This course explores the interplay between the physical spaces of American cities and the class and racial identities of urban residents. Focusing on Boston’s and Cambridge’s history from the 1960s to the present, we ask how spaces (from sidewalks to university campuses) shape residents’ images of themselves and their neighbors. Course readings and assignments emphasize the contested nature of decision making processes, focusing on debates among politicians, courts, university officials, and neighborhood groups to determine residential and educational policies.
We begin the course by examining a pioneering work in the field of urban studies: Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). Jacobs vehemently critiqued programs for urban renewal and instead celebrated the vitality of social spaces found in older urban neighborhoods such as Boston’s North End and New York’s Greenwich Village. For the first essay, students focus on the skill of closely examining a single text by assessing her claims about the importance of sidewalks and other public spaces in promoting public safety and social cohesion. As a class, we visit the North End and discuss Jacobs’s characterization of this neighborhood.

We then turn to one of the most tumultuous times in Boston’s history as we investigate the protests surrounding the implementation of forced busing to integrate the Boston Public Schools in the 1970s. This period continues to be the subject of considerable debate, with scholars offering conflicting accounts of the role of racial, ethnic, class, and gender-based identities among opponents of busing. For the second essay, students develop the ability to assess and respond to a scholarly debate, evaluating and comparing conflicting accounts.

We build on the skills developed in the first two assignments in a final research paper that considers Harvard’s own history of class, race, and space. Students first explore scholarship regarding “town gown” relations more generally and then conduct original research regarding a key episode in Harvard’s interactions with neighboring residents in Boston or Cambridge. We meet with librarians and archivists, learning about a variety of approaches to research in urban history. At the end of the semester, students, working in small groups, present their work at a public panel, discussing the ways that lessons from Harvard’s past might inform current plans to develop the Harvard’s campus in Allston. These presentations provide students with an opportunity to practice the skill of presenting academic research to wider audiences and to engage in conversations with community members about Harvard’s past, present, and future.

These three assignments introduce first-year students to the fundamental elements of academic writing in preparation for their future courses at Harvard. They teach students how to:

• pose an analytical question or problem that will make a paper’s argument necessary;
• craft a thesis that is arguable, not self-evident or descriptive;
• substantiate the thesis with thoughtfully analyzed evidence;
• anticipate and respond to objections to an argument;
• structure an argument logically;
• use primary and secondary sources responsibly, including how to avoid plagiarizing.
• locate and evaluate sources in both the physical and online resources of Harvard’s libraries;
• understand the roles that their sources will play in their papers;
• integrate and properly cite their sources.¹

**Required Texts:**

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* available for at the COOP.
- Course pack available at Gnomon Copy.

¹ For more information on the goals of Expos 20, see http://writingprogram.fas.harvard.edu/pages/expos-20-0.
Synopsis of Major Assignments:

**Essay One: Jane Jacobs and The Death and Life of Great American Cities**
*Close Reading Analysis (5-6 pages; 1500-1900 words)*

**Assignment**

Argue for an interpretation of an important aspect of Jane Jacobs’s views in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Explore a theme that you feel is important to the development of her argument and assess how she constructs that argument – her assumptions, her use of evidence, her reasoning, etc. Your own evidence should derive directly from the text, and your analysis should be based on your close reading of key passages.

**Readings**


**Essay Two: Conflicting Accounts of Boston’s Busing Crisis**
*Intervene in a Debate (6-8 pages; 1800-2500 words)*

**Assignment**

The role of racial, ethnic, class, and/or gender-based identities in the opposition to busing in Boston continues to be a subject of historical debate. For this assignment, you will read four interpretations of this incident. Your assignment is to “identify, compare, and evaluate” the arguments of two to four of these interpretations.

**Readings**

Essay Three: Harvard’s “Town Gown” Relations
Multi-Source Research Essay Analyzing Primary Sources (8-10 pages; 2,400 to 3,100 words)

Assignment

Offer an interpretive argument about an important episode in Harvard’s relations with residents of Boston and/or Cambridge. Support that argument with an examination and comparison of accounts in primary sources, considering the perspective of each source and noting discrepancies and/or points of agreement.

Readings


*** Your research materials

Due Dates (subject to change):

Essay One
Thursday, 9/10 – Three Analytical Questions Due at 11:59 PM
Friday, 9/18 – Pre-draft Introduction of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM
Tuesday, 9/22 – Draft of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM
Friday, 10/2 – Revision of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM

Essay Two
Thursday, 10/8 – Response Paper for Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
Tuesday, 10/13 – Draft of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
Sunday, 10/18 – Point Outline of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
Sunday, 10/25 – Revision of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM

Essay Three
Sunday, 11/1 – Research Proposal for Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
Sunday, 11/8 – Annotated Bibliography Due at 11:59 PM
Sunday, 11/15 – Pre-draft Body Paragraph of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
Wednesday, 11/18 – Draft of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
Sunday 12/6 – Revision of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
TBD – Panel Presentations
Final Grades:

Revision of Essay 1 15%
Revision of Essay 2 30%
Revision of Essay 3 40%
Final Presentations 5%
Participation 10%

Participation encompasses active participation in class discussions, pre- and post-draft assignments, drafts, cover letters, and workshop letters to your peers. If you neglect to submit these written assignments, you will not receive credit towards your participation grade.

Please note that I expect your revisions to be free of grammatical, spelling, and formatting errors. I am happy to explain any technical issues that seem confusing or obscure. Failure to meet these expectations may result in a lowered final grade.

Extensions and Late Papers:

I will be happy to grant each of you ONE extension of 24 hours on a pre-draft, response paper, or a draft. After you have used this extension, I will not be able to offer feedback on late assignments. The deadlines for revisions, however, are firm. I will deduct 1/3 of a grade for every 24 hours that the revisions of essays one and two are late (an A would become an A-, an A- a B+, etc.) I cannot accept any late papers for the revision of essay three.

Library and Archival Visits:

Our meetings with professional librarians and archivists are an integral part of learning to conduct research. We will be visiting Lamont Library during our regularly scheduled class times on October 27 to meet with Susan Gilroy, Librarian for Undergraduate Programs for Writing, Harvard University Archives on November 3 to meet with Barbara Meloni, Public Services Archivist, and the Cambridge Public Library on November 5 to meet with Alyssa Pacy, Archivist. In order for us to make the best use of our time on these days, you should plan to take a tour of Widener before October 27. Tours run on Thursdays from 3:