Growth and Structure of Cities

APPROPRIATE ENTRY COURSES FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS:

Term I: City 185 Urban Culture and Society
(McDonogh/Raddatz/Restrepo, M,W 1:10-2:30)
A survey of the interactions of space, social formation and ideas across
global cities, enhanced by hands-on experience and analysis in Greater
Philadelphia beginning with Ardmore and Bryn Mawr and reaching
outwards in peoples, issues and solutions. 40 slots are reserved for BMC
and HC first year students in the three sections of the course.

Term II City 190 Form of the City
(Lee 9:55-11:15, 11:25-12:45)
A broad historical view of visual and formal elements of architecture,
urbanism and planning worldwide, from early history to contemporary
issues. Students should also develop skills and interests in a wide range of
cross-listed and corollary courses at the introductory level. Again, the
course will be taught in two smaller sections to stimulate discussion.

DEFINING A UNIQUE INTERDISCIPLINARY MAJOR

Since its foundation in 1971, Growth and Structure of Cities at Bryn
Mawr College has built on a deep interdisciplinary commitment to the city
as an object of study. This goal of research and teaching shapes not only
our classes, within a wider liberal arts education, but also the interactions
we encourage among students as citizens and practitioners. To realize
these goals, we integrate analyses of space, form and the history of the
built environment with the theories and methods of politics, economics
and socio-cultural studies, both qualitative and quantitative. Hence, we
encourage students to think in terms of both theory and practice through
engagement with real communities and issues worldwide. In short, the
ideal Cities student should be able to look at and solve problems from
multiple vantages, ranging from architectural and visual understanding to
statistics. At the same time, this student should develop multicultural and
global perspectives through comparative readings and discussions of
urban formal, social and cultural issues over time and through exposure to the unique urban laboratory of Greater Philadelphia.

At an advanced level, we encourage focused study of particular cities and problems through advanced seminars, JYA and required senior theses which have been completed by more than 700 graduated majors from Haverford and Bryn Mawr over more than four decades. These alums constitute an engaged network for current students as well. Within Bi-Co’s wider liberal arts discussions, Cities students develop critical perspectives toward urban-related careers they may choose to pursue after graduation. Future architects learn to talk to community organizers and to consider public finance as well as aesthetics. Media analysts share thoughts about access and power with ecologists and policy scholars. Future planners learn to question the tools and categories of their field as social constructs which may blind them to other people and solutions. These discussions, in and out of class, involve all students and faculty, our active alumnae/ni, and distinguished visitors.

MOVING ONWARDS: THE MAJOR

Students MUST take a total of ten courses (two at the 300-level) plus the thesis to complete the major. At the intermediate level, students should complete major requirements with an architectural survey –American, Modern, Western – and City 229 (Comparative Urbanism) by their sophomore year if possible. The survey increases their experience and use of spatial forms while Comparative Urbanism is a research and writing intensive course built around four cities and a shared theme. The theme for 2019 will be Colonial and Post-Colonial Urbanism, looking at Hong Kong, Belfast, Paris and the Maghreb, and San Juan, Puerto Rico. We also encourage students to take appropriate classes in methods, quantitative, qualitative and visual, as well as GIS.

This is also the point at which many students explore our design studios (City 226/228, Daniela Voith/Sam Olshin) as pathways into architecture or as complements to many other urban interests. In addition, we offer courses on environmental and urban history that link Cities to ES. All these courses prepare students for Junior Year Abroad and the capstone thesis in fall of the senior year.

We believe strongly in the value of one semester of JYA to expose students to new cities and language skills; popular programs include Copenhagen (DIS), Barcelona, Paris, various London programs, and Cape Town. Meanwhile, students develop mentoring relations with our regular
faculty and visitors. Juniors also will prepare for independent research in
the summer and their thesis, the capstone of the Cities program, which is
completed in fall of the senior year. Internships, during the summer and for
credit during the term, also constitute a vital part of the major experience;
Cities has long term relations with institutions as varied as the Philadelphia
Planning Commission, the Parks Alliance, and the Philadelphia Chinatown
Development Corporation.

Ultimately, each major work plan reflects individual student interests,
contributing to growth and change in the major. Yet, planning also should
embody careful choices of Cities and related courses. This may lead
students towards design, planning, social justice issues, studies of urban
cultures, environmental questions or along numerous other routes.
Recognizing the interdisciplinary demands of urban issues today, Cities
also asks that each student designate four courses that complement their
major and enhance their expertise. This may seem confusing at first, but
there is a particular responsibility in an interdisciplinary major that students
find concrete grounding as well as a wide vision. Students frequently work
with Environmental Studies, Economics, Political Science or International
Studies. Architecture students need physics and calculus to go on in
graduate programs. Students also combine their work in Cities with
Education or language and cultural studies in Spanish, French and
German, and some pursue interests as varied as Mass Media and Public
Health in their undergraduate and post-graduate lives. Here again, the
Senior Conference crystallizes ideas and issues in a scholarly community.

WHAT DO STUDENTS DO AFTER CITIES?

Cities offers a popular 3/2 program in Planning with U Penn as well as
possible BA/MA arrangements within BMC. Cities graduates have gone
on to careers in architecture, planning, development, education, mass
media, medicine, government, law, real estate and business. They have
also pursued academic life in many fields, from History of Art to American
Studies to Geography to Public Policy. Our 700+ alums worldwide
continue to return and engage students and faculty in creative discussions
and projects and to form nuclei for urban thought and action across the
globe.