# 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 do they influence each other?

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, focusing on Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) and so-called 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, contributes 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 emergencies that we are experiencing.

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

* Debate, discuss and understand global phenomena which characterize our urban scenarios.
* Understand the different definitions of CCIs and Creative cities, critically approaching them identifying opportunities and the limits of culture and creativity-led local development.
* Theoretically and empirically study contemporary urban phenomena and innovation.
* Improve their knowledge of the representations of cities through arts and design.
* Exercise their communication and learning skills through a guided discussion about critical issues and workgroups.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course starts by providing sociological definitions of the concept of city, urban, and culture and their interrelation. Particular attention will be given to urban evolutions, specifically the characteristics that 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 introduce the field of urban/regional studies and economic geography. It 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 cities' representations as a means 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 analyzing 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, the 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
* The future of cities

***READING LIST***

The “Urban Cultural Studies booklet” is available at Container.9; additional materials will be uploaded on BlackBoard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The professor will dedicate much attention to theories but also to real case studies and applied research. In addition, guest speakers will be invited to provide additional knowledge on specific issues. Practical exercises will be assigned to be carried out individually and in groups. When possible, in-class discussions will be organized to allow students to share their own opinions and exercise their communication capabilities. Creative and cultural resources, such as comics and movies will be assigned as study material.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*Attending students:*

The assessment will be based on:

1. Final oral exam (75% of each student’s grade). The exam will be based on the topics covered in the teaching materials the professor 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 grade): students will be required to carry out one major assignment in a team.
3. Participation and effort in Class discussions and other ‘in-progress’ assignments.

*Non-Attending students:*

Students who do not attend classes need to be prepared on the same syllabus and BB material as attending students. They will have to check the professor’s instructions on BB and eventually contact me beforehand to be instructed on the possibility of carrying out an agreed exercise which will be evaluated together with the oral exam.

The exam will be composed of two or three open questions on the assigned study material.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no admission requirements.