

Geography of the Contemporary City

Code: 100081
 ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Humanities	OT	3
Humanities	OT	4

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Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

A commitment to regularly follow class sessions and actively participate in them is required. Students should have skills on Catalan language and on Spanish language equal or higher than B2 level. Students should be able to read texts in Catalan, Spanish, English, French and Italian.

Objectives and Contextualisation

Academic, scientific, political and ethical proposal:

The course is an introduction to the study of the contemporary city (19th to 21st centuries) as a neuralgic center of the political, economic, social and cultural dynamics of today's increasingly urbanized society. From the perspective of the social and human sciences, the global urbanization process and the problems it poses are exposed. The most significant moments in the recent history of urban transformations are highlighted with the explanation of concrete cases, with particular attention to the case of Barcelona. The different conceptions of the city in social thought and the main tendencies of urbanism in Europe and North America are analyzed. The relationship between city and culture is approached from different areas: the new multicultural social reality, the role of culture in urban requalification and the relationship between city, literature and cinema.

It seeks to learn to:

- read the changes that are taking place in the city, understood as a reality inherited in a constant process of construction;
- understand the city as the result of the actions of different social agents, each of them pursuing different political, social and economic interests, framed in changing cultural contexts according to the dynamics of each recent historical moment;
- interpret the different dimensions of urban reality in the globalization and neoliberalism scenarios, which enhances the role of cities as managers of the world economy while accentuating their internal social and cultural problems;
- build a critical view of the urban fact, understood as: an ethical commitment and a political positioning facing the injustices, imbalances and inequalities that occur in the contemporary city; a social implication in the transformation of the city, as citizens and as scientists; a capacity to generate a critical and own discourse in front of the urban reality, and before the external and dominant discourses.
- refer this conceptual and practical baggage in the most immediate urban reality, that is, metropolitan Barcelona.

Competences

Humanities

- Interpreting social and cultural diversity.
- Students must be capable of collecting and interpreting relevant data (usually within their area of study) in order to make statements that reflect social, scientific or ethical relevant issues.
- Students must have and understand knowledge of an area of study built on the basis of general secondary education, and while it relies on some advanced textbooks it also includes some aspects coming from the forefront of its field of study.

Learning Outcomes

1. Describing spatial relationships of the physical, economic, social and cultural diversity of territories on different territorial scales.
2. Describing the main characteristics in general of the contemporary city, and specially in metropolitan regions.
3. Describing the main economic, social and cultural contemporary problems in the world.
4. Summarising characteristics of a written text according to its communicative purposes.

Content

(Very) orientative program

Structure and configuration of urban space

- The city: a reflection on the contemporary urban phenomenon. The city in social thought. The city, social product. Urban social agents. The urban acceleration of the contemporary world.

The city of the 19th century: social reform and the origins of modern urbanism.

- Europe: industrialization and urbanization; the emergence of large cities. The urban social issue and the origins of modern urbanism. Urban Utopias. Garden city. City and modernity. City and literature.

The city of the 20th century: between the suburb and the ghetto

- From the city-factory to the tertiary metropolis. Urban transformations in Europe. The rationalist movement and the reformist urban planning. The North American experience: the creation of the suburban city. City and cinema.

The postmodern city: culture, representation, difference

- The informational revolution and late capitalism: the renewed protagonism of cities and their productive and locational logic. Globalization and formation of a world system of cities. Big cities, main cities, global cities. The increasing complexity of the postindustrial urban space: from the compact city to the dispersed urbanization. The current urban culture and urban renewal policies. Architecture and urban form. City and real estate speculation. Competition and competitiveness between cities. The city in the «global south» countries. City and music.

The scenarios of the contemporary city

- Urban social polarization. The dual city. The spaces of the dual city: areas of overcentrality; degraded peripheries; ethnic ghettos; elitist gentrification; closed communities. The spectacle city: leisure, culture, consumption. Cities for sale, urban marketing (museums, tourism, shopping centers). The hyperreal city; the disneyficated city; the themed city. The memory of the city. The sustainable city: the environmental crisis. Public space and citizenship. Hybridity and multiculturalism. The rebel city. City and graffiti

Practices on construction and destruction, use and resistance in the neoliberal city

- Community and coexistence: social relations in the city. The spaces of difference, division and exclusion. The policies in/of the urban space. Capital and culture: gentrifying the city. Urban stories: identity and subjectivity in

the city; urban social integration. Building urban territories: urban cultures and spatial strategies. Housing and speculation. Urban social movements: citizenship and participation. Use and resistance in/of the public spaces of the neoliberal city. Infrastructures, transport, mobility. Urban planning, strategic plans, urban projects

Barcelona

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Theoretical sessions	50	2	
Type: Supervised			
Practical sessions	10	0.4	
Type: Autonomous			
Autonomous activities	40	1.6	

Structure of the course

Presential classes are «theoretical» (exposition by the professor) and «practical» (readings, debates in forum based on texts).

In the UAB's Campus Virtual there is essential documentation and information for the course, both regarding the organizational aspects of the subject and in relation to the thematic contents of it. It is important to access Campus Virtual often.

