

**University of the Western Cape
Department of Geography, Environmental Studies & Tourism
GES732: African Urbanisms**

Second Semester 2023

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| Course Convener: | Dr Erin Torkelson Office: Old Arts 143 Email: etorkelson@uwc.ac.za |
| Lectures: | Tuesday, 10:20 – 12 Venue: Old Arts 143 |
| Office Hours | Tuesday, 9:00-10:00 & Wednesday, directly after class 11:05-12:00 |

OVERVIEW:

This is an honours seminar that sets out to examine new frontiers of African urban theory and research. We use Henri Lefebvre's foundational writings on urban revolution as our jumping off point, and proceed weekly with an examination of diverse approaches to the study of power, difference and inequality in the contemporary African city. Each week will begin with a foundational assumption or concept related to urban space, before exploring how ethnographic and critical geographical research can push the boundaries of that assumption/concept and reveal emergent political possibilities and ways of rethinking the city. The course interrogates the limitations of Northern urban theory, and the often unacknowledged contributions of studies from the global South. The aim of the course is for students to come away with a critical 'toolkit' for understanding intersections of space, power, and difference, and some of the methodological openings and risks of current research in the human sciences.

However, at this stage, only some of our weeks have readings. That is by design. This is a preliminary syllabus and it is labelled preliminary because it needs your input. In particular, I want to use this course to help deepen your understanding African urban theory and research as it relates to your Honours Dissertations. On the first day, we will discuss your dissertation projects and develop reading lists for your projects. We will use these reading lists to fill in our weeks in accordance with your interests and preferences. Student will be in charge of leading the discussion during the weeks pertaining to their research. This will enable each participant to develop their expertise on a particular issue in conjunction with colleagues. All students must read for every week, regardless of the subject. This course is a collective enterprise and we will read together to support one another.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

At the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Understand the globalization process and its impact on urban development in African cities;
- Critically think about urban socio-spatial issues in a theoretically grounded manner;
- Understand a selection of themes that represent significant foci in current urban geographical research, emphasizing the African context: these include aspects on social transformation, spatial planning, and urban change;
- Demonstrate both academic writing skills and visual and spatial literacy at the postgraduate level;
- Familiarize yourself with official urban planning and development policies that affect lives of urban populations in various ways.

MAIN CONTENT:

This module will focus on broadening your knowledge and critical skills in engaging with the field of Urban Geography. The content will include:

- Urbanism, ecology and infrastructure
- Classification, constitution and experience of urban space
- Reworking urban economies
- Locality, mobility and livelihoods
- Contested social spaces
- Urban governance
- Globalization and urban change

ASSESSMENT:

The final mark for this module is a combination of continuous assessment as well as a final exam. The ratio of class mark to exam mark is 50:50. Your final mark is comprised of the following:

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| Discussion Participation | 20% of CAM | Total contributes 50% of final mark |
| Reading Journals | 40% of CAM | |
| Class Presentations | 24% of CAM | |
| Exam: Literature Review | | Exam mark contributes 50% of final mark |

Discussion Participation: You are expected to attend all scheduled classes having thoughtfully completed each day's assigned readings. Participation includes responding to instructor questions, participating in conversations and activities, and listening respectfully to other members of the class.

4 Reading Journals: We will be reading a lot of (sometimes dense) material this semester. I do not expect that you will remember or understand every single detail of the texts. Instead, I want you to read for comprehension of the major claims and broad themes of different kinds of texts. To focus your efforts, I ask that you read with several questions in mind and attempt to answer these questions in **300-500 word reading journals. Journals should be posted on Ikamva two hours prior to our meeting time. In the weeks you present (see below), you will submit your presentation instead of a reading journal.**

- First, what are the central claims of the text? What is the author trying to prove, disprove?
- Second, how does the author support their claims? What kinds of evidence does the author use?
- Third, what are the implicit and explicit assumptions of the text? What does the author presume to be true?
- Fourth, how does this reading link to others? Does the author agree with other authors, or disagree?
- I also invite you to develop your own questions as you engage the material. For example, what was unclear about the work? What was unsatisfactory or unconvincing? What else might be relevant for understanding this issue?

My hope is that these reading journals will help you develop a system to take notes as you read. They will also form the basis of our discussions. Most importantly, they will form the basis of your literature review for your dissertation.

Class Presentations: All students will be responsible for giving three concise presentations (no more than 15 minutes) to help guide our discussions at the beginning of our sessions. The presentations are not meant to

be a summary of the material we read, for everyone will have read it. Rather, identify conceptual commonalities or differences among the week's readings; analytically engage specific modes of inquiry, argument, or fieldwork practice; and raise what you take to be critical questions for our collective to explore.

Literature Review: Students will be responsible for writing a 2500 word literature review. This should be a first attempt at your literature review for your dissertation project. I want to see you use the literature we have read together in this class, alongside other independent reading to begin to frame your dissertation. The best literature reviews not only tell the reader what's been written on your subject before, but what your contribution will be (i.e. how your dissertation will be a little bit different from what's been written before). Your literature review will need an argument to let your reader know how you are building on existing work and adding something new and fresh.

KEY DATES

- Literature Review – 1st Section for Peer Review: October 2
- Literature Review – 2nd Section for Peer Review: October 9
- Literature Review – Full Draft for Peer Review: October 16
- Literature Review – Final Literature Review: October 30

COMMUNICATION:

All communication regarding the module will be issued via iKamva. Please check your UWC email and visit our iKamva site regularly.

