**HIST 410/510: American Cities: Cities and Suburbs in America**

**M/W 10:00-11:20**

**Lillis 175**

**Professor Lawrence Culver**

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**Office: McKenzie 357**

**Office Hours:**

**Monday: 1:00 to 2:00**

**Wednesday and Friday: 2:00 to 3:00**

**Required Book: Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America***

**Other readings available on Canvas, online, or as handouts.**

Cities are confluences of culture, history, and nature. This course examines the history of towns, cities, and suburbs in America, from their origins to the present. It gives special focus to the cities of the North American West, which grew rapidly from Native American, colonial, or settler origins, and came to dominate the urban culture and form of the United States. Lectures and readings examine the historical evolution of urban areas in the United States. We will examine how forces including culture, immigration, and economic and technological change shaped American cities, and how the built environments of cities interacted with the natural environments surrounding them. We will consider how cities have served as crucibles for American society, politics, and culture. We will also examine subjects connected to urban history, including architectural history, and the histories of landscape architecture and urban planning.

There will be two papers based on class readings, and a final paper on an urban history topic of each student’s own choice. Students will also make a presentation in class to get feedback from students and the professor before the paper is due. Reading questions (5 questions, written to create student discussion, are due on Wednesdays whenever readings are assigned.)

Week One:

Sept. 25 Native Urban America

Sept. 27 Colonial Cities

Reading: Abbott, 1-39.

Week Two:

Oct. 2 Urban Industrial Capitalism Arrives: Mill Towns, and the Consumer Refinement of America

Oct. 4 The Gold Rush and the “Instant Cities” of the West

Reading: Abbott, 39-88

Week Three:

Oct. 9 Cities of Industry; and Chicago: Industrializing Nature and Agriculture in the Gilded Age

Oct. 11 Technology and Urban Transformation in the Later 19th Century

Readings: Abbott, 88-163

Week Four:

Oct. 16 Cities of Immigrants: Tenements, Chinatowns, and Barrios

Oct. 18 The Place of Nature in the City: Frederick Law Olmstead, Central Park, and the American Landscape

Paper One Due by Friday, October 20th

Excerpt, *Becoming Mexican American*

Week Five:

Oct. 23 Urban Reform, Renewal, the Sanitary City and the City Beautiful

Oct. 25 Midterm

Abbot, 163-291

Week Six:

Oct. 30 From Hollywoodland to Autotopia: Los Angeles

Nov. 1 No Class

“The City of Leisure”

Week Seven:

No. 6 The Great Migration; World War II and Urban America

Nov. 8 Suburbia: From Eastern Origins to Ranch Houses on the Crabgrass Frontier

“A City Called Heaven”

“The Baby Boom and the Age of the Subdivision”

“The Westward Facing House”

Week Eight:

Nov. 13 Cities of Leisure: Disneyland, Sun City, and Las Vegas

Nov. 15 Urban Decay and Debates over Urban Renewal

Excerpt, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

“Disneyland: The Happiest Place on Earth”

“The Seattle World’s Fair”

Paper Two Due by Friday, Nov. 17th

Week Nine:

Nov. 20 Sprawl Versus the “New Urbanism”

Nov. 22 Urban Unnatural Disasters

“The Do It Yourself Deathscape”

“The Case for Letting Malibu Burn”

Week Ten:

Nov. 27 Student Presentations

Nov. 29 Student Presentations; Exam Review

**Final Papers Due Friday, December 1st**

**FINAL EXAM: 10:15 Friday, December 8**