List of suggested books 2013

Book options for Fall 2013

Please review the list of books below. Note that for long books, dividing up chapters between group members is permissible, but all group members should read the introductory, methods (if applicable) and conclusion chapters. If dividing up chapters, each group member should provide a summary to the others.

Back to Book Review Details

General histories of housing, parks and urban development

- Bloom, Nicholas Dagen. 2004. *Merchant of Illusion: James Rouse, American’s salesman of the businessman’s utopia*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press. The story of James Rouse, developer of highly successful “festival marketplaces” like Faneuil Hall and Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, as well as founder (with his wife, Patty, of the Enterprise Foundation, to support affordable housing. (223 pages, all inclusive, i.e. including end notes, index, bibliography and other appendices)


- Vale, Lawrence. 2013. *Purging the Poorest: Public Housing and the Design Politics of Twice-Cleared Communities*. Vale examines public early housing projects in Atlanta and Chicago and their demolition and redevelopment decades later as a means of exploring the evolution of public housing policy and urbanism. (428 pages, 344 of reading)


Assessments/critiques of urban policy and urban-related policy


- Glaeser, Edward. 2011. *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*. New York: Penguin. Glaeser, an economist at Harvard, makes an argument that cities are the healthiest, greenest, and richest forms of community, seeks to understand why that is so with examples from around the world, and suggests policies to take advantage of urban possibilities. (338 pages, all inclusive)


- Jacobs, Jane. 1961. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. [New York]: Random House. Warning, this is a very long and dense book, but a classic for every planner to read and understand. Probably too long for this assignment but good to put on your list. (458 pages, 448 of reading)


- Kozol, Jonathan. 2012. *Fire in the Ashes: Twenty-five years among the poorest children in America*. Crown. In this culminating work about a group of inner-city children he has known for many years, Jonathan Kozol returns to the scene of his previous books, and to the children he has vividly portrayed, to share with us their fascinating journeys and unexpected victories as they grow into adulthood. (354 pages, all inclusive)


- Ryan, Brent D. 2012. *Design after Decline: how America rebuilds shrinking cities*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. An exploration of urban renewal policies of the 1950s and 60s, and policies to address the impacts of these policies in later decades, focusing on Detroit and Philadelphia. (261 pages, 224 of reading)
• Tough, Paul. 2008. *Whatever it Takes: Geoffrey Canada’s quest to change Harlem and America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. The story of Geoffrey Canada and his work to develop the Harlem Children’s Zone project. (296 pages, 270 of reading)

Specific cities or regions

• Gans, Herbert J. 1962. *The Urban Villagers: group and class in the life of Italian-Americans*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe. This is Gans’ classic study of Boston’s West End community just prior to and during its bulldozing in the 1950 as part of the urban renewal program. (443 pages, 395 of reading)


• Insko, Steve. 2011. *Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi*. Steve Insko looks at the “instant city” of Karachi, Pakistan. He calls it an “instant city” because it, like many urban areas around the world, has seen an epic migration from the country to the city, going from half a million in the 40s to 13 million today. (304 pages, 246 of reading)

• King, Mel. 1981. *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development*. South End Press. King is a long-time teacher, community activist and organizer in Boston. The book chronicles struggles in Boston’s Black community from the 1950s through the 1970s around housing, education, jobs, and control of political institutions. (304 pages, 297 of reading)


• Lupo, Alan, Frank C. Colcord, and Edmund P. Fowler. 1971. *Rites of way: the politics of transportation in Boston and the U.S. city*: Boston: Little, Brown. Really interesting analysis of the revolt against the inner Belt proposal in the Boston area, written just after the victory by the anti-highway coalition. With a narrative by journalist Alan Lupo, plus more academic analyses by several researchers, and a photo essay. (294 pages, but that includes appendices)


• Sims, David. 2010. *Understanding Cairo: the Logic of a City out of Control*. Exploration of how the 18 million inhabitants of Cairo have informally shaped their city in the face of a largely neglectful government. Published just before the Arab Spring. (335 pages, all inclusive)


Natural resources, the environment, and cities


• Soll, David. 2013. *Empire of Water: An Environmental and Political History of the New York City Water Supply*. Brand new work detailing the development of New York City’s water system. (296 pages, 214 of reading)

• Tumber, Catherine. 2012. *Small, Gritty, and Green: the promise of America’s smaller industrial cities in a low-carbon world*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press. Through long experience and interactions with small Rust Belt cities, Tumber explores their history of deurbanization but also their potential for sustainable urban living. (211 pages, 140 of reading)


Food

• Berry, Wendell. 1978. *The Unsettling of America: culture & agriculture*. New York: Avon. This is a classic account of the shift in American agriculture from family farms to large businesses, and an eloquently written plea for rethinking our cultural values. (228 pages, all inclusive)
• Cronon, William. 1991. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: Norton. A long book but a classic and important history of how Chicago shaped resource development in the Midwest (agriculture, forestry, livestock, etc.) and vice versa. If you're interested in food systems, reading at least part of this book would give you a deep background on the development of agricultural markets in the US in the 19th century. Warning: the book does not go into 20th Century history. It's also very long and probably not a great choice for this assignment, but a very good book. (592 pages, 386 of reading)


**Personal Stories and Public Policy**


• MacDonald, Michael P. 1999. *All souls: A family story from Southie*. Boston: Beacon Press. A memoir of growing up in a troubled Irish-American family in South Boston during the 1970s, with a lot of food for thought about poverty, race, and community. (296 pages, 264 of reading)


• Wilkerson, Isabel. 2010. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. Random House. Very well-reviewed book about the migration of African Americans from the south to the north and west, as told through the stories of three families. A long book but totally immersing and powerful - it could be split between three people to follow each story line. (622 pages, 538 of reading)