



Department of Sociology and Anthropology
The University of Texas at El Paso

ANTH 4370/SOCI 3341/ASIA 3350/POLS 4344

Underworlds: Infrastructure & Society

Fall 2019

SYLLABUS

Meeting Times & Location: T/Th 10:30-11:50 am, Cotton Memorial Building 201

Instructor: Prof. Bilge O'Hearn (bohearn@utep.edu)

Office & Hours: Old Main 312, W 10-11:30 am or by appointment

Teaching Assistant (TA): Hannah S. Penklis (hspenklis@miners.utep.edu)

TA Office & Hours: Old Main 314, T/TR 1-2:00 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules etc. These are products of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are organs of the human brain, created by the human hand; the power of knowledge, objectified. The development of fixed capital [physical infrastructures] indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it.

Karl Marx, Notebook VII, The Chapter on Capital, p. 626

The things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers.

Hannah Arendt, The Human Condition, p.9

How did the Hoover Dam and the electrification of the Southwest change life for the Navajo and the new residents of Phoenix, AZ? How did young Albanians feel about building a regional highway they built by hand but never got to use? How do the urban poor in Mumbai cope with having access to water only five hours a day? This course examines the relationship between built networks that are commonly known as infrastructures and the society. Whether we live in cities or in the countryside, modern society depends on infrastructure. Throughout the semester, we will read ethnographies and discuss how different groups of people (city and countryside dwellers, planners and decisionmakers, and those who are excluded from these categories) imbue the urban environment with their own interests and investments in the name of "living together". We will study various cities around the world, their relationship of the countryside and cross-border regions in neighboring localities and countries, and how their inhabitants, users, planners and decisionmakers make sense of the urban form they help create. We will examine these cities through an infrastructural analysis, or from the perspective of material, social and other forms of infrastructures such as electricity lines, waterways, housing, roads, bridges, oil and gas pipelines and fiber optic cables. We will ask what kinds of impact infrastructure make in the lives of those who inhabit, maintain, consume, or sabotage them. We will look at the social, political, economic and cultural lives of major urban infrastructures and their networks from around the world, from past to present, to future and ask about what kind of a society they are to help build. Central questions of this course concern power relations, social in/equality through material and social access, and political in/exclusion.



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LEARNING OUTCOMES

On the successful completion of the course you, the student will be able to:

- Acquire general knowledge on the relationship between material infrastructures and society;
- Describe the relationship between the built environment, power, and the global, regional, national, and local socio-economic access in/equality;
- Apply social scientific theory, research methods and terminology in studies of socio-material change;
- Discuss contemporary texts critically; write critical essays; participate in team work; conduct field research; and provide peer-review.
- Perform community engagement activities for the long-term benefit of the individual and the society at large.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS

Course materials are presented through readings, lecture, class discussion and documentaries. We will read sections from the following books according to the reading schedule:

- Björkman, Lisa. 2015. *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters: Embedded Infrastructures of Millennial Mumbai*. Durham: Duke University Press. (hardcopy available at UTEP Bookstore)
- Fisch, Michael. 2018. *An Anthropology of the Machine: Tokyo's Commuter Train Network*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (hardcopy available at UTEP Bookstore)
- Needham, Andrew. 2014. *Power lines: Phoenix and the making of the Southwest*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (e-book available through the UTEP Library)
- Nucho, Joanna Randa. 2016. *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services, and Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (hardcopy available at UTEP Bookstore)
- Reeves, Madeleine. 2014. *Border work: Border Work: Spatial Lives of the State in Rural Central Asia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (e-book available through the UTEP Library)
- Zeiderman, Austin. 2016. *Endangered City: The Politics of Security and Risk in Bogotá*. Durham: Duke University Press. (e-book available through the UTEP Library)

Other required readings will include articles and book chapters that are NOT found in any of the required texts; instead, these readings will be made available electronically on Blackboard. These electronic reserves are available to all students registered for this course as full text PDF files that may be downloaded and printed from our course page on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT PERFORMANCE

You will learn from your peers, your TA and me by collectively discussing course readings, lectures, and audiovisual material. But this course also aims at developing your skills in applying what you learn in class to outside cases of your own choosing. The course will prepare you to conduct field research and report back from the field. We will spend ample time in class regarding the details of conducting hands-on field research, teamwork, library research and the writing process. In addition, we will have guest speakers (e.g. from the Writing Center to present us critical information regarding how to write successfully) and will conduct site visits during class time, which will contribute to your hand-on learning and community engagement.



