

**RI: Honors The City and Its Underground:
Metropolis and Counterculture in Modern Europe (3
Credits)
HIS 4405
AD 204
Fall 2021**

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Course Description

In this course we will spend the entire semester working on the mapping out a central feature of urban cultural geography. As a group we will explore and define what some scholars refer to as “the urban underground.” We will study and discuss a wide, interdisciplinary range of materials, including history, film, urban geography, and even biology. Subject matter, region and historical period vary widely, but in each case, our texts will have two features in common: they are set in cities, and they concern aspects of urban life that are inconspicuous, concealed, out of the public eye, and often illegal. Keeping a reading response journal and creating your own independent research project, you will take part in our collective effort to define the urban underground. Questions central to this course include:

- 1) How do cities create countercultures (or undergrounds)?
- 2) Why do cities in particular breed underground communities?
- 3) How does a city’s underground help define or shape the larger urban whole?
- 4) What different kinds of underground exist and how are they related to one another?
- 5) To what extent are undergrounds beneficial (or detrimental) to the city, and civilization, as a whole?

Course Objectives

By the end of this class students will have acquired the tools of urban history and urban studies and be able to understand the dynamic role of urban space in the production of culture. They will also have gained an ability to formulate a research topic, conduct research in primary source materials, and present their research effectively in both verbal and written formats.

Research Journals

Purchase a composition notebook and a three highlighter pens (yellow, pink and orange). For each reading assignment keep a journal in which you respond to the material. Your journal entries can be as long as you like, but they must include at least: 1) three observations on how the reading expands your understanding of the underground; 2) three questions about the underground that arise from your reading, and 3) at least one idea, related to the reading or not, for developing your own research project. When you are finished with your journal entry, highlight the observations in yellow, the questions in pink and the research ideas in orange.

Thoughtful and engaged journal entries will receive 90-100 points. Adequate entries will receive a 80-90 points. Inadequate entries will receive below 80 points.

Research Projects

The main project in this class is to produce your own personal contribution to the history and analysis of urban undergrounds. You will write a (minimum) 12-page study of an urban underground of your choosing. A list of possible topics can be found on the final page of this syllabus. *You should be working on your project throughout the semester*, and you will have to produce an outline and thesis by October 8th. When considering your project, think of a theme, region or time period you're interested in, and make sure your topic involves an urban subculture or counterculture. You will give a 20-30 minute graded presentation on your topic on one of the two presentation days at the end of the semester.

Grades for the presentation will depend on content (70%) and delivery (30%)

Research Intensive Course

This is a research intensive class. As such it promotes the following 6 outcomes:

- 1) Students will acquire a solid core knowledge of urban history and urban geography as it relates to undergrounds and countercultures.
- 2) Each student will formulate an independent and original research question involving urban space and underground or countercultural movements or activities (see topic suggestions below).
- 3) Each student will create a plan of action for completing his or her research.
- 4) Class discussion and other assignments will help students develop the critical thinking skills that will enable them to evaluate and interpret the sources they use for their research.
- 5) Students will keep in mind ethical issues concerning the role of countercultural and/or underground movements and incorporate relevant ethical questions into their research.
- 6) Students will learn the communication skills proper to the transmission of research findings in the discipline of history.

Research Assessment

This course contains an assignment or multiple assignments designed to help students conduct research and inquiry at an intensive level. If this class is selected to participate in the university-wide assessment program, students will be asked to complete a consent form and submit electronically some of their research assignments for review. Visit the Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI) for additional opportunities and information at <http://www.fau.edu/ouri>.

Note on Honors Distinction

Not only is this a research intensive course, but it also differs substantially from a non-Honors course in its profoundly interdisciplinary nature. This class requires students to do original research on primary sources in what is essentially a special field between urban studies, geography, cultural studies and history that can only be called *sui generis*. This course can be taught either as an honors undergraduate class or as a graduate class, the distinction between the two being minimal.

Prerequisites

In order to enroll in this course, students need to have taken at least one prior history course or gained the consent of the instructor.

Classroom Etiquette Policy

In order to enhance and maintain a productive atmosphere for education, personal communication devices, such as cellular telephones and pagers, are to be disabled in class sessions.

