

AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
CAS 228
T, F, 3:30 - 4:50
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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 26, 2008

For *Tuesday, February 2008*

Well, it looks like I wasted a sick day because it morphed into a snow day. Either way, I missed you folk. We'll do Friday's work today. I have it under good authority that the computer software in the classroom has been upgraded (I'll check it out later today if I have a chance), so we may have a chance to look at the cool stuff I was going to show you, and maybe you'll have some cool stuff to show each other as well. To save you the trouble of bouncing back to last week's syllabus, I'm repeating the Friday work right here.

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?

For ***Friday, February 29***

Happy Leap Day. Enjoy it. You won't have another one for four years.

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

Part II. The Conditions for City Diversity.

10. *The Need for Aged Buildings*, 187 - 199 (**ML: 244 - 260**)
11. *The Need for Concentration*, 200 - 221 (**ML: 261 - 289**)
12. *Some Myths about Diversity*, 222 - 228 (**ML: 290 - 312**)

Chapter 10. *Need for Aged Buildings.*

The most interesting idea here, in my estimation at least, is the idea that cities *need* buildings which are *not* in prime condition. When Jacobs argues for "aged" buildings, she is not doing this because of their intrinsic charm or historic value, but for another reason altogether. You will need to know what this is, and why she sees this as important.

Chapter 11. *Need for Concentration.*

Traditionally, Americans have looked at high population densities

as a bad thing. Much of the sprawl we see around our cities has resulted from a push for less density. Jacobs challenges this concept and suggests that high density is in fact not a bad thing at all. You'll need to understand why.

Chapter 12. *Some Myths about Diversity.*

A **myth** is a commonly held belief upon which persons act *as if* it were true. If the myth is true, obviously there is no harm. If the myth is merely irrelevant, there is no harm done, either. But if the myth is false, then the behavior arising from it is positively harmful, and may evoke disaster in the long run. The myths Jacobs identifies are these:

Diversity is Ugly
Diversity causes Traffic Congestion
Diversity invites ruinous Uses.

As you read this section see how Jane Jacobs counters each of these myths with her exposition of the real situation. Keep in mind her definition of *diversity* is not quite the man in the street's definition.

The Chapters in Jacobs are fairly small. These three chapters constitute about 60 pages, and as you've *already* read (supposedly) the material for Tuesday's class I'd like to have you also get started start working in Ezell's book, **Get Urban** about now. I'm guessing this book is not very much like anything you've read in college before. It is rather a cross between a book of analysis and a "how to" book for practical application.

By the 29th, I want you to do two things. I'm being a little deliberately obscure here, but for a reason.

1. Familiarize yourself with the **Table of Contents**. Be prepared to suggest in a sentence or two how Chapters **1, 2, 3, and 8** differ **conceptually** and **strategically** from Chapters **4, 5, 6, and 7**.
2. Dip into the **part** of chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, which makes them different conceptually and strategically from the rest of those chapters, and find *one* interesting thing. Mark the page and be prepared to indicate to the class what it was and why you found it interesting. If you don't understand what I'm hinting at here e-mail me. I may just give more hints, who knows?