Cities of Tomorrow

UF100.001
Intellectual Foundations
Mondays, 10:30-11:45
ILC 118

Amanda Ashley, Ph.D.
amandaashley@boisestate.edu
208-426-2005

Todd Shallat, Ph.D.
tshalla@boisestate.edu
208-761-0485

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Boise State University
Imagine the urban future.

Imagine energy rained down from the sky through kites and inflatable turbines. Imagine floating cities. Magnetic trains. Robots displacing labor. 3-D printers reducing the need to travel. Sushi delivered by drones.

By 2050, futurist say, two-thirds of the Earth’s population will crowd into megacities. Nine out of ten will live elbow-to-elbow in cities larger and Boise. *Cities of Tomorrow* contemplates what to expect.

Our journey begins with ethical dilemmas posed by cities in science fiction. Connecting art to infrastructure, politics to economics, we link the physical form of cities to issues of social welfare. Stops along the tour include housing and segregation, density and gentrification, migration and transportation, tsunamis, Batman, jet packs, the challenge of sprawling suburbs, and creative liberation through art.

Our objective, simply stated, is to marvel at the wonder of cities. More broadly we hope to instill a passion for critical thinking. We strive to distinguish between causes and correlations, to shun buzzwords and distorted statistics, to write and speak concisely and actively engage.
Plenary and discussion sections

The big-tent “plenary” lecture meets weekly on Mondays at 10:30 in the Interactive Learning Center (ILC), room 118. Each week student must also attend a small-tent discussion section.

- Wednesdays, 9 – 10:15, ILC 204 with Amanda Ashley at amandaashley@boisestate.edu
- Wednesdays, 12-1:15, ICL 201 with Wendy Jaquet at wendyjaquet@yahoo.com
- Wednesdays, 1:30-2:45, ICL 204 with Wendy Jaquet at wendyjaquet@yahoo.com
- Thursdays, 10:30-11:45, ILC 201 with Todd Shallat at tshalla@boisestate.edu
- Thursdays, 3-4:15, ILC 213 with Elizabeth Felton at eannfelton@gmail.com
- Fridays, 10:30-11:45, ILC 201 with Kristof Bihari at kristofbihari@boisestate.edu
- Fridays, 12 – 1:15, ILC 201 with Elizabeth Felton at eannfelton@gmail.com
- Fridays, 3-4:45, ED 221 with Kristof Bihari at kristofbihari@boisestate.edu

Student advisor is Joe Erskine at josepherskine@boisestate.edu
Assignments and grades

To pass, students must complete all the assignments. Grades are based on a curve of 100 possible points: the sci-fi essay (10 points), the group placemaking presentation (10 points), the e-portfolio (5 points), the think-tank essay (35 points), the class journal (30 points), and class participation (10 points). Attendance is required. Students who miss more than twice can complete a make-up assignment or withdraw from the class.

Essays

The class begins and ends with a formal paper essay—one concerning cities in science fiction, the other a critique of a think-tank report. Both papers should have a title on a title page. List your name, discussion leader, and discussion section. Papers are collected and returned in the discussion sections. We do not accept emailed papers. Save an electronic copy for your records.

The weekly journal

The journal is a record of your responses to the weekly reading and viewing assignments. Purchase the 100-page notebook reserved for UF100.010 in the textbook section of the Boise State University bookstore. Title and date each entry. Cite details. Strive for entries of 200 words.
Weekly schedule and deadlines

August 22

The Idea of the Future
Wishful thinking shapes cites more profoundly than concrete. Each generation imagines the urban future throught the distorted lens of its own grand design.

Reading: Review the class syllabus and announcements on Blackboard.

Journal writing: Before class, purchase your journal notebook in the bookstore. Date and title each entry. Begin by writing a little about yourself, your academic ambitions, your experience with cities, and your expectations for this class. Comment on the requirement that we meet in a living classroom. In our age of virtual learning, why congregate face-to-face?

Discussion section: Discussion leaders introduce the course and the first assignment. Students read aloud a line or two from their journal.

August 29

Fritz Lange’s Metropolis
Futurists protest totalitarian regimentation.

Readings (posted on Blackboard): Kurt Vonnegut’s “2 B R 0 2 B” (1962); read also, Ursula Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” (1973).

Journal writing: no formal assignment.

First formal essay (10 points): Both Vonnegut and Le Guin wrote about the human cost of a utopian civilization. What concerns do they share and where do they diverge? In three double-spaced pages (about 750 words), consider which is the darker story. Give your paper an original title on a title page. Your essay should also include:

- A concise introduction (where you state your argument, answering the question posed in the assignment); a body (where you marshal the facts and other specifics, supporting your argument); and a conclusion that summarizes or restates your central point.
- A close analysis of at least one specific passage from each story. Show you understood the reading. Details help.
- No long quotations. Rely on your own words and quote, if you must, only briefly and only to illustrate your point.
- No first-person narrative (“I did . . I want.”). Reporting should be about the people in the story, not the reporter.
- Avoid passive verbs (is, are, were, was) that sap the power from your writing.
  - Passive: “The streets were paved with asphalt.”
  - Better: “Asphalt paved the streets.”

