

AMST 334
Urban America
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY
GHH 108
T, TH 11:00 -12:20
Spring, 2013

MICHAEL R. H. SWANSON Ph. D.
OFFICE: GHH 215
Hours: T, TH 9:00 - 11:00
M, W, 1:00-2:00
PHONE: (254)-3230
E-mail: mswanson@rwu.edu

Week of February 19, 2013

For *Tuesday, February 19*

I hope to complete the process of choosing our example cities today. From the cities upon which we've begun some preliminary investigation, we'll choose between 6-8 to use for the rest of the semester. Ideal cities will follow the rules of Goldilocks (which are actually the rules of Aristotle)—neither too *much* nor too *little*. Some cities are overwhelming in their size and scope—a group of 3-4 students couldn't do much more than peck at the surface. Others simply don't have enough data, specifically the kinds of data we need—historical evidence of the city's growth, change, development (and perhaps decline), and contemporary evidence of what the city is like *now*—what claims to fame (good or bad) it has, what are the sources of city pride, what parts of the cities work well, which parts not so well, and why, and what could be done to make the city a better place for residents and/or visitors.

You'll organize into your groups to do this, and hopefully at least one of the members of your group will have a computer or similar device with internet connectivity. Here's some of the things I'll be showing you how to look for.

1. Local Radio Stations which have a streaming internet presence. Hopefully a talk radio station or two, and a news station as well. Lists of local radio stations are available through <http://city-data.com>. Plugging them into google search will give you quick access to their websites for investigation purposes.
2. Local Television Stations which stream programs, particularly local news programs.
3. Local Daily and/or weekly newspapers which can be accessed free.

The idea is to “live” in the community by tuning in on a regular basis. Everyone won't have to listen to everything, watch everything, or read everything, but all should be paying some attention.

In an ideal world, we'd choose cities spread all across the United States—not just East and West Coast ones. While I won't rule out "star" cities like Chicago, I'd like to have some cities which aren't "stars," as well. Unless I hear a roaring objection, I would like to rule out Boston. Too many of you are familiar with Boston already—or at least familiar with "famous" boston—The Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Quincy Market, maybe even the South End. I'd like to have cities about which you're curious—cities in which you might find yourselves living. Enough of that. We'll see what happens in class.

For *Thursday, February 21*

Happy Eve of George Washington's Birthday.

Read, in Rybczynski,

Chapter 5, "*In the Land of the Dollar*" 110-130

Chapter 6, "*Civic Art*" 131-148

These two chapters focus on Chicago, the city in which I did my undergraduate training. I'm not ruling Chicago out as one of our focal cities, though we will have ample exposure to it here, and in Studs' Terkel's book. You've seen a bit of "Civic Art" in the video "The Garden and the Grid" which I showed a week ago. I may be showing another video from the same series, entitled "Proud Towers". Alternately, I may ask you to watch it from home. It is available as a streaming video through our library.

The chief questions we need to explore here are these: First, how does *transportation* (chiefly the railroad) and *heavy industry* (manufacturing) transform the urban experience? Which is more important, or is this a story like "love and marriage"—as the song goes, "you can't have one without the other"?