Attendance Policy Statement

Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance.

Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services

(CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling>.

Student Accessibility Services

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU’s campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at www.fau.edu/sas/.

Academic Integrity Policy

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see [University Regulation 4.001](#). Please also see the Honors College’s academic [Honor Code](#).

Incomplete Grades

Florida Atlantic University’s policies regarding “incomplete” grades can be found in the [University Catalog](#).

Grade Scale

- 90-100 (A)
- 80-90 (B)
- 70-80 (C)
- 60-70 (D)
- 60 or below (F)

Grades

Journals.....	30%
Participation.....	20%
Presentation.....	20%
Research Project.....	30%

Films

- Mira Nair’s *Salaam Bombay*
- Stephen Frear’s *Dirty, Pretty Things*
- Martin Scorsese’s *Goodfellas*
- Sam Green and Bill Siegel’s *The Weather Underground*

Books and Supplies to Buy

One composition book
Three highlighter pens (yellow, pink and orange)

Course Outline

Urban Conditions

August 26

Introducing the Underground

September 2

The City: A Rat's-Eye View

Reading:

Robert Sullivan, *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants* (1-26, 97-112, 220-227)

September 9

The Literal Underground: Urban Geography

Reading: Peter Ackroyd, *London Under* Excerpted pages (pp??)

September 16

Surviving and Exploiting the Urban Environment I

Reading:

Excerpts from Kellow Chesney, *Pickpockets, Beggars and Ratcatchers: Life in the Victorian Underworld* (38-59, 91-127) and Excerpts from Sarah Wise, *The Italian Boy: A Tale of Murder and Body Snatching in 1830s London* (xiii-48, 71-91, 165-192, 299-311)

Surviving and Exploiting the Urban Environment II

Film: *Salaam Bombay*

September 23

Surviving and Exploiting the Urban Environment III

Reading: Excerpt from Luc Sante, *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York* (301-362) and excerpt from Diego Gambetta, *Codes of the Underworld: How Criminals Communicate* (3-53)

September 30

Surviving and Exploiting the Urban Environment IV

Film: *Goodfellas*

October 7

Surviving and Exploiting the Urban Environment V

Excerpts from Underground America

[Thesis, Outline, Bibliography Due Today!]

October 14

Surviving and Exploiting the Urban Environment VI

Film: Dirty, Pretty Things

October 21

Subculture and Style in the City

Reading:

Excerpt from Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*
Subculture and style (84-127)

Film: *The Filth and the Fury*

October 28

Where is Bohemia?

Reading:

Excerpt from Elizabeth Wilson, *Bohemians: the Glamorous Outcasts* (1-51, 159-178, 195-207)

November 4

The City and Sexuality

Reading:

Excerpt from Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957* (1-13, 43-67, 139-194)

November 11

Veteran's Day Holiday

November 18

Political Undergrounds

Reading:

Ely: "Organized Troglodytes"

Film: "The Weather Underground"

November 25

Presentations

[Final Project Due: December 3]

List of Topic Ideas

As long as your subject is based in an urban environment, and needs to remain at least partially hidden, it should be workable. We will discuss options over the course of the semester.

- *Left Bank Paris/Greenwich Village/Soho, Haight-Ashbury, etc. (urban bohemia or counterculture)
- *1950s beatnik culture
- *The cabaret world of Weimar Berlin or the equivalent elsewhere
- *The Japanese Yakusa Crime Underground or any other mafia or criminal underground
- *An underground culture set up in order to carry out some version of organized crime
- *Underground zines
- *Underground hacker subculture
- *Underground music or film scenes
- *The Floating worlds of Tokugawa Japan
- *Any radical political movement hidden from the law in any part of the world
- *Any “cult” or outlawed religion in an urban base (like Christianity in ancient Rome)
- *Any urban countercultural movement
- *A red light district, or equivalent
- *Any political (anti-governmental) underground
- *Any underground form of profit making (i.e. black markets, fenced goods, etc.)
- *Sexual fetish underground
- *Any urban mafia or organized gang
- *Illegal sports underground (dog-fighting, fight clubs, gambling, etc.)
- *Any underground militia in an occupied country, also known as an insurgency or resistance
- *Examination of an underground described in a literary text