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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a course in urban history offered at Delta College in Michigan. A variety of techniques are utilized in teaching the course--lecture is relied on to acquaint students with the historian's role in the study of urban history, a field trip to an inner city is planned, short field assignments are used to acquaint students with their urban surroundings, and individual or team projects, wherein the real success of the course lies, are utilized to offer opportunities for individual creativity and inquiry in the area of urban history. Areas in which students have conducted research for their projects have included urban planning, welfare reform, rural vs. urban poverty, and ethnic and racial mobility. Among the more outstanding results achieved by students have been production of a film showing rural/urban contrasts, cooking of a representative "welfare recipient's dinner", and publication of a study of occupational mobility for Blacks in the city of Saginaw, Michigan. Additionally, local community histories have been produced, as have been slide presentations and oral history reports. While the intent of an urban history course has not been to supplant the more conventional U. S. history survey, it is nonetheless a realistic alternative capable of stimulating historical curiosity and constructive research and study. The course outline is appended. (JDS)

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URBAN HISTORY IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

As a course offering, "The History of Urban America" has proven to be a worthwhile stimulant to declining student interest in American history at Delta College, University Center, Michigan. While the broad spectrum of American history frequently limits areas of interest for the typical student, the study of America's urban past provides a new and distinctive perspective attractive to students living in both the city and rural areas. Moreover, urban studies can be a legitimate alternative to encourage meaningful inquiry and research all too often lacking in the survey course.

Several years of experience have shown that for students enrolled in an American urban history course, it is not necessary to complete as a prerequisite the introductory American survey. In fact, most participants in the urban history classes at Delta College who are of sophomore standing and possess satisfactory academic records, perform well and evidence a new found understanding of their urban environment. Many students who have already been turned-off by high school or college history surveys discover that if they are again to attempt historical study, a new approach, offering unique views and varied opportunities for research is necessary. And, since American cities develop and decay regardless of the political trends and national events studied in the survey, urban history encourages new techniques and methods of learning.

The study of Urban history in itself seemed appropriate to the geographical location of our college. Located in the middle of a corn field, the college attracts its share of rural, small-town students. Yet, within easy driving distance there are three major cities totaling over

400,000 people. All are experiencing urban decay and the problems of minority adjustment. Many students, especially older adults, ADC and welfare recipients, returning to school with a dedication to better understand and alleviate the poverty they experienced, enrolled in the urban history class. Urban students are attracted by the nature of the course itself. For the first time they could historically examine the environment in which they lived. To draw the interested rural students, the rural-urban conflict is used as a contrasting theme for the entire course.

The instructional methods are by no means revolutionary nor significantly innovative. A loose chronological approach organized the course. Lecturing is relied upon initially to acquaint the students with the historian's role in the study of urban America. By the fourth or fifth week of the semester, the lectures are gradually phased out and replaced by discussion sessions focusing upon assigned readings. Student reaction and participation has been favorable in response to such monographs as Kenneth Lockridge's, New England Town, and Robert Dykstra's, The Cattle Towns. By far, the most stimulating sessions resulted from reading Allan Spear's, Black Chicago. Gaming, (Ghetto, The Cities Game, and Blacks and Whites) discussions, films, (note the Colonial Williamsburgh series), and individual oral book reports on late nineteenth century novels supplement the day-to-day fare.

To get the students out of the classroom and into the field, a visit to Saginaw's inner city is planned each semester. This trip, lasting approximately five to six hours, was organized deliberately to acquaint rural, small town, and suburban students with the diversity of the ghetto. Originally, the excursion idea sprang from the accidental discovery that many students who had grown up in the surrounding rural

and suburban fringes, had never trespassed into Black neighborhoods or the decaying inner city. The class visited neighborhood houses, Model Cities offices, senior citizen centers, renewal and rehabilitation neighborhoods, and job training centers. The experience of meeting many dedicated people working to alleviate the conditions of poverty, modified many students racially prejudicial attitudes. The field trip has repeatedly justified itself as an eye-opening opportunity seldom experienced in the classroom.

Other short assignments are also utilized to acquaint students with their own urban surroundings. Students are asked to walk through a cemetery and determine the relative prosperity, ethnicity, occupations, age of population, epidemics and disasters descriptive of a particular community. Another short assignment consists of a neighborhood survey to determine the historic source of wealth and the early economic base for a particular community. These valuable field techniques enable students to relate history to their everyday lives.

The real success of the Urban History offering lies not so much in the structural classroom procedures but with the creativity shown by students on individual or team projects. As a part of the student's first written examination, groups of three students are assigned the task of designing a colonial town. Utilizing written directions based on those given to his agents in the New World by William Penn in 1682, the students are required to design graphically a realistic colonial town. Problems of defense, poverty, transportation, communication, and planning demand consideration and conceptual planning. Upon completion of their plan, the group is asked to explain their schematic

before the class. Accompanying each design a brief written prospectus is submitted explaining the town plan and the considerations that motivated the final design.

