

AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
GHH 105
T, TH 12:30 -1:50
Fall, 2009

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Week of November 3, 2009

For **Tuesday and Thursday, November 3 and 5.**

As you're working on your take-home this week, I'm going to cut back on the amount of reading some. Besides we're moving to a different book which will require some different reading techniques and skills. Jacobs required you to use your imagination and experience to fill in the sensory elements which constitute the Urban Scene: you had to "see" old buildings, "hear" traffic, and "smell" pizza and/or car fumes using experiences in your memory.

You won't have to do that with Larry Ford's *Cities and Buildings*, because it is densely illustrated. (Well, you'll still have to rely on imaginary sounds and smells.) Here, the illustrations dominate the text as we're going to be using it. You'll be doing more looking, less intense reading, and, in fact, you'll be using the book at least partly as a pictorial dictionary. Some chapters we're going to skip nearly entirely. I'm going to try to train you to look at **black type**, *deduce* the meaning of the black type from the illustrations themselves (plus the captions, of course—don't skip the captions), and *then* decide if you need to read more to augment the knowledge you have acquired from Jane Jacobs and your own experiences and investigations. This is reading like you've never done it before—trust me and give the process a try. Oh yes, Occasionally I'll tell you to look at a diagram and occasionally I'll tell you *don't look at that diagram*. We'll see who can bring themselves not to look.

To start us off, by Thursday, November 5,

Read, in *Ford*,

Preface, ix - xiii

Introduction, Merging the Traditions of Space and Time 1-10

1. Downtown Buildings: The role of the Skyscraper in Shaping the American Central Business District. 10 - 64

Here's how I want you to approach Chapter 1.

1. Observe the typography. Notice the black type. Notice there are **Two levels** of black type. Concentrate only on the outer level (the level which extends beyond the text into the margins). If I count about right, there are twenty of these. Read them to decide which of the sections you need to pay attention to in *this* course. Do you need to know that the Central Business District arose in London? Probably not. Do you need to know different definitions of downtown? Probably.
2. As you look at those outer levels—think about whether they have any relationship to some of the ideas Jacobs has presented in her book. Then do the same thing for the subheadings which are flush with the body of the type. Are any of these self-explanatory? If so, do you need to read the rest of the text carefully? (Remember you'll not be taking an in-class test on any of this.)
3. There are eleven pictures in this chapter. Read the captions and look at them. Can you create a hypothesis *why* the picture was included? (The one nasty thing about this book is that the pictures aren't numbered. You'll need to remember them by page number). Think of the pictures as aesthetic objects as well as illustrations. Is there something attractive to your eye about the image each presents?
4. Now read those parts of the chapter this preliminary investigation seems to indicate you need to read, and skip the rest. In class on Thursday, we'll compare analyses.

To keep us busy this week while you're doing some reading I'll be showing a video or two related to the content of this chapter. (I'll also hold time to help with your Jacobs exam if you need it.)