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Overall, you will be assessed based on the following four (4) forms of assignments, each of which are weighted differently:

Discussion Leadership: Each of you will be assigned two (2) course readings. You will do a brief introduction to the assigned reading, emphasizing the main points/take-aways and prepare 2-3 critically-thought questions for class discussion. You will also facilitate class debate on the reading you are assigned, guided by your discussion questions. It is therefore very important that other class members have enough time to process your questions. Your discussion questions, along with a paragraph of your review of the assigned reading, need to be posted on Blackboard by **mid-night the night before our class**. Your grade for this assignment will be evaluated based on your written work and your classroom performance. [10 points, 5 points each]

There may be several extra credit options in the form of discussion leadership throughout the semester; stay alert for those.

Participation and Attendance: You are expected to actively participate in class discussions and debates. Moreover, throughout the semester, we will conduct **study visits** to different sites such as UTEP Facilities, The City of El Paso's International Bridges Department and others. In addition we will host **guest speakers**. Attendance to site visits and guest presentations are mandatory. All will be held during class time. You will be assessed on your overall participation performance during class discussions and study visits. [10 points]

Criteria for assessing participation:

5-4 (A): The student is always attentive and well prepared, answers readily when called upon, initiates interactions, volunteers, participates actively in discussions and group activities;

3 (B): The student is prepared and pays attention, but is reluctant to take initiative, answers questions only when asked, participates actively in-group activities but passively in discussions;

2 (C): The student is not fully prepared, does not take initiative and often is not able to answer questions when called upon, participates scarcely in-group activities and in discussions;

1 (D): The student is inadequately prepared and has difficulty answering questions when called upon, his/her contribution to group activities and to discussions is minimal.

0 (F): The student is frequently absent from class and/or asleep during class activities and discussion and s/he fails to meet all the participation requirements.

Critical Discussion Papers (CDPs): You are to submit four (4) critical discussion papers (between 750-999 words) out of 7 opportunities to do so. You can also submit a trial CDP, if you chose to do so; please alert your TA and me that your CDP is a trial version before you submit it. Each of your CDPs will be based on one of the books, or set of articles (usually four). A CDP is basically a review piece which critically discusses the book/articles in single essay format, due at the end of the book/set of articles cycle (or before we move on to the next readings, usually every other week). All written work must be submitted on every other Friday via **Turnitin**. Due dates for Turnitin submissions are: **Sept 27** (CDP on *Power Lines*); **Oct 4** (CDP on "Roads that



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Dis/Connect"); **Oct 11** (CDP on Border work); **Oct 25** (CDP on *Everyday Sectarianism*); **Nov 8** (CDP on Pipe Politics); **Nov 22** (CDP on *Anthropology of the Machine*); and **Dec 6** (CDP on *Endangered City*). You are advised to begin submitting your critical discussion papers as early in the semester as possible. Please ensure timely submissions of your CDPs. Each day of late submission (weekends included) will cost you one point; late submissions after the third day will not be accepted. [30 points; 7,5 points each; lowest dropped]

Final Research Paper: In order to successfully complete this requirement, you will first chose a teammate, agree on an infrastructure, and conduct an in-depth study of an urban infrastructural system of your choosing. Your choice can be informed by past or present experiences. You will be trained in and apply various social scientific research methods on primary (participant and non-participant observations, elite/expert interviewing, life history, discourse and narrative analyses) and secondary forms of data collection (archival and library research). [50 points; 5 points for the abstract, 10 points for the field research report, 15 points for the draft final paper, 20 points for the final paper.]

This assignment will be completed in four stages:

Stage 1. Designing your research question, choosing your teammate, writing your abstract
You are required to **team up with another class member** and conduct a field research. Each of you will submit a **250-word long ABSTRACT** by **September 20**, describing which aspects of which infrastructure and by which methods you will conduct your field research.

Stage 2. Field Progress Report

You will submit one (1) **500-word long FIELD REPORT** based on your ongoing research, outlining the actual conduct of field research: your accomplishments, limitations and constraints, and remaining work to be done. Your field report is **due by Nov 1**.

Stage 3. Drafting your final research paper

You will submit one (1) **DRAFT FINAL PAPER, due by Nov 27**. The draft final paper should in principle look like a final paper (including Introduction and Conclusion). In it, you will discuss your field results in light of course readings, lectures, documentaries, and cases and examples that may come up during class discussions. Your draft final paper needs to be no less than **1500** words.

Stage 4. Final paper

You will submit one (1) **FINAL RESEARCH PAPER** (one paper per student) based on your semester-long research. Your final paper needs to be no shorter than **2250** words, including the bibliography, and needs to be sufficiently different from your draft paper and your teammate's paper, responding to instructor and peer review. Final papers are **due by Dec 12**.