Class discussion of plans for a colonial town not only brings the class and individual groups together, but provides a worthwhile alternative to conventional testing. The students become aware of the value of social and geographically structural planning. They discover why the church and governmental buildings are located in the center of the town; how American cities geared their planning to commerce and industry and ignored their social responsibility of aiding the poor, elderly, and feeble. It is easily realized that much of what our cities reflect physically and socially had their origin in the structure and plan of the colonial settlement.

In addition to the above as part of the term assignment, students are encouraged to pursue major research projects reflecting individual interest. Urban planning, welfare reform, rural v. urban poverty, and ethnic and racial mobility studies have all been areas researched. Student projects are started early in the semester and days are periodically set aside for progress reports. These reports maintain individual enthusiasm and in some instances create anticipation within the class for final results. By far, the most rewarding and perhaps valuable period of the entire semester is the last weeks of the class when the projects are presented.

A few of the outstanding projects developed by the students give insight into the nature of research undertaken in the community college urban history course. Students enrolled in the class over the last few years have created such presentations as an eight millimeter film showing

rural v. urban contrast within our state. These particular students traveled extensively and utilized over sixty rolls of film to create an outstanding visual record depicting rural life and its institutions in contrast to urban existence. Another group conducted a "Buying Habits Survey" of a recently completed nearby shopping mall. The results indicating amount of time and money spent, means of transportation to and from the mall, shopper's hometowns, etc., were computerized and mailed to local governmental and planning agencies.

Other students set out to plan and cook a representative welfare recipient's dinner. They determined that the daily food allowance per individual in the college area on welfare was thirty-three cents per meal. Upon collecting this sum from each class member, they proceeded, with the cooperation of the College to put on a typical welfare dinner for the entire class. The dinner consisted of meatloaf, jello, instant potatoes, bread and butter, and powdered milk to drink. This project attracted local T.V. coverage. Later the students were asked to duplicate the dinner for a state-wide gathering of educators meeting on campus to discuss the historical treatment of poverty in the state.

Lastly, not to neglect historical scholarship, social and residential mobility studies were completed by several students. One Black student, stimulated by Spear's book, attempted to duplicate Spear's residential analysis of Chicago for the city of Saginaw. He accompanied this residential study with an occupational mobility chart for Blacks in late nineteenth century Saginaw. His research was the first such effort undertaken in Saginaw and resulted in the publication of his findings.

Outside of these specifics, the classes have produced some worthwhile local histories of nearby communities, slide presentations of urban

pollution, and oral history reports. Guest speakers are sometimes brought in by the students, and participate in class presentations. The projects thus stimulate creativity, involve the local communities, and in the end, frequently serve as a catalyst to motivate students who in the past could not relate to historical studies.

Evaluation of the course and instruction is conducted through computer analyzed questionnaires utilized within the history department. The form is not particularly unique; however, written comments evaluating texts, projects, and field trips prove especially insightful.

In the last three years, the urban history course has become a requirement of the Urban Public Service curriculum and a strongly recommended elective within the Law Enforcement program. Consequently, enrollment has steadily increased and averages approximately sixty students per semester.

Because many students take the urban history course as part of the Urban Public Service and Law Enforcement programs, I have recently modified the format of the offering to emphasize the social aspects of urban history. Attempts have been made to redirect the course toward the study of the development and attempted historical solutions to specific urban social problems. Howard Chudacoff's The Evolution of American Urban Society, has proven to be a valuable text in providing social insights into urban problems.

While the intent of offering an urban history course in the community college is not to supplant the conventional United States survey, it none-the-less becomes a realistic alternative that can stimulate historical curiosity and provoke worthwhile study and research. Because urban history is a relatively new, specialized discipline and historians themselves are not in agreement on what exactly "urban history" is, to

undertake a formal course offering provides opportunities for diversification and classroom innovation. Further, urban studies not only encourages instructional creativity, but also lends itself to stimulate independent learning on the part of the student. Few courses, other than urban history, offer the potential for research into local history. As suggested above, there are exceptional research materials to be utilized and opportunities for discovery in the city that are rarely exploited. In the end, perhaps the study of the institutions, values, and traditions of our cities may awaken students to their responsibility of developing an understanding of our nation's past.

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HISTORY OF URBAN AMERICA

History 244
J. W. Kilar
G-121

Winter, 1977

OBJECTIVES:

The word urban has come in recent years to have almost the value of a talisman in academic as well as political circles. It lends an air of concern and relevance to any discourse. Sociologists, geographers, political scientists, and economists have in our day subjected city and metropolitan phenomena to intensive examination from any points of view. All agree that the city as a societal construct has played a pervasive role in the history of mankind. Thus because of its contemporary nature and its historical influence obviously little overt justification is demanded prior to undertaking a study of the American city.

Thus, visibly aware of the significance of a study of American urbanization, we must establish an approach that will enable us to readily synthesize the historical evidence that has been discovered about urban America. Basically, since all cities develop and decay separately, unrelated to each other, it is useless to look at the history or urbanization from the familiar chronological approach to historical studies. Rather, a conceptual pattern that fits into a very loose chronological order will serve as an outline of study. In the process of synthesizing this historical evidence it is anticipated that the end results will create a human understanding and awareness of the role the city has played in American society. An awareness that may enable us to better our own urban environment and solve the challenges of modern day urbanization.