Possible teaching-learning strategies developed by the teacher:

- teaching in master classes;
- organization of the forum and debate sessions;
- teaching of practical sessions;
- proposal and guide in mandatory readings;
- tutorials of the essays;
- case development;
- eventually, participation of external speakers;
- eventually, field trips and visits to exhibitions.

Activities that, foreseeably, the students will realize:

- unavoidable presence/follow-up to class sessions;
- necessary participation in the forum and debate sessions;
- necessary participation in the practical sessions;
- systematic reading of mandatory texts;
- presentation of summaries and reviews;
- presence to eventual field trips and visits to exhibitions;
- short exercises during lectures;
- development of a short essay (written, individual, supervised by the teacher);
- preparation and public presentation (oral, in group, tutored by the teacher) of a discussion forum on a topic related to geographical thought;
- a written or oral test.

By imposition, the teaching guide of this course includes the formula of citing some «competences», «hours», «training activities» and «learning outcomes», even though they do not correspond to the professor's criteria.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Discussion forum based in proposed readings	25%	5	0.2	2, 1
Individual test	25%	5	0.2	2
Short basic essay	25%	20	0.8	3
Written summary of the proposed readings and participation in class	25%	20	0.8	2, 4

Continuous evaluation

Evaluation of the theoretical classes:

- Short creative essay. Written, individual. [The evaluation will assess the appropriate expression, coherence in the development, bibliography management, originality, etc.].
- Individual test. [The evaluation will assess the assimilation of knowledge, the capacity for analysis, synthesis and interpretation].

Evaluation of practical classes:

- Thematic discussion-forum based on the proposed readings. Collective work (oral and written) directed by two or three speakers following the calendar established in the first class session. Once presented, the speakers will have a week to deliver it in written or graphic form (non-extendable). [The evaluation will assess the preparation -including tutorials with the teacher-, the oral presentation and presentation -in group- of the debate-forum, the correct and adequate oral expression, bibliography management, the team work, the graphic presentation of the results].
- Written summary of each of the mandatory readings; participation at class. Individual work. A minimum of abstracts must be submitted. [The evaluation will assess the capacity for synthesis and capture-abstraction of the main ideas; the presence, attitude, participation and contributions in the class discussions made from the readings will be valued in a special way].

Single evaluation

Evaluation of the theoretical classes:

- Short creative essay. Written, individual. [The evaluation will assess the appropriate expression, coherence in the development, bibliography management, originality, etc.].
- Individual test. [The evaluation will assess the assimilation of knowledge, the capacity for analysis, synthesis and interpretation].

Evaluation of practical classes:

- Thematic report based on the proposed readings. [The evaluation will assess the preparation -including tutorials with the teacher-, the oral presentation and presentation -in group- of the debate-forum, the correct and adequate oral expression, bibliography management, the team work, the graphic presentation of the results].
- Written summary of each of the mandatory readings. Individual work. A minimum of abstracts must be submitted. [The evaluation will assess the capacity for synthesis and capture-abstraction of the main ideas; the presence, attitude, participation and contributions in the class discussions made from the readings will be valued in a special way].

The same «non-assessable» criterion will be applied as for continuous evaluation. The review of the final qualification follows the same procedure as for the continuous evaluation.

On evaluation and reevaluation

On carrying out each evaluation activity, lecturers will inform students (on Moodle) of the procedures to be followed for reviewing all grades awarded, and the date on which such a review will take place. In order to be evaluated, all the evaluable parts must be submitted-presented, have attended a minimum of 80% of the class sessions and have actively participated in the class sessions and discussion-forum. The non-presentation of any of the evaluable parts will lead to a «Not evaluated» as the final grade. In order to pass, a minimum score of 3,5 must be reached in every evaluative part. In order to be re-evaluated it is necessary to have presented all the evaluable parts. Only creative essay and individual proof may be reevaluated. In the re-evaluation, the overall maximum score will be 5. The re-evaluation will not serve, in any case, to «improve grade». The date for making this recovery will, in principle, be the one proposed by the Faculty.

According to the regulations of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and of the UAB, «the copying or plagiarism of material, both in the case of assignments and in the case of exams, constitutes a crime that will be sanctioned with a zero in the activity. The reproduction, total or partial, of the work of another person or source is considered "copying". "Plagiarism" is the act of presenting all or part of an author's text as one's own, without citing the sources». Those assessment acts in which there have been irregularities (copying, plagiarism) will not be recoverable. In the event of a student committing any irregularity that may lead to a significant variation in the grade awarded to an assessment activity, the student will be given a zero for this activity, regardless of any disciplinary process that may take place. In the event of several irregularities in assessment activities of the same subject, the student will be given a zero as the final grade for this subject. This subject allows the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies exclusively for text correction. Anyway, the student must clearly identify which parts AI has been used and the tools/apps employed. Lack of transparency regarding the use of AI in any assessed activity will be considered academic dishonesty; the corresponding grade may be lowered, or the work may even be awarded a zero. In cases of greater infringement, more serious action may be taken.

Bibliography

Some general bibliographic cues:

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For each theme of the program, the professor will provide a specific bibliography.

Software

Word processor (MS Word), power-point and Internet access.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(PAUL) Classroom practices	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed
(TE) Theory	1	Catalan	second semester	morning-mixed