

**HH2046
Urban History
Semester 2 (AY2024/25)**

Seminar: Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m.
Venue: LHS-TR+28, LHS-B2-05, The Hive

Instructor: Asst. Prof. Michael Yeo
Email: m.yeo@ntu.edu.sg
Office: SHHK #05-20
Office Hours: By appointment; email me to arrange for a consultation if required.

Course Outline

This course is an introduction to the discipline of urban history. We will explore the nature, development, and experience of urban spaces in the past, drawing from diverse geographies and periods. The course is structured around the multidisciplinary character of urban history, with each week focusing on different approaches, debates, and themes in this field. This knowledge will equip you with a set of intellectual tools that you can use to develop your own research into the urban past and present.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

1. Compare, contrast, and combine major approaches in urban history.
2. Identify and evaluate the temporal and spatial contexts of urbanism.
3. Investigate and explain various factors in the birth, growth, stagnation, and death of urban spaces.
4. Understand how people have experienced urban life in different places and periods.
5. Collect and synthesize large quantities of historical evidence about a town or city.

Class Structure

Seminars will be carried out in person and will take place on Tuesdays, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m., interspersed with short breaks. You will be assigned a group at the beginning of the first class, which you will have to sit with for the rest of the semester.

Course Assessment

You will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Class Participation:	10%
Group Presentation:	10%
Poster Essay (24 February):	20%
Source Analysis Test (1 April):	30%
Take-Home Exam (22 April):	30%

Class Participation

You are required to attend every seminar, having read all the assigned weekly readings to the extent that you are prepared to discuss them. Your participation in class will be assessed by the depth, frequency, and quality of your contributions to seminar discussions.

Group Presentation

With your groupmates, you will give a presentation during one of the seminars (either on Weeks 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10). The group presentation should offer a response to the prompt in each of the weekly seminars, which can be found in the class schedule, in relation to *at least two* cities and *no more than five* cities. Your group can present either: (1) a joint response agreeing or disagreeing with the prompt; or (2) a debate between different opinions held by members of the group. The group presentation should also: (1) offer a brief history of each city referred to; (2) allow for each group member to speak for five minutes; and (3) include a question-and-answer session. The weekly group presentations are important because the Take-Home Exam will be based on a similar format: you will have to write essays in response to a series of prompts, drawing on the histories of different cities. Do note that your presentation skills will be assessed individually, so the scores of each group member might not be uniform. Your group is required to submit any slides used for the group presentation.

Poster Essay

You will design a poster for any city or town *and* write an 800-word essay explaining the details in your poster. Please select an urban centre that is *not* a capital city in the present day. Your poster should refer to the history and the historical landmarks of your chosen urban centre, and your essay should draw upon relevant secondary sources. This assignment will be due by 11:59 p.m. on 24 February 2025 on NTU Learn. You can find detailed instructions for this assignment on NTU Learn.

Source Analysis Test

In 1 April 2025, you will take a three-hour test that will assess your ability to analyse sources used for urban history. You will choose two out of six sources—one textual and one visual—to analyse and to write two separate essays about. Each essay should be at least 300 words and no more than 1,000 words in length. Although this test will take place during the seminar, you will be required to write your answers on a Word document and submit it on NTU Learn, so please remember to have your laptop ready. There are no plans for a make-up test; if you are absent for this test, you will likely receive a score of zero. We will practice how to analyse sources for urban history during some of the weekly seminars, which will prepare you for this test.

Take-Home Exam

In the final week of the semester, you will be given a week to complete an exam from 12:00 p.m. on 15 April 2025 to 11:59 p.m. on 22 April 2025. You will write two 1,000-word essays, each in response to one of six statements related to the themes covered in the weekly seminars. Your essays should: (1) refer to *at least two* different cities; (2) have an argument anchored in historical evidence; (3) consider change over time; and (4) consider variations between different cities. You will be required to write your answers on a Word document and submit it on NTU Learn. Your essays must draw upon secondary sources that are relevant and properly cited.

Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1 (14 January)

Course Introduction

Week 2 (21 January)

What is Urban History?

Readings:

- Shane Ewen, *What is Urban History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), 1–9. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Introduction: Why Urban History?”.]
 - Charles Tilly, “What Good is Urban History?,” *Journal of Urban History* 22, no. 6 (1996): 702–19.
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Week 3 (28 January)

Economy

Themes: agriculture, commerce, the origins of cities, trade, urban economic growth

Readings:

- David L. Stone, “Economy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History*, ed. Peter Clark (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 127–46.
 - Richard C. Wade, *The Rise of Western Cities, 1790–1830* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 39–71. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “The Economic Base”.]
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Week 4 (4 February)

Environment

Themes: environmental degradation, hinterlands, resource endowments, urban environmental history

Readings:

- Martin V. Melosi, “Humans, Cities, and Nature: How Do Cities Fit in the Material World?,” *Journal of Urban History* 6, no. 1 (2010): 3–21.
- William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 207–59. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Annihilating Space: Meat”.]

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Week 5 (11 February)

Networks

Themes: connectedness, global urban history, regulation, transnational urbanism, urban networks

Readings:

- Nicolas Kenny, “From Body and Home to Nation and World: The Varying Scales of Transnational Urbanism in Montreal and Brussels at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” *Urban History* 36, no. 2 (2009): 223–242.
- Kris Alexanderson, *Subversive Seas: Anticolonial Networks Across the Twentieth Century Dutch Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 137–67. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Pan-Islamism Abroad: Regulation and Resistance in the Middle East”.]

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Week 6 (18 February)

Power

Themes: colonial cities, ethnicity, frontier cities, imperial metropolises, race, segregation

Readings:

- Brett Rushforth, “Insinuating Empire: Indians, Smugglers, and the Imperial Geography of Eighteenth-Century Montreal,” in *Frontier Cities: Encounters at the Crossroads of Empire*, ed. Jay Gitlin, Barbara Berglund, and Adam Arenson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 49–65.
- Mikko Toivanen, “The Colonial City in Motion: Managing Ethnic Diversity through Public Processions in Singapore and Batavia, 1840–1870,” *Asian Ethnicity* 24, no. 4 (2023): 523–543.

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Week 7 (25 February)

Modernization

Themes: colonial modernity, industrialization, modern culture, technological change, urban growth

Readings:

- Marie-Claire Bergère, *Shanghai: China’s Gateway to Modernity*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 242–84. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Haipai and the Ideal of Modernity”.]
- Johny A. Khusyairi and Freek Colombijn, “Moving at a Different Velocity: The Modernization of Transportation and Social Differentiation in Surabaya in the 1920s,” in *Cars, Conduits, and Kampongs: The Modernization of the Indonesian City, 1920–1960*, ed. Freek Colombijn and Joost Coté (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 251–271.

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Term Break
3 to 7 March

Week 8 (11 March)

Gender

Themes: bodies and cities, gender roles, gendered practices, public and private spaces

Readings:

- Maureen Flanagan, “Private Needs, Public Space: Public Toilets Provision in the Anglo-Atlantic Patriarchal City: London, Dublin, Toronto and Chicago,” *Urban History* 41, no. 2 (2014): 265–290.
- Georgina Hickey, *Breaking the Gender Code: Women and Urban Public Space in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2023), 95–118. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “When Girls Became Women: Confronting Exclusion and Harassment in the Long 1960s”.]

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Week 9 (18 March)

Order

Themes: control, public order, policing, urban governance

Readings:

- Prashant Kidambi, “The Ultimate Masters of the City: Police, Public Order and the Poor in Colonial Bombay, c. 1890–1914,” *Crime, History and Societies* 8, no. 1 (2004): 27–47.
- Julio Capó Jr., *Welcome to Fairyland: Queer Miami before 1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 159–196. [These pages refer to the chapter titled, “Passing Through Miami’s Queer World”.]