Objectives: Class Outline

In order to focus on the historical origin of contemporary social problems, the class outline attempts to approach specified areas of historical social concern in the loose chronological order noted above. Thus, by looking at such topics as planning, police and fire protection, welfare, housing, race, etc., we can lend a significant relevance to those problems demanding modern solutions. Only by understanding the past can we hope to avoid mistakes of the future. And, because urban studies has so long been dominated by those trained in technology and not in social concerns, it is one of the most obvious disciplines where the social sciences have not been applied nor the lesson of history heeded. Hopefully, therefore, if nothing else, as students seeking to change urban society, we can understand to avoid repetitive, archaic solutions of the past.

Specifically, the topics of concern traced throughout the American urban history will be:

1. Planning
2. Social Development
   a. Police, Crime and Fire Protection
   b. Welfare or Aid for the Poor
   c. Housing
   d. Political Structure and Growth
   e. Transportation
   f. Racial and Ethnic Adjustments to the City

Textbooks:

Howard P. Chudachoff, The Evolution of American Urban Society
Allan H. Spear, Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Chetto

Class Attendance:

Students are expected to attend class regularly. Periodic attendance will be taken. Since a good part of this course involves class discussion and participation, frequent absence and non-participation can only be detrimental to a student's standing.

Tests:

There will be two major tests plus a final examination. Test dates are indicated on the attached class outline. The tests will be a combination of essay, projects and short answers. Periodic quizzes over readings will also be given.

Make-Up Tests:

If a student because of severe illness is unable to take an examination on the assigned date, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor and schedule a make-up within a week of the missed test.

Grading Procedure:

Two exams	200 total points
One final examination	150 total points
Projects & Class Assigrments	100 total points
Discussion & Quizzes	50 points

Grading Scale:

500 - 450 . . . . A
450 - 400 . . . . B
400 - 350 C
350 - 300 C
299 - . . . . E

Class Projects:

Students are required to do a group or individual projects. Generally these will be in a variety of different media. These topics that may be pursued will be assigned. Further elaboration and development will take place lateriin the semester.

CLASS OUTLINE

Chronology	Concept coverage	Readings, Lectures*, Activities and Exams:
1st week	Introduction: a. Explanation of course b. What is Urban Histoyy c. What is a city	Lectures: a. "What is Urban History"* b. "What is a City" c. "The Origin of Cities"* - slides Read: Schlesinger, The City in American History (hand-out)
2nd - 4th weeks I. The City in Early America: From Colonial Time to 1850 a. the beginnings and early solutions to urban problems 1630-1750 b. The American Revolution and the City: 1750-1800	I. The City: A. Planning the Colonial Town; sectional differences B. Political Structure C. Housing D. Environmental Concerns E. Protection - Internal & External II. The People: A. Poverty & poor relief B. Class structure C. Crime and vice	Lectures: a. "A Walk Through the Colonial Town" b. "Planning in Colonial America" Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 1 Warner, "Philadelphia, the Private City" (hand-out) 1st Exam: Group Test: Planning a Colonial Town (See special instructions)
5th week II. The Rise of a Nation of Cities: 1800-1865	I. The Social Impact of Urbanization	Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 2 Lecture: "N.Y. from Small Town to Urban Center"
6th - 9th weeks III. The City in the Industrial Age, 1850-1920 a. The complexities of the late 19th century city, 1865-1890	I. The collapse of city: A. The City: 1. Planning 2. Transportation 3. Industrialization	Read: Miller: Chapter 3 Tarr, "Transportation and Moral Reform; From City to Suburb

6th - 9th weeks cont'd.	b. Life in the 19th century city, 1880-1900	B. The People 1. Migration, Old and New 2. Housing 3. Health 4. Poverty and Social Mobility 5. The Creation of the Black Ghetto: the Blackman's adjustment to the city	Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 4 Handlin, "Generations . . ." Thernstrom, Migration and Social Mobility Film: "A Nation of Immigrants" Read: Spear, Black Chicago
	c. The response to the complexities of life in the 19th century city, 1890-1920. Reformism:	C. The political response 1. Bossism 2. Reformism	Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 5 Shannon, "Age of the Bosses"
	d.	D. The Social response 1. Housing 2. Policing the city E. The Physical response 1. Environment 2. Planning	Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 6 Lecture: "Tenement Housing Reform" "Planning in the Progressive Era" Exam #2
10th - 12th weeks	IV. The City in the 20th Century 1920-1974 A. The Emergence of an Urban Nation	A. Continued attempts to solve growing urban complexities: 1. New Urban Growth 2. New Initiative & New Politics	Read: Chaudacoff, Chapter 7 Schmitt, "Back to Nature" (hand-out)
13th - 15th weeks	V. The City in the 20th Century cont'd. B. The federal government takes a hand in the city, 1920-1950	A. The People 1. Poverty 2. Housing 3. Police 4. Environment B. The City 1. Suburbia 2. The future city	Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 8 Rothmann, "Poor People in Depression" Read: Chudacoff, Chapter 9 Time "The New American Plurality" Progressive "New Towns for Old" Final Exam

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