Growth and Structure of Cities

APPROPRIATE ENTRY COURSES FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS:

Term I: City 185 Urban Culture and Society
(McDonogh/Raddatz, M,W 1:10-2:30 Taylor F and Taylor G)
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 two sections of the course.

Term II City 190 Form of the City
(M,W 1:10-2:30, 2:30-4:00 Lee)
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 commitment to the city as an object of
study and to interdisciplinary teaching and research, both within our
classes and within a wider liberal arts education. 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. We also encourage students to
think in terms of both theory and practice through engagement with real
communities and issues worldwide. Hence, 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,
students 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 600 graduated majors from Haverford and Bryn Mawr over more than four decades – alms who constitute and active and 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. Future planners learn to question the tools and categories of their field as social constructs which may blind them to other people and solutions. Computer designers think about access and power, while ecologists, policy scholars and film analysts share global insights. 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 2018 is global suburbia, looking at Greater Philadelphia, Paris, Buenos Aires and Hong Kong; in 2019 it will be Colonial and Post-Colonial cities. In addition, we encourage methods classes in visual methods and quantitative methods 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 during the term, also constitute a vital part of the major experience.

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 seems confusing at first, but we think there is a particular responsibility in an interdisciplinary major that students have 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 600+ 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.