

AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
CAS 228
T, F, 3:30 - 4:50
Spring, 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 19, 2008

For Tuesday, February 19

Read, in Jacobs,
Chapter 6. The Uses of City Neighborhoods

This chapter may be the most difficult of all in this assignment. This is not Jacobs' fault, particularly, but the fault of our own preconceptions about neighborhoods and what it means to be someone's neighbor. We're going to have to move to different sorts of definitions here. Jacobs wants us to understand three levels of "neighborhood," all of which have to function simultaneously if a city is to function well. If this is the case, simple geography can't be the entire definer of neighborhood or neighborliness. I wonder, given that she wrote this before the invention of the Internet, whether she would now want to consider *four* levels of "neighborhood". What do you think?

For Friday, February 22

Read, in ***Death and Life of Great American Cities:***

Part II. ***The Conditions for City Diversity.***

7. *The Generators of Diversity* 143 - 151 (ML: 187 - 197)
8. *The Need for Mixed Primary Uses* 152 - 177 (ML: 198 - 232)
9. *The Need for Small Blocks* 178 - 186 (ML: 233 - 243)

Notes on the Readings:

Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.

Much of the power of Jane Jacobs' book comes from the rigorous structure of the argument. Part One establishes Diversity as a measure of healthy urban life. Part Two looks at what makes for diversity: the factors which make diversity within city districts possible. She identifies

four which are crucial enough to be considered needs. The six chapters in part two are organized almost as if they could stand by themselves: Chapter 7 serves as an introduction, and Chapter 12 as a discussion for chapters 8 through 11

Chapter 8: *Need for Mixed Primary Uses.*

- You will need to understand what a primary use is to fully understand this chapter and the reasoning behind it. One of the great reforms of the last years of the 19th century was to use zoning to create districts within cities and towns in which only one type of activity took place. Recently the logic of this has been questioned by a number of urban critics, including Howard Kunstler. Perhaps the first person to raise the issue was Jane Jacobs. Use this chapter to seek examples of mixed primary uses as well as to understand what happens when these are not present.

Chapter 9. *Need for Small Blocks.*

- This chapter looks at the basic pattern of streets within communities. More streets mean less area upon which to build, which means the trend has been to create fewer streets and in many instances reclaim streets already in use into larger and larger blocks. If you understand why Jacobs favors a lively sidewalk life, you'll have a beginning to understand why more streets is a good idea, in her judgement. While Jacobs doesn't speak much about length of streets themselves, you may want to investigate what the difference is between areas of your cities with long streets and areas of cities with short streets. Which are best for drivers? Which are best for the occupants of the cities themselves?