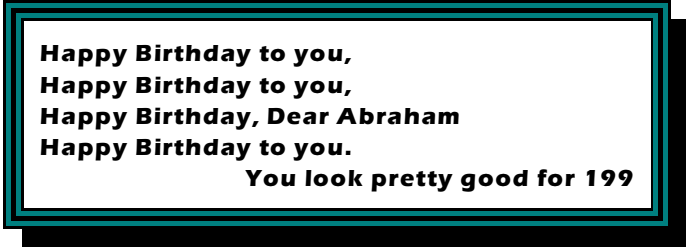


AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
CAS 228
T, F, 3:30 - 4:50
Fall, 2008

MICHAEL R. H. SWANSON Ph. D.
OFFICE: Feinstein College 110
Hours: T, 11:00-12:30
M, W, F, 1:00-2:00
PHONE: (254)-3230
E-mail: amst334_urban@msn.com

Week of February 12, 2008



**Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday, Dear Abraham
Happy Birthday to you.
You look pretty good for 199**

I would also be remiss if I didn't take a few electrons to wish you a happy Abraham Lincoln's Birthday. When I was a youngster everyone knew his birthdate and George Washington's as well. Why? We got both days off. No More! We get the Monday between off, and everyone can go out and buy a new car to celebrate.

I *think* we have our city groups sorted out. Thanks for the help you gave in this. We do need to play catchup a little this week, however, so the reading load is going to be on the modest side, largely repeating some of last week's work. As I type this, I don't know if people have begun to look for examples of some of the things Jane Jacobs analyzes in *Death and Life of Great American Cities*. I hope so. I'll find out tomorrow.

For **Tuesday, February 12**

Read, in Jacobs,

4. *The Uses of Sidewalks: Assimilating Children* 74 - 88

Jacobs argues here that children are safer on the streets than they are in the parks, though "common sense" planning believes otherwise. One doesn't think of Jacobs as a feminist, particularly, but you will note in this chapter some observations of gender roles which fit in nicely with feminist theory. Sidewalks of the type Jacobs advocates socialize children into a world in which both men and women play important roles. Suburbs and traditional parks do not. Is she right?

Some of the most elementary and ordinary features of cities turn out to be some of the most important. We remind ourselves that the lowly sidewalk is itself important enough to demand three chapters, and you will notice that each chapter interrelates with and builds upon the previous one: if sidewalks are not safe, they won't facilitate contact, and without contact, children cannot be assimilated. These chapters are

especially crucial because many of you most likely live in sidewalk-less neighborhoods. Friday the 8th I will spend some time introducing some of the new additions to this class's Blackboard site. I encourage you to try them out over the weekend, and I'll ask you about this on Tuesday.

For **Friday, February 15th**

Read, in **Jacobs**,

5. *The Uses of Neighborhood Parks*: 89 - 111

Jane Jacobs is not a particular fan of parks as theoretical solutions to urban problems. She is in favor of parks which work well. In this chapter she tries to separate good parks from bad parks. To do so, she looks at concrete examples in a number of American cities, some of which are the focus of group projects. Those of you studying places like New York or San Francisco will want to try to Google some of the parks she mentions by name. Google Image them, too. In fact, all of you would benefit by locating some of the parks, neighborhood and otherwise, in your city of choice. One of them (not a neighborhood version) is pictured in this week's corner-left picture frame. You must note that "park" carries a broad definition. If you have in your mind's eye a vision of trees, grass, and the odd swing or two, you'll need to broaden your horizons some.

Most cities have a Department of Parks and Playgrounds, though the name of the department will vary from place to place. You'll have to be a little imaginative. One way to locate something about parks and the like is to begin at the official website of the city. Most if not all cities have such a thing.

On the electronic version of this syllabus I've put links to three websites which will help you locate newspapers and broadcasting outlets for your several cities. Another reason I've not pushed the reading this week is that I want you to get seriously involved with locating sources of local information. You should become "regulars" at more than one of these. With both newspapers, and radio, you're looking for local news, and some insight to the cultural attributes of the city and its surrounding region. For example, are there foreign language stations? If so, which languages are represented? Keep a special eye out for local talk radio.

In future syllabi I will be asking you to look up specific things about your cities, using a variety of easy-to-use tools.