

## SYLLABUS

HNRS 353-004 CITIES  
Spring 2016

J. Trefil  
207 East Bldg  
(703)993-2183  
[jtrefil@gmu.edu](mailto:jtrefil@gmu.edu)

Jan. 23 Group organization, overview of course, first writing assignment, form groups and develop individual group assignments

Jan. 30 private meeting with instructor to evaluate first writing assignment, set course goals

Feb. 7 The agricultural revolution and the beginning of cities NATURE, CH 1-3

SPRAWL CH 1-6

Feb. 14 The development of cities

SPRAWL, CH 13,

NATURE, CH 10-13

Feb. 21 Group meetings with instructor for 'rough draft' presentation

Feb 28 How the DC area developed and how it works today BOOK REPORT DUE  
Group presentations, new group assignments

March 6-- private meetings with instructor to evaluate written work and presentation, initial discussion of term paper

March 13-19 NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

March 20-- New Technologies, group work on new presentations

March 27 — Group meetings with instructor for 'rough draft' presentation

April 3-- Group presentations -- the future of the DC area

April 10-- private meeting with instructor to evaluate written assignment and presentation, develop term paper

April 17 -- private meetings with instructor to develop term paper (as needed)

April 24—Urban futures, final private meeting to develop term paper (as needed)

May 1-- presentation of term papers, overall discussion

### BOOKS

'NATURE' = HUMAN NATURE, James Trefil

'SPRAWL' = SPRAWL, Robert Breugmann

## WRITING ASSIGNMENT: OBSERVING THE CITY

Due Jan 30

NOTE: You will discuss this paper individually with the instructor. The meeting will **NOT** be in the classroom, but in his office in 207 East Building

The first assignment will be a 500 word essay based on your observation of some aspect of the city. You will

- 1) pick some place in the city—this can be a shopping mall (Tyson's Corner is a popular choice), a metro station, an institution like a library or city hall, a museum, and so on.
- 2) Watch what happens in that place for a couple of hours. What is going on? Who is coming and going? What are they doing?
- 3) Based on your observations, ask an interesting question about that part of the city and answer it.

Examples:

How do people get here?  
What do they do while they're here?  
How long do they stay?  
What kind of buildings are involved?  
Do people seem happy?

NOTE: You must leave the GMU campus to complete this assignment unless you have advance permission from the instructor to remain here.

Write up your results in a 500 word essay and bring it to the instructor's office at the time you signed up for on the sign up sheet. It will be the basis for a discussion of the goals we will set for you in the course.

NOTE: Your work will be evaluated partly on the basis of the quality of your observations, and partly on how interesting a question you ask. Be creative!

## BOOK REPORT ASSIGNMENT

Due Feb. 28

The purpose of this assignment is to allow you to convince me that you have read the assigned reading. This will be a 500 word report in which you will pick one topic from either book, either from the chapters that have been assigned or from those that have not, and

- Explain what the author does in this section
  - Explain how the section relates to the development in class so far
- There will be no bibliography, but you will need to identify the place where your topic can be found by giving me the book title and page number

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

HNRS 353 CITIES  
Spring 2016

J. Trefil  
207 East Bldg  
(703)993-2183  
[jtrefil@gmu.edu](mailto:jtrefil@gmu.edu)

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will be built around a simple question: What will the DC area look like in 50 years? We will trace the technological advances, from agriculture to IT, that shaped the modern city, then look at new technologies and try to predict how they will shape the future. Students will work in interdisciplinary teams to present various topics to the class, and there will be several individual writing assignments that will be closely supervised by the instructor.

### ABOUT THE COURSE

This course is going to stress individual research and the development of communication skills. If you are looking for the standard lecture-exam-term paper format you will be disappointed. The course will emphasize communicating ideas. You will get practice in three areas: (1) making presentations as part of a group, (2) writing short essays on specific topics, and (3) writing a longer report. In each area there will be individual meetings with the instructor to evaluate and improve student skills.

### RESEARCH TEAMS

During the first class we will split the class into five research teams of 5-6 people each. Each team will choose a topic for later presentation from a list prepared by the instructor, and individual members of the team will be assigned specific areas to cover. The general topic will be "How the DC Areas Works and How It Got to be That Way". Teams might choose to talk about subjects like transportation, communication, water supply, energy, and so on. After the team topic is approved by the instructor, individuals in the team will take on specific assignments – for example, if the general team topic is transportation, one member may discuss highways, another public transportation, another train systems, and so on. Each team will meet privately with the instructor to present a 'rough draft' version of their report before the report is presented to the class as a whole, and each student will meet privately with the instructor after the presentation for discussion.

The team can decide how its presentation to the class will be made, but all presentations must be in PowerPoint. In addition, each individual member of the team will write a 500 word paper describing his or her individual topic. These papers will be discussed, along with the presentation, in a private meeting with the instructor as scheduled. All written work in this course must be done on a word processor. Each

student in the class will be asked to turn in a list of questions or comments (one per group presentation) at the end of the class period in which presentations are made.

Later in the term, the teams will go through a similar process for presentations on the topic of "What is the Future of the DC Area?"

#### TERM PAPER

The last part of the course will be taken up by the development of a term paper. These will be done individually, and will be written on a topic to be chosen by the student and approved by the instructor. Students will meet individually with the instructor to develop their papers, and the papers will be due the last day of class. Further details will be given in a future handout.

On the last day of class, each student will hand in a portfolio consisting of all written (and/or revised) work and the term paper.

NOTE: I AM TEACHING TWO SECTIONS OF HNRS 353 THIS SEMESTER. WHEN SENDING EMAILS, PLEASE SPECIFY 'HNRS 353 CITIES' SO I KNOW WHICH SECTION YOU ARE IN