

URBAN ANTHROPOLOGY

Lecturer: Dr. Emil Nasritdinov, emilzn@gmail.com

Monday 2.10 pm, r. 1/220, Wednesday 2.10pm, r. 1/326

Course is available at the AUCA e-course system

Cities have been looked at and analyzed from the multitude of perspectives: Ancient City, Industrial City, Garden City, Fractal City, Instant City, Post-City, Sustainable City, Green City, Ethnic City, etc. Such list of book and conference titles can easily spill onto the next page. Where do cities around the world acquire so many different meanings and forms? What shapes the skylines of Manhattan, Tokyo, Delhi, Moscow and Bishkek? Who is the contemporary urban hero? Is it you, strolling down Sovetskaya to a beat from your ipod? Or a beggar, who spends most of her day sitting with a stretched hand on cold concrete in "podzemka". We would like to invite you on a board of our Yellow Cab to take a ride through the busy urban jungles of largest metropolises across five continents. We will look at these hubs of human life in their cultural context: sometimes shining and glamorous and sometimes dirty and disgusting. By learning what city people eat, whom they meet, where they work, and how they sleep, we will understand how urban cultures interact, clash, merge and how new culture comes to life – that of a Global CITY-zen. The lecturer's personal experiences of living/traveling across big and small cities in the U.S., Europe, Australia, Northern Africa, Middle East, South-East Asia, Russia, and Central Asia will be a bonus to a collection of very interesting and insightful texts.

Assessment

Attendance and class participation:	15%
Global City project	10%
Bishkek urban space	15%
Bishkek urban character	15%
Bishkek urban event	15%
Online assignments 3x10%	30%

Attendance and participation

Attendance is absolutely essential. For each class missed without a reason you will lose 2%. If you miss more than 4 classes you will receive X grade.

Global City Project

Every student will make a presentation on the urban anthropology issue in one of the global cities around the world. This presentation should not be simply a report about the city, but should be built around some urban anthropology topic. There is no need for a written report, but you need to organize a power-point presentation.

Bishkek project

You can collaborate with one or two students to work on three research projects in Bishkek: urban space, urban character and urban event. Potentially, we can put together a small publication at the end of semester.

Urban space

Find a place in Bishkek, which has a strong urban feel and is somewhat unique. You should conduct fieldwork there, observe how the space is used and possibly interview its users. In your PowerPoint presentation and a paper (4-5 pages long) you should give rich description of its physical characteristics, meanings associated with it and its use. You should also collect visual information in the form of photographs and videos.

Urban character

With each year after independence Bishkek has becoming more and more cosmopolitan. At the same time we witness the growing polarity across the socio-economic strata of its population. In this project you have to choose one interesting character, which can be said to be a part of a

unique but, clearly distinguishable urban cultural category. In your research you have to do observations and conduct interviews with your characters to create a detailed and multisided portrait, that would include anything from the outlook (if it is important) to lifestyle and worldviews.

Urban event

Finally, you have to describe a unique event in Bishkek. This can be a one-time or recurring event, or some longer-term activity that Bishkek residents are engaged in. Range of possibilities is very broad, as long as there is a chance to use ethnographic methods. If applicable, try to find out about history of your event, whether it is a part of a bigger tradition, and about the meanings attached to it. Describe in details how the event takes place, who is involved, to what degree it is ritualistic, etc.

Online Assignments

Three times in the semester you will have to complete online assignments. Each assignment will consist of two or three questions based on the lecture and reading materials. You have to complete this assignments on the AUCA e-course system.

Schedule of classes

Week 1: Subject of urban anthropology

Part I: City in history

Week 2: Origin of cities

Week 4: Ancient city

Week 5: Greek city

Week 6: Roman city

Week 7: Medieval city

Week 8: Baroque city

Part II: Urban ethnography

Week 9: Chicago urban ethnography

Week 10: Urbanism as a way of life

Week 11: City of difference

Week 12: Migrants in the city

Week 13: City as a theater

Week 14: Symbols and meanings of the city

Week 15: Technocity

Week 16: Conclusion: future of the city

Key readings

Stevenson, D. (2003) *Cities and Urban Cultures*, Open university Press

Gmelch, G., & W. Zenner (2002) *Urban life: Readings in the Anthropology of the City*, Waveland Press

Low, S. (ed.) (2005) *Theorizing the City: The New Urban Anthropology Reader*, Rutgers