# Urban cultural studies

## Prof. Carla Sedini

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

What are ‘cities’? What is ‘the urban’? Why are they important? What is the connection between urban and culture? How they influence each other? As the French critical theorist Henri Lefebvre argues, to understand what a body is capable of, we must use ‘the vast store of non- formal knowledge embedded in poetry, music, dance, and theatre’ (Lefebvre 1994: 407 in Masterson-Algar and Vilaseca, 2015). Globalization infused the idea of arts, culture, and creativity as de-localized; however, the creators of arts, artifacts, and - in general - ideas, who work in the so-called Cultural and Creative sectors, are socially, historically, and geographically contextualized and influenced. The course will focus on the urban evolution and cultural urban processes and manifestations from a sociological and geographical perspective, with particular attention to Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and Creative Cities. Design will be observed as a particular case of CCI. it will be presented both as a discipline of study and applied research and as the creative sector itself, which more than others contribute to urban regeneration and cultural planning processes.

Specific course aims are:

To learn how cities are built upon economic forces and social structures such as race, class and government policies influence, and how that has changed over time;

To locate culture and creativity in the current global economic landscape and analyze their organizational peculiarities, by introducing the main models that represent the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) and the consequent definition of Creative City;

To understand and learn how to study cities using a qualitative research model;

To collectively reflect on the future of our cities in light of the emergency that we are experiencing.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

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Debate, discuss and understand global phenomena which characterize our urban scenarios

Understand the different definitions of CCIs

Analyze critically different policy choices regarding the above, applying knowledge about causal relations and ingrained assumptions about the opportunities and the limits of culture- and creativity-led local development

Improve their knowledge of the representations of cities through arts and design

Analyze creative and cultural products concerning cities

Exercise their communication and learning skills through a guided discussion about critical issues and workgroups.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course starts providing sociological definitions of the concept of city, urban, and culture and their interrelation. Particular attention will be given to urban evolutions, specifically to the characteristics which defined the Fordist City compared to the Post-Fordist City. Globalization processes will be considered to address the issue of most recent urban and cultural changes. In light of these changes, the course will provide an introduction to the field of urban/regional studies and economic geography, and within them will analyze the approaches connecting the arts, culture, and creativity to urban and regional development. Cultural and Creative industries and the concept of Creative City will be presented and analyzed according to diverse theories of reference.

The course will dedicate specific attention to the representations of cities as also a mean to investigate and study them; comics, photography and design sectors will be specific CCIs taken into consideration; the first two sectors, in particular, will be used as an example for representing and analyze cities; the second, will be mainly oriented towards a deeper understanding of this specific economic sector and moreover, it will be presented as an essential planning discipline for strategic urban development.

More specifically, course contents are the following:

Cultural studies in urban contexts

Local development, clusters and regional systems of innovation

Globalization and urban centrality

Cities representations: comics and photography

Social research and visual sociology

From the Fordist to the Post-fordist city

Cultural and Creative Industries and the Creative City

Design – cities – events

***READING LIST[[1]](#footnote-1)***

Fraser, B. *Visible cities, global comics: urban images and spatial form*, University Press of Mississippi, 2019 [selected chapters].

LeGates, R.T. and Stout, F. *The City Reader*, Seventh edition. New York, NY : Routledge, 2020. [selected chapters].

Martinotti, G. (1996). *Four Populations: Human Settlements and Social Morphology in the Contemporary Metropolis. European Review*, 4, pp 3-23

Molotch, H. *Where stuff comes from: How toasters, toilets, cars, computers and many other things come to be as they are.* Routledge, 2004. [selected chapters].

Scott, A.J.  *The cultural economy of cities: essays on the geography of image-producing industries,* Sage, 2000 [selected chapters].

Additional materials will be uploaded on BlackBoard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The teaching methods will be based both on: in-presence, streaming, and video-recorded lessons. Much attention will be dedicated to theories, but also to real case studies and applied research. In addition to this, guest speakers will be invited to provide additional knowledge on specific issues. Practical exercises will be assigned to be carried on both individually and in groups. When possible, in-class discussions will be organized to give students the possibility to share their own opinions and exercise their communication capabilities. Creative and cultural resources, such as comics and movies, will be assigned as a study material.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*Attending students:*

The assessment will be based on:

1. Final oral exam (75% of each student’s individual grade). The exam will be based on the arguments covered in the teaching materials the instructor will discuss in class and publish on BB. The topics will cover both theoretical models and concrete applications/development of cases or models.

2. Final group assignment (25% of each student’s individual grade): students will be required to carry out one major assignment in team. All attending students will be part of one group; each group will decide the theme of the workgroup together with the instructor.

3. Participation and effort in Class discussions and other ‘in-progress’ assignments.

*Non-Attending students:*

Students who choose not to attend classes need to be prepared on the same syllabus of attending students; in addition to this, they will have to contact the instructor beforehand in order to be given an individual assignement and additional study material.

The exam will be composed of four open questions, decided by the instructor, on the assigned readings.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no admission requirements.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students

1. I testi indicati nella bibliografia sono acquistabili presso le librerie di Ateneo; è possibile acquistarli anche presso altri rivenditori. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)