

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

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Week of April 4, 2010

A Studs Group Experiment.

For *Monday, April 4.*

Informal Group Discussions on *Division Street America*.

I've been using some less common words to indicate what I'd like to have you do with the glimpses into the lives of the people in Studs Terkel's *Division Street America*: Words like "interpret," and "assess". I'm trying to help us see that different people experience the same place in very different ways. A bartender and a patron experience a bar in different ways: a middle class person experiences a ride on public transportation in a way different from a person of either the upper class or the lower class. Ultimately, each resident of a city has to make peace with this/her city in his/her own way. From outside, we can look and make judgments about how these individuals are interacting with their urban environments—note the small victories and defeats, the triumphs, the joys, the disappointments, and ultimately we can evaluate whether a person has made the best of his/her circumstances. Has "the city" been used to best advantage? Has the city diminished the life or perhaps the spirit of the dweller? What opportunities have been missed.

Again, I don't want us to think at the level of the old Horatio Alger "Rags to Riches" stories. Though the city is big, we have to think small, we need to make something out of these vignettes.

By simply "counting off" I've divided the class into five groups of six (one group gets seven—there are 31 of us). I've also assigned each person two of Studs' persons, mostly by luck of the draw. A couple of you get three. As you've noticed not all of these men and women get equal time—some are less than a page long. Here's what I want us to do.