Discussion section: Be prepared to concisely restate your essay’s thesis. Discuss, also, the moral and social justice implications of population control. When did Vonnegut first publish his story? Is his city of the future more plausible than the planet Le Guin’s imagines?
September 5
**Labor Day Holiday**
No plenary or discussion sections.

**Reading:** J.G. Ballard, “Concentration City” (1997)

**Viewing:** Adrian Benepe, “Reanimating public space through sustainable design” (2013)
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKDrxyZsF7Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nKDrxyZsF7Y)

**Journal writing:** What is the value of uncluttered space? J.G. Ballard imagines a future without it. Ted talker Adrian Benepe shows ways to preserve it. Would the Benepe ideas meet the challenge Ballard describes?

September 12
**Zap. Boom. Pow.**
A battle for the future rages in Gotham.

**Reading:** Matt Jones, “The City as a Battlesuit for surviving the Future” (2009)

**Viewing:** Dredd’s Mega City One special effects (2012)
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ9OFwFxx4](www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ9OFwFxx4)

**Journal Writing:** How has science fiction informed modern cities and architecture? Conversely, how have sci-fi cities—Batman’s Gotham is one, Judge Dredd’s Mega City is another—used stylized architecture to comment on urbanization?

**Discussion section:** Consider Frank Miller’s “Sin City” (2005). Is the vision nostalgic (backward looking) or futuristic? Why film in black and white? View clips in class at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2D6kPU5c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T2D6kPU5c) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQbn-eWc0-s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQbn-eWc0-s).

September 19
**Race to Oblivion**
Fact meets science fiction in prophecies from the era of Earth Day.

**Reading:** Ehrlich and Ehrlich “Fables” (1997)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8XOF3SOuB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8XOF3SOuB)

**Journal writing:** Describe the controversy over Ehrlich and Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968). Was is the book controversial? Summarize the debate.

**Discussion section:** Library source exercise concerning *The Population Bomb*.
Bedroom Utopias
Suburbanites rescripted the future with a passion of automobiles.

**Reading:** Lewis Mumford on the suburbs from *The City in History* (1961).

**Viewing:** Leigh Gallagher, “The suburbs are dying” (TEDxMidAtlantic 2014). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyhCyB4oXXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FyhCyB4oXXQ)

**View also,** “What On Earth” (1966) [https://www.nfb.ca/film/what_on_earth/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/what_on_earth/)

**Journal writing:** Gallagher says suburbs are becoming urban while cities are becoming suburban. Explain.

**Discussion section:** Select a passage to read aloud from Mumford’s critique of suburbs. Is he angry? Offended? Ashamed? How does Mumford compare with Gallagher’s take on the suburbs?

October 3
**Visualizing the Future**
Planners engage the public with a new media tools.

**Reading:** Alissa Walker “How Pokémon is Improving Your City” *Curbed* (2016); read also, Brent Toderian and Jillian Glover “10 Lessons in More Engaging Citizen Engagement” Planetizen (2014) [http://www.curbed.com/2016/7/15/12189158/pokemon-go-improving-cities](http://www.curbed.com/2016/7/15/12189158/pokemon-go-improving-cities) and [http://www.planetizen.com/node/67656](http://www.planetizen.com/node/67656)

**Journal writing:** What might be some weaknesses and strengths of social media as a tool of civic engagement? Are media like Facebook and Snapchat more or less likely to promote democratic participation? Sign off by writing a hashtag that captures your main idea.

**Discussion section:** Breaking into groups, brainstorm a mobile app that might get Boiseans more involved in the civic life of their city.
October 10

**Art, public space, and protest**
Creative thinkers emancipate space.


**Journal writing:** What is place-making? Who gets to “make” place? What do placemakers mean when they talk about “the power of ten.” Identify a bland place in the Boise Valley that might have some “place” potential. List attractions you might add and who might use them.


**Journal midterm review:** Submit your journal for a friendly evaluation. Clearly date and title each entry to facilitate review.

**Discussion section** (10 points): Group into teams of five for a local exercise in creative place-making. Review the “place game” guidelines (attached). Organize a visit to a nearby corner. Create a collaborative PowerPoint or Prezi that identifies problems and suggests modifications. Each group gets ten minutes and twelve slides.

October 17

**Beyond automobiles**
Sky trams and aerial taxis levitate urban design.

**Viewing:** “700 mph in a tube” (2015). [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7A7GsAPR3J0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7A7GsAPR3J0)


**Journal writing:** no assignment. Professors return the journals.

**Discussion section:** Finalize and practice the group presentation.
October 24

**Poverty and place**

Cultures clash over affordable housing.


**Viewing:** Selections from “The Pruitt-Igoe Myth” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xKgZM8y3hso

**Journal writing:** What ethical responsibility does the City of Boise have for sheltering the homeless? What is being tried in Seattle? Look back to the era of not-so-golden era of public housing projects, what lessons might be learned from projects like Pruitt-Igoe?