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Week 10 (25 March)

Poverty

Themes: inequality, migration, poverty, urban population growth

Readings:

- Haydon Cherry, *Down and Out in Saigon: Stories of the Poor in a Colonial City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 1–53. [These pages refer to the chapters titled, “Prologue”, “Paulatim Crescam”, and “A Woman Who Ran Away”.]

Group Presentation Prompt:

“XXX”

Week 11 (1 April)

Source Analysis Test

The Source Analysis Test will take place this week during the seminar. Over three hours, you will choose two out of six sources to analyse, one textual and one visual. There are no plans for a make-up test; if you are absent for this test, you will likely receive a score of zero. Please have your laptop and charger ready; this is a computer-based test, so you will submit your essay responses via NTU Learn.

Week 12 (8 April)

Revision Week

The seminar this week consists of a brief lecture recapitulating the course. Please feel free to use the time after the lecture for consultations on the Take-Home Exam.

Week 13 (15 April)

Exam Week

There will be no seminar this week. The Take-Home Exam will be released this week, so please take this time to complete this assessment.

Course Policies and Student Responsibilities

General

You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with the information in this document, especially assignment deadlines and requirements. You are also responsible for finding out about any course-related announcements if you miss any seminars. You are expected to complete all pre-class readings, attend all seminars punctually, and participate in all tutorial discussions. You should adhere to accepted scholarly practices in all of your written work; any source material used should be properly cited.

Absenteeism

This course requires you to be in class to contribute to discussions and team presentations. These in-class activities make up a significant portion of your course grade. Absence from class without a valid reason will thus affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include: falling ill, which must be supported by a medical certificate; or participating in an NTU-approved activity, which must be supported by an excuse letter from a relevant body; or a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by documentation. There will be no make-up opportunities for group presentations. If you miss a seminar, you must inform the instructor before the start of the seminar by email.

Late Policy

Assignments submitted after their assigned deadlines will be penalised by the deduction of 5% of the maximum score for each 24-hour period after the submission date. For example, assignments submitted 2 hours late will be subject to a 5% penalty, assignments submitted 26 hours late will be subject to a 10% penalty, and so on. If you require an extension, please request for it at least a day before the assignment is due with a valid reason. Valid reasons include: falling ill, which must be supported by a medical certificate; participating in an NTU-approved activity, which must be supported by an excuse letter from a relevant body; a serious extenuating circumstance, which should be supported by relevant documentation; or any personal reasons that might be conveyed in confidence to the instructor.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Universities consider using the works of others without properly acknowledging that use to be “cheating”; this includes contract cheating or injudicious use of artificial intelligence (AI). What counts as “injudicious use” largely refers, but is not limited, to using AI to write entire chunks of your work. Egregious cases of such behaviour will result in a score of zero for the assignment in question. In accordance with school policy, the instructor will also report such cases to the university to be placed on record in your academic file. Learn how to cite the work of others properly. If in doubt, ask.

Word Limits

All assignments have clearly stated word limits and instructions on what is included in the word count. Please adhere to this word limit. If your assignment exceeds the maximum word limit by 10%, it will be penalised by the deduction of 10% of the maximum score. If your assignment exceeds the maximum word limit by 15%, it will incur further penalties.

Course Style Guide

Please cite your sources according to the notes and bibliography system of the Chicago Manual of Style. For all assignments, please select an easily readable font, such as Times New Roman or Garamond, and refrain from using Arial or Helvetica. The main body of the text should be in font size 12pt, and the footnotes should be in font size 10pt. The main body of the text should be in double spacing, with footnotes in single spacing.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the feedback and suggestions offered by the students who previously participated in HH2046 during: Semesters 1 and 2, AY2022/23; Semester 1, AY2023/24.

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