

AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
GHH 108
M, Th 3:30 - 4:50
Spring, 2011

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Week of March 21, 2011

For Monday, March 21

Happy Spring!

Welcome back. I hope you had an interesting and enjoyable spring break. I spent mine loafing, grading papers, and playing with my cats, not necessarily in that order. You'll remember that I assigned no readings for this day, partly to give you time to focus on Jacobs and partly because I wanted you to refresh yourselves. Today, we're going to look at a film.

Every so often on this campus I get nearly run over by a student on a skateboard. I'm rather amazed at what can be done. A few years ago, I came across an interesting documentary film: *Dogtown and Zboys*. Every so often on this campus I get nearly run over by a student on a skateboard. I'm rather amazed at what can be done. At 97 minutes, I'll have to break it in two as there is a class in this room right after mine. I don't know if any class members are (or were) skateboarders, but skateboarding is, as I hope you will see, a phenomenon created by urban kids in urban environments. The film also demonstrates a number of the points Jacobs makes about rearing kids in urban environments. Some of you may have seen the commercial version, *Lords of Dogtown*. Every time I've shown *this* version, people have said it is far more interesting. I hope you'll enjoy it.

For Thursday, March 24

Some Time with Studs.

I'm going to wager that this book is like none other you've read before, except some may have read *Working* in a sociology class. We watched the musical, *Working*, in *Class and Culture last week*. Studs Terkel is arguably the most important oral historian of his era. *Division Street America* takes its title from a *real* division street. But its larger topic is race in American Culture, as that works itself out in cities like Chicago.

So far, our focus has been an analysis of what makes cities work

when then they do, and fail when they don't. We should recognize by now that every citizen of a city experiences that place differently. For some, cities provide environments of opportunity in which they thrive. For others, they provide a stage for lives of despair and heartbreak. They also provide arenas for social conflict and reconciliation, and Terkel's book will let us explore lives which fall into all these categories. As I indicated on an earlier syllabus, we are fortunate that the archives of the Chicago Historical Society have preserved the original tapes of eight of the persons whose stories make up *Division Street*. We're going to begin with those this week and early next. Then I'll assign the rest of the books to individuals by some scheme I'm still working on. As you'll see from the table of contents, not all persons get the treatments of the same length. My job will be to make the divisions equitable, varied, and interesting. I'll be asking you to tell us all about your characters; what their role in life was, and what the city meant to each of them. More about that later.

For *NOW*,

Read, in <i>Division Street America</i> ,	
Forward by Alex Kotlowitz	xv
Introduction to the 1993 edition	ix
Prefatory Notes	xxi
An A-B-C Guide for Non-Chicagoans	xxix
"Lucy Jefferson"	11 - 18
"Kid Pharoah"	37 - 45

If you have the time, I suggest you read the A-B-C Guide with Google Maps handy. You'll be able to orient yourself to the city. It wouldn't be a bad idea to have it accessible when your reading about the people, either. While Chicago is greatly changed from the day the book was published, there are still remnants of the old present, and the new gives insight to what the causes of the change may have been.

On the Web Version, I provide links to the interviews with Lucy Jefferson and Kid Pharaoh. I'd like to have you read one first, then listen to it, and for the other one, reverse the process. Does it make a difference to your impression if reading follows hearing or hearing follows listening? Be aware also of the questions Studs Terkel asks. What do they (and their sequence) suggest about his technique?