Selected final papers, in abridged form, may be sent for publication in El Paso Times, El Diario, El Paso Herald-Post, or the Prospector.



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GRADING SCALE

The following grading scale will be used for all graded work in this course: A = 100-95% B = 94-85% C = 84-75% D = 74-65% F = 64% and below

POLICIES, INTEGRITY AND EXPECTATIONS

This course involves participation in discussions and activities. We each have different experiences that influence our perspectives of the world. The classroom should be a lively, interactive and comfortable place where information is shared ideas tested and issues debated. You are expected to treat your instructor and all other participants in the course with courtesy and respect. Your comments to others should be factual, constructive, and free from harassing statements. You are encouraged to disagree with other students, but such disagreements need to be based upon facts and documentation (rather than prejudices and personalities). Unprofessional or disrespectful conduct will result in a lower grade on an assignment since part of the learning process in this course is respectful engagement of ideas with others. You should expect the professor of the course to be prepared for each class, to treat each student with respect and compassion. Students will in turn come to each class prepared, complete assignments on time and will adhere to the university's academic standards including those governing academic dishonesty including cheating, plagiarism, or fraud. The following link will provide further guidance on the University's student rules and policies:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services.

Academic integrity Misconduct in research or scholarship includes cheating, fabrication, falsification, multiple submission, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research, as well as complicity in any or all of the above. Most serious breach of the said code is ***plagiarism [pley-juh-riz-uhm, -jee-uh-riz-]***, which is defined as “the appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.”

Plagiarism includes:

- Intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one’s own (i.e., without crediting the author or creator).
- Failing to credit sources used in a work product in an attempt to pass off the work as one’s own.
- Attempting to receive credit for work performed by another, including papers obtained in whole or in part from individuals or other sources. Students are permitted to use the services of a tutor (paid or unpaid), a professional editor, or the University Writing Center to assist them in completing assigned work, unless the instructor explicitly prohibits such assistance. If the student uses such services, the resulting product must be the original work of the student. Purchasing research reports, essays, lab reports, practice sets, or answers to



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assignments from any person or business are strictly prohibited. Sale of such materials is a violation of both these rules and State law.

- Failing to cite the World Wide Web, databases and other electronic resources if they are utilized in any way as resource material in an academic exercise.
- Other similar acts.

Plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty are subject to punitive action. For more information please consult the handbook of Operating Procedures at <https://www.utep.edu/vpba/hoop/section-2/student-conduct-and-discipline.html> . IF YOU ARE UNSURE ABOUT ANY PART OF THE HANDBOOK, PLEASE COME SEE ME.

Professionalism, attendance and make up Attendance; timely completion of reading and written assignments; thoughtful contribution to class discussions, including participation in several in- class exercises are required. The University views class attendance as the responsibility of the student; attendance is essential to complete the course successfully. Attendance in this class is not mandatory. However, your participation and input during class discussions WILL AFFECT your overall grade. ATTENDANCE TO SITE VISITS AND GUEST PRESENTATIONS ARE MANDATORY, unless you have written verification for your excused absence. University rules related to excused and unexcused absences can be found at <http://catalog.utep.edu/undergrad/academic-regulations/curriculum-and-classroom-policies/>.

Use of Technology Technology is part of our lives and learning experience. You are thus permitted to use your laptop, phone, tablet etc. in class. However, please pay utmost attention in order not to distract and disrupt our collective learning environment, which would surely affect your learning experience, as well as that of others. If there is any complaint from your classmates or from myself regarding your abuse of technology, you will be asked to stop this behavior immediately.

READING SCHEDULE

Unless otherwise noted, you are required to come to class having done the assigned reading(s) on the day they are scheduled.

WEEK 1 Infrastructure and Society: A View from Below

- Aug 27** Introduction to Underworlds
- Aug 29** **READ** Graham, Stephen and Simon Marvin. 2001. *Splintering Urbanism*. London and New York: Routledge. Prologue & Chapter 1

WEEK 2 Politics of Infrastructure I

- Sept 3** **READ** Graham, Stephen and Simon Marvin. 2001. *Splintering Urbanism*. London and New York: Routledge. Chapters 1 & 2.
- Sept 5** *Visit by the Writing Center*
 - How to write an Abstract**
 - How to write a CDP**
 - Scheduling of Discussion Facilitation**



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WEEK 3 Politics of Infrastructure II

Sept 10 **READ** Winner, Langdon. 1980. "Do artifacts have politics?" *Daedalus* 109(1):121-136.