**Discussion section:** Ten-minute place-making presentations.

October 31

**Surveillance in the city**


**E-portfolio assignment (five points):** Log into “Digication” and begin your e-portfolio (https://www.digication.com); see also, posted e-portfolio handout.

**Journal writing:** How much surveillance will be enough in future cities? What might be gained and lost by 24/7 surveillance? Can smart cities be trusted not to abuse technological power?

**Group work:** Complete placemaking presentations.

November 7

**Race for the White House**

Urban issues straddle political dividing lines.


**Library:** Select your topic and begin your research on the final “think-tank” essay. See the guide to the assignment in the syllabus below. The paper, worth 35 points, is due in the last week of November.

**Journal writing:** What are the most pressing urban issues in the 2016 campaign? In Penn Institute’s “Expert Voices 2016,” a blue-ribbon panel of experts states its case. Identify the expert opinion closest to your own concerns about the future of American cities. Identify another expert viewpoint that seems less important or more distant from your concerns.

**Discussion section:** Be prepared to share your journal. Which urban issues work best for Clinton’s hope for future cities? Which issue works best for Trump?
November 14

**Nature’s wrath**
Droughts, tsunamis, and sinking cities are perils of humanity’s progress. Climate and urbanization are converging in dangerous ways.

Reading: Claire Gordon, “Three Natural Disasters We’re Expecting” *(Al Jazeera 2013)*

Journals writing: Summarize, in a sentence or two, the substance of the findings in the think-tank report. Is the reporting impartial?

Discussion section: Gordon identifies three scenarios for future disasters. Which scenario is potentially most devastating? Which scenario is most likely in Boise? Are Boiseans prepared?

November 28

**Humanity in motion**
Cities, coping with growth, prepare for mass migrations.

**Reading:** no assignment. Revise and proof the think tank essay.

**Writing assignment** (35 points): The five-page think-tank paper is due at the start of your discussion section. See the guide to the paper below.

**Discussion section:** Explain the report’s single-most important finding. What policy recommendations might be the most obvious and pragmatic? What solutions are like to excite the most controversy?

December 5

**Megatrends in gigacities**
Cities larger than 10 million will house three out of four by the year 2050. What are the implications?

**Journals due** (30 points): In your last journal entry, reflect on themes of the class. Did *Cities of Tomorrow* expand your thinking? If you plan to live or work in cities, how might the study of urbanization directly impact your life?

No final exam. Happy holidays!
Guide to the think-tank essay

Critically review a think-tank report on the future of life in cities. In about five double-spaced pages (1,250 words), explain the report’s most significant finding. Measure those conclusions against scholarship posted on JSTOR.

Select one of three think-tank reports posted on Blackboard:

- *New Lenses on Future Cities* (Centre for Livable Places, 2014)
- *Rise of the Renter Nation* (Right to the City Alliance, 2014)
- *World Cities Report* (UN Habitat 2016)

Method: Carefully read the report. Use the library’s JSTOR index to find scholarship that challenges or confirms finding in the report. Use at least three JSTOR sources. List the report and journal sources on a works cited page. If you are unsure how to cite, consult any style manual. Include the author (if any), title, journal, volume number, date of publication, and page numbers; like this:


Questions to consider: All predictions are based on assumptions. In forecasting the future, what does the think tank assume? Who sponsored the publication? What kind of data is harnessed? Are the recommendations mostly public or private, governmental or market driven? Do the journal articles confirm or question the major findings? Provide examples.

Format: Give your paper an original title on a title page. Get immediately to the point. Don’t belabor the obvious or ask rhetorical questions. Avoid the first person “I” or “we” unless you happened to be a global expert. Write concisely. Introduce, defend, and conclude. Quote selectively and only to illustrate a point you have already stated. Proof and revise.

Guide to the Make-Up Assignment

Students who miss more than twice can complete a make-up assignment. Negotiate the work that needs to be done with your discussion leader. The last day to withdraw without an appeal is October 28. If a medical issue arises, please keep us informed.

Reading: “Report to the President on the Technology of Cities” (2016)

Writing: In about 600 words (two or three doubled spaced pages), explain the “fourth stage” of urban development as described in the White House report. What are the most promising technologies? What might government do?
WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

Evaluate the Place

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<th>FAIR</th>
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<td>Feels Safe</td>
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Comfort & Image average rating: (sum/4)

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<td>Accessible by transit</td>
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Access & Linkages average rating: (sum/4)

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<td>Comfortable places to sit</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frequent community events/activities</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Area is busy</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variety of things to do</td>
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Uses & Activities average rating: (sum/4)

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<td>Sense of pride and ownership</td>
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Sociability average rating: (sum/4)

Identify Opportunities

1. What do you like best about this place?

2. List three things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot:
   -
   -
   -

3. What three changes would you make in the long term that would have the biggest impact?
   -
   -
   -

4. Ask someone who is in the “place” what they like about it and what they would do to improve it. Their answer:

5. What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.