis

Explosive Metropolis

**Readings:** Teaford, pp. 56-96; Self, pp. 1-60.

WEEK 7. Feb. 14-18

Suburbia

The Sunbelt and Western Cityscapes

**Readings:** Teaford, ch. 5; Self, pp. 61-131.

WEEK 8. Feb. 23, 25

February 21: Presidents' Day Holiday

Making the Urban Crisis

**Readings:** Teaford, ch. 6; Self, pp. 133-214

**DUE Feb. 23: Reading San Diego paper**

WEEK 9. Feb. 28-Mar. 4

Economic & Urban Restructuring: The Case of Los Angeles

**Readings:** Teaford, ch. 7; Governor's Commission, *Violence in the City*; Self, pp. 215-334.

WEEK 10. Mar. 7-11

The American City in the Twenty-first Century

**Readings:** Rome, "Building on the Land"; Davis, "Playing the City"; Fishman, "Beyond Suburbia: Rise of the Technoburb"; Sharpe & Wallock, "Bold New City or Built-Up 'Burb?"

## **“Reading San Diego” Assignment**

Read the article, “How to Read a City” by Christopher Salter. The following assignment springs from the ideas and methods that Salter describes in his article. It requires curiosity, speculation, and creative thinking on your part. Indeed, you are encouraged to use your imagination in this exercise, as you observe a piece of San Diego’s built environment.

### **The assignment:**

#### **A. Pick a spot in San Diego to “read.”**

- Pick a place that will lend itself to this assignment, that is, an area that is built up in some way. In other words, avoid an empty expanse of land that lacks a human landscape.
- Narrow your spot to a manageable size. Rather than taking a huge panoramic view, choose instead a city or suburban block, an intersection, a section of a housing development, a corner in downtown, etc.
- *Do not* pick an area on campus to write about! That’s too easy...
- You are especially encouraged to pick an area of the city that is unfamiliar to you.

#### **B. Do the “OSAE, Can you see?” exercise on the spot you have chosen.**

1. Observation: visually analyze your area, and make order of the elements of the landscape. Begin with the obvious, then work toward a more comprehensive analysis. What do you see? Some things to consider are topography, transportation, private and public buildings, indications of people’s values and beliefs, their ethnicity, and signs of social status.  
If there are residences in this area, consider these questions: what type of housing typifies the area (apartments, single-family detached dwellings, etc.)? How do you think the area was developed (by speculators, individual architects, people who built their own homes)? What does the residential landscape (dwellings, cars, gardens) tell you about the social class (occupations, income) and the ethnicity of the people who live there now? Are there any indications that the original occupants were any different from current residents?
2. Speculation: speculate about why the landscape is ordered the way it is. What is the utility of this area, and why does it look this way? What do you think the “shapers” of this particular landscape had in mind when they designed, planned, and built this area? What is going on in this landscape now? Are there patterns of change or transition which you can detect?
3. Analysis: Investigate the history of your area by finding at least 6 sources on it (such as census data, newspaper articles, a history of San Diego that mentions this area, local city records, city ordinances, chamber of commerce records, Sanborn fire insurance maps, etc.). How do your sources help you make sense of your spot? Do they help you answer any questions that arose for you during the previous two steps? What seems to have happened to the area over time? What (if anything) has changed from its early years to today?  
You may also consult an excellent web page on San Diego: [www.sandag.cog.ca.us](http://www.sandag.cog.ca.us). However, if you use this, it will count as 1 source.
4. Evaluation: Does the human modification of this area work? For whom? Who does it leave out? How could this landscape be used more productively, or equitably? Is it a wise use of this land? Does this landscape have environmental, social, and economic merit?

**C. Write an essay** (8-10 pages, typed, double spaced) that discusses the four elements of the exercise. Instead of simply listing each element, your paper should flow as a smooth, clearly-written essay with a clear point of view. Try to formulate a thesis, and anchor your paper around this central idea as you write about the exercise itself. Be sure to identify the location of the spot you have chosen; a map would be helpful. Include a clear introduction and conclusion in your paper, and cite any written documents you utilize, using proper footnote style. All papers should include footnotes and a bibliography. Use a style book for guidelines of proper footnote and bibliography formats (Turabian is preferred). Please number your pages. Photographs, maps, etc. are encouraged – use them to illustrate points you are making in your paper.

**Optional readings:** Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, ch. 4; Grady Clay, *Close-Up: How to Read the American City*. Both are on reserve and may give you more food for thought.