READ Edwards, Paul N. Infrastructure and modernity: force, time, and social organization in the history of sociotechnical systems. In *Modernity and Technology*. Edited by Thomas J. Misa, Philip Brey and Andrew Feenberg, 185-225. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

EXPERIMENT with socio-material research methods I

Sept 12 In-class screening of *Requiem for Detroit*

WEEK 4 Electrification and the 'New' Urbanism/Ruralism I

Sept 17 **READ** Needham, *Power Lines*: Intro, Chapters 1 & 2

EXPERIMENT with socio-material research methods II

Sept 19 **ATTEND Guest Speaker: Colin B. Williams, City of El Paso Risk Manager**

Abstracts are due Sept 20!

WEEK 5 Electrification and the 'New' Urbanism/Ruralism II

Sept 24 **READ** Needham, *Power Lines*: Chapters 3, 4 & 5

Sept 26 **READ** Needham, *Power Lines*: Chapter 6, 7 & Conclusion

Site visit TBA

CDP on Power Lines due Sept 27!

WEEK 6 Roads that Dis/Connect

Oct 1 **READ** Harvey, Penny and Hannah Knox. 2012. The enchantments of infrastructure. *Mobilities* 7(4):521-535.

READ Dalakoglou, Dimitris. 2012. The Road from Capitalism to Capitalism. *Mobilities* 7(4):571-586.

Oct 3 **READ** Pedersen, Morten Axel and Mikkel Bunkenborg. 2012. Roads that separate: Sino-Mongolian relations in the inner Asian desert. *Mobilities* 7(4): 555-569.

READ Salamanca, Omar Jabary. 2015. Road 443: cementing dispossession, normalizing segregation and disrupting everyday life in Palestine. In *Infrastructural lives: urban infrastructure in context*. Edited by Stephen Graham and Colin McFarlane, 114-135. London and New York: Routledge.

CDP on Roads due Oct 4!

WEEK 7 Borders

Oct 8 **READ** Reeves, Madeleine. 2014. *Borderwork*: Chapters 4, 5 & 6 (e-book available through the UTEP Library)

READ Shapira, Harel. 2013. "The Border: Infrastructure of the Global." *Public Culture* 25(2): 249-260.

Oct 10 Site Visit to the City of El Paso's International Bridges Department

CDP on Border work due Oct 11!



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WEEK 8 Urban Circulations and Citizenship I

Oct 15 *READ* Nucho, *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon*: Intro, Chapters 1 & 2
Oct 17 *READ* Nucho, *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon*: Chapters 3 & 4

WEEK 9 Urban Circulations and Citizenship II

Oct 22 *READ* Nucho, *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon*: Chapter 5 & Conclusion
Oct 24 Site Visit TBA

CDP on Everyday Sectarianism due Oct 25!

WEEK 10 Water Works I

Oct 29 *READ* Bjorkman, *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters*: Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2
Oct 31 Site Visit to the International Boundary and Water Commission & American Dam
LISTEN EPHistory.com 1-7-17 Hour Two Gabe Duran and Intl Boundary & Water Commission history, begins at 4"40 (
<http://www.ephistory.com/uncategorized/1-7-17-hour-one-peppe-lorena-morales-new-mexicn-food-hour-two-gabe-duran-intl-boundary-water-commission-history/>)

Field reports are due Nov 1!

WEEK 11 Water Works II

Nov 5 *READ* Bjorkman, *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters*: Chapters 3 & 4
Nov 7 *READ* Bjorkman, *Pipe Politics, Contested Waters*: Chapters 5, 6 & 7

CDP on Pipe Politics due Nov 8!

WEEK 12 Affective Lives of Infrastructures I

Nov 12 *READ* Fisch, *Anthropology of the Machine*: Introduction, Chapter 1
Nov 14 *READ* Fisch, *Anthropology of the Machine*: Chapters 2 & 3

WEEK 13 Affective Lives of Infrastructures II

Nov 19 *READ* Fisch, *Anthropology of the Machine*: Chapters 4, 5 & 6
Nov 21 No Class

CDP on Anthropology of the Machine due Nov 22!

WEEK 14 Politics of Security and Risk I

Nov 26 *READ* Zeiderman, *Endangered City*: Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

Draft Final Papers due Nov 27!!!

Nov 28 No Class

WEEK 15 Politics of Security and Risk II

Dec 3 *READ* Zeiderman, *Endangered City*: Chapters 3, 4 & 5
Dec 5 Course wrap-up

CDP on Endangered City due Dec 6!

FINAL PAPERS ARE DUE DEC 12!!