REQUIRED READINGS:

There is not a prescribed textbook for this module. We will design the first six weeks of the course together around reading you would like to do for your dissertation. It is expected that you will read the required readings in preparation for lectures. We will choose two or three readings per week.

ABSENCE AND LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:

If you are forced to miss a class test or assessment task submission due to illness or other valid reasons, you must submit a completed ***Application for Late Assessment*** found here: <https://forms.gle/e5EZx9x4BTia7m8C7> along with a scanned valid original doctor's certificate or other accompanying documentary proof within five (5) days of the date/time of the test or assessment task due date. Applications received within this time period will be considered for the opportunity to write a sick test or will be given additional time at the discretion of the lecturer for the assessment task submission. Students will be informed of the outcome of their application. Please note that students are not guaranteed the opportunity for a sick test. Only approved applications will have the opportunity.

PLAGIARISM:

The UWC Plagiarism policy states that "*Plagiarism is (a) the appropriation of formulations, ideas or words from the work of another person without acknowledging the author(s) and the source; and (b) the appropriation of work from someone else's assignment, test or research paper without acknowledging such other person and/or source*". If you are suspected of plagiarism, you will be asked to "attend" a meeting with your lecturer. If confirmed, you will sign a declaration that will be kept on file for departmental use. In addition, you will be asked to resubmit within 3 days to achieve a maximum mark of 50%. Repeat offenders will be recommended to the proctor for disciplinary action.

**** Plagiarism includes the use of new AI technologies like Chat GPT as well as things like Grammarly that help smooth out language.**

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND TUTORIALS:

WEEK 1: July 25 – Introduction

Readings:

- Amin, Ash. 2013. “The Urban Condition: A Challenge to Social Science,” *Public Culture* 25(2).
- Sassen, Saskia. 2010. “The City: Its Return as a Lens for Social Theory,” *City, Culture and Society*, 1: 3-11.

WEEK 2: August 1 – The Urban Revolution

We begin this week with Henri Lefebvre’s seminal theorization of the urban revolution and the various ways it has been interpreted and critiqued. Key here is the role of land/real estate as what Lefebvre calls the “secondary circuit” of capital, or what David Harvey discusses in terms of the spatial fix. We will also raise questions related to more popular political and policy dimensions of the term.

Readings:

- Smith, Neil. 2003. Forward. In Lefebvre, H., *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. vii-xxiii.
- Lefebvre, Henri. 2003. “From the City to Urban Strategy,” from *The Urban Revolution*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp.1-22.
- Harvey, David. 2001. “Globalization and the ‘spatial fix,’” *Geographische Revue* 3(2), 23-30.

WEEK 3: August 8 – The Right to the City

This week we consider the contemporary applicability of the “right to the city” for understanding urban social movements. Henri Lefebvre, for whom “the right to the city is like a cry and a demand... for a transformed and renewed right to urban life,” is our point of departure, but we also examine how other urban theorists have taken up and modified his ideas, including David Harvey’s most recent book on urban protest. We will also aim to compare “the right to the city,” theorized largely in terms of urban processes in the global North, with a wider range of resistance strategies from societies with different state, legal, and property regimes.

Readings:

- Lefebvre, Henri. 1996. “The right to the city,” from *Writings on Cities*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 147-160.
- Harvey, David. 2012. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. New York: Verso. Introduction.
- Bayat, Asef. 2000. “From ‘dangerous classes’ to ‘quiet rebels’: Politics of the urban subaltern in the global south,” *International Sociology* 15(3).

WEEK 4: August 15 – Youth Politics – Michelle

- Fenton, Wafer and Fitchett, “Youth Mobility in a Post-Apartheid City”

- Jeffery, *Timepass*
- Nutall, “Stylinzing the Self”

WEEK 5: August 22 – Urban Apartheid – Nokuthula

- Mabin and Smit, “Reconstructing South Africa’s Cities”
- Wilson and Mafeje, *Langa*
- Makhulu, *Making Freedom*

WEEK 6: August 29 – Intersectionality/Racial Capitalism – Micheala

- Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, “Toward a Field of Intersectionality Studies”
- Yuval-Davis, “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics”
- Kundnani, “Racial Capitalism”

WEEK 7: September 5 – BREAK

- Enjoy a rest this week!

WEEK 8: September 12 – Transport and Infrastructure - Micheala

- Von Schnitzler, “Citizenship Prepaid”
- Simone, “People as Infrastructure”
- Weizman, “Hollow Land”

WEEK 9: September 19 – Urban Citizenship and Belonging - Michelle

- Das, “State, Citizenship and the Urban Poor”
- Holston, *Insurgent Citizenship*
- Cresswell, “Toward a Politics of Mobility”

WEEK 10: September 26 – Museums, Memory and Memorialization – Nokuthula

- Rose-Redwood, Alderman, Azaryahu, “Collective Memory and the Politics of Urban Space”
- Mitchell, “Monuments, Memorials and the Politics of Memory”
- Legg, “Contesting and Surviving Memory”

WEEK 11: October 3

- Bring rough draft of your first body of literature

WEEK 12: October 10

- Bring rough draft of your second body of literature

WEEK 13: October 17 -

- Bring a draft of your literature review for peer review

EXAM: October 30

- Submit full literature review to Ikamva