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MB 735 MS 670 Urban Anthropology

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[This is a draft, final copy will be distributed the first day of class]

**Course Description**

This course explores some of the critical issues arising from the rapid urbanization occurring around the world. The responses to this twentieth century phenomenon vary from the celebration of secularity to a fatalistic fear of the future. As those called to be Christian witnesses, we must seek to understand cities and how the dynamics of city life affect our efforts at evangelism, church planting and doing social justice.

The focus of this course will be on urbanization and urbanism first, and then on the missiological implications of how we understand cities. In order to achieve this we will study the theoretical issues in the sub-discipline called urban anthropology, drawing on the work of anthropologists and missiologists worldwide. This course will have a cross-cultural focus, that is, we will examine cities outside of the United States primarily, but the perspective we develop will have application for cities here. We will look at issues such as ethnicity and urban ethnic groups, migration and the rural-urban conflict; family and kinship organization as an adaptation to urban complexity; the nature of urban voluntary associations, quasi-groups, and homogeneous and heterogeneous groups; social networks; urban ministries; urban church growth, and methods of anthropological research in urban settings.

Although it is not a prerequisite, it will be better for the students if they have taken the foundation anthropology course MB 600/700. If not, then the student will have to become familiar with some of the basic anthropological concepts, such as culture, social organization, and worldview very quickly. If this proves to be a difficulty, then please consult with the professor early and often.

**Course Objectives**

It is anticipated that the student in this course will develop the following competencies:

1. To be able to articulate various social science perspectives for understanding urban environments.
2. To understand how political, economic and ideological webs of relationships operate to establish power, wealth and privilege in cities.
3. To develop skills for analyzing a city with an eye to understanding how it is put together and how it operates.
4. To be able to dialogue about these issues with reasonable control of the appropriate authors and literature, assumptions and conclusions, and theories and theologies of mission.
5. To develop a theology of the mission that seeks to address ministry to people and communities in urban environments.

**Required Books**


Course Requirements
1. Attend class regularly. Class is a commitment and can become a community, but only if students attend and participate.
2. Read the weekly assignments. Understanding the lectures and entering the dialogue requires critically engaging the books and articles.
3. Write critical reflection papers. A brief review of the literature will be due each week in order to assure that the students have been engaged with the readings.
4. Write a research paper. The paper should show engagement with the literature in that: the research is clear (referenced), a wide range of appropriate literature has been consulted, the variety of positions taken on the issue is clear, and the student has taken a position and has defended it well. References and bibliography will follow the style of the journal Missiology.

READINGS: There is not available in print a good introductory text on Urban Anthropology. We are therefore going to use some other approaches to become familiar with the basic concepts in the field. There is a lot of reading in the course, but the reading is evenly distributed throughout the course so that the student can pace himself or herself. This is a course in Urban Anthropology, but we will be intentional in developing missiological applications of that discipline. It is a foundational premise of this course that, the better we understand the city anthropologically and sociologically, the more effective we can be in ministering to the people who live in the city. The readings reflect this need to combine anthropological and missiological approaches to urbanization.

REFLECTIONS: You are required to hand in ten Reflection Papers during the course. The structure of the paper will follow these guidelines:
- The United Nations book, Cities in a Globalizing World, raises a number of concrete issues about changes and challenges in the city;
- The other readings provide some perspectives, both secular and Christian, on these and other issues;
- Therefore, select some of the perspectives provided by the readings and show how they could be applied to the problems raised in the United Nations book. Be sure to demonstrate that you can distill the essence of the readings, you can bring these perspectives to bear on practical issues, and you can interpret data from charts and graphs in the UN book to contribute to the analysis.
- These are due on Wednesdays at 12:00 noon in my mail slot in the ESJ office because I want to read them over before we meet in class each week. We will plan to devote some time for discussion of the issues that you have read about in the articles assigned for the week.
- Master’s students: these reflection papers should be three pages, double spaced.
- Doctoral students: these reflection papers should be five pages, double spaced.
- There are eleven dates below. On ten of these dates, a paper is due from you. That will give you a bit of flexibility should you fall behind during the semester. Check them off as you turn them in and then you will be sure not to miss any.
RESEARCH
In an advanced course like this, often one of the most rewarding learning experiences is the in-depth research you do on a topic of your choosing. The purpose of this exercise is to study in greater detail some aspect of city life and then make explicit the implications of your research for the urban church and for doing effective ministry in the city.

Possible topics include: the study of cities in some part of the world (marco level); the study of some aspect of the city such as the culture of poverty, gangs, social class systems, social networks, ethnicity in the city, family patterns, migration, housing, police, legal systems, jails, street people, children on the streets, prostitutes, hospitals, business and marketing, church cultures, transportation, etc.

My recommendation is that you pick a city now, preferably a city outside the United States. Go online, to Google, and enter that city’s name for a search. Examine every site, and find the ones that have information you will need: maps, demographics, ethnic groups, neighborhoods, city government, churches, religions, companies, corporations, factories, etc.

The Lausanne (1980) booklet, *Christian Witness to Large Cities* and David Barrett’s (1986) *World Class Cities and World Evangelization* may help you with the section about doing mission in the city. Develop a strategy that is anthropologically informed, theologically sound, and draws missiological insights from these types of strategy books.

The due date for selecting your topic is October 2nd. By that date hand in a written statement of the problem you propose to research, and if possible a tentative outline of your paper. An outline is due October 23rd. When I sign off on your proposal you are ready to begin the research. You are not limited to the topics suggested here, but be sure to select a topic about which you can get excited and one that you can manage. One way of managing is to focus your reflection papers on the issues that you intend to write about. That way doing the reflection papers is a step in writing the research paper. The final due date for your paper is December 11th. If you want my critique and feedback before you prepare a final draft of your paper, then you can hand in your best draft before November 13th and I will read it and return it to you in time for you to have it finalized by the deadline of December 11th.

- Master’s students: The paper should be 20 pages, double spaced.
- Doctoral students: The paper should be 30 pages, double spaced.
**Student Evaluation**

Your final grade for the course will be determined from the three sources:

1. **REFLECTION PAPERS**, 5% EACH   50%
2. **RESEARCH PAPER**     25%
3. **FINAL EXAM**       25%

**Course Outline**

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**Office Hours** Wednesday 1:00-2:30 or by appointment. I’m located on the third floor of the McPheeters Center in the ESJ School.

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