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MB 735 Urban Anthropology

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Course Description

This course explores some of the critical issues arising from two powerful forces at work in the world today: urbanization and globalization. At the intersection of these forces there is life and death, growth and decay, virtue and decadence, security and danger. Cities define civilization and the irony is that cities also symbolize savagery. Either way, cities are where the people are, and thus cities are where our Triune God wants to live and minister. We are called to the city.

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. This will not be easy, for most Americans have been raised with a worldview suffused with rural romanticism. Some of the material in this course will be brutal to those in a holiness tradition that prefers separation from the world to engagement with the world’s cities.

The focus of this course will be on urbanization and globalization, and then on the missiological implications of our emerging understanding of urban life. 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 also application for cities in this country. 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 MS 600/MB 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 difficult, 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 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 for MS 670

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 papers 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.

Course Requirements for MB 735

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. Read an ethnography or do work with a downtown agency. The preferred ethnography is: Teresa P. R. Caldeira City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and
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. We will plan to devote some time each class for discussion of the issues that you have read about in the articles.
- These reflection papers should be two pages, single-spaced.

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.

*Topic: A Complete Description and Analysis of a City.* 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. At the same time, work in the library to find hard copy sources (books, articles, maps). Develop as full an understanding as you can of one city. Things I will look for are: origin, growth, changes, present organization, relations with nation, place in globalization, problems, needs, populations, opportunities for mission work.
Now, take the city that you chose and narrow down to an area of ministry around a particular problem. Possible topics include: 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. As you develop the ministry option, you may reference other cities where such work has been tried. This paper should conclude with a section on what it will take to do mission in the city. 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.

- MS 670 students: The paper should be 15 pages, single-spaced.
- MB 735 students: The paper should be 20 pages, single-spaced.

**Student Evaluation**

**MS 670 Students:** Your final grade will come from:
1. Reflection Papers, 5% each  
2. Research Paper  

**MB 735 Students:** Your final grade will come from:
1. Reflection Papers, 3% each  
2. Research Paper  
3. Book Review or Project

**Course Grading**

The unit of credit is a semester hour, which is defined as one hour of classroom work per week for one semester, or its equivalent. The 4.00 point system is used to compute grade point standing. The grading system is:

- **A** 4.00 Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objectives.
- **B** 3.00 Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives.
- **C** 2.00 Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives.
- **D** 1.00 Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives.
- **F** 0 Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives.

**Incomplete Work**

The official end of each term is 4:00 p.m. on the last day of the examination schedule. This hour is the deadline for handing in all course work. Each instructor may set an earlier deadline for submission of any or all course work. The student must petition the faculty person involved and the student’s advisor for permission to receive an “I” at the end of the semester.
A grade of “I” denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment. If the work of a course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as “F.”

Incomplete grades shall be removed one calendar month prior to the close of the following semester unless an earlier date is designated by the Office of the Chief Academic Officer on the individual petition. If the work is not completed by the time designated, the “I” shall be changed to an “F” unless a passing grade can be given based on work already completed or unless special permission is granted by the Chief Academic Officer.

Professors are required to give either a grade or an “I,” if approved, to each student registered for credit in a course. Students with Incompletes in two or more classes will not be allowed to enroll in a new semester or term without permission from their Dean.

**Office Hours**

Office hours will be Tuesday 1-3 p.m. and Thursday 1-3 p.m. It is best to make an appointment in advance, but you may check during hours to see if others have not taken a time slot. Other times may be available by appointment. My office is in the ESJ School on the third floor of the McPheeters Center, Room 308. Telephone: 858-2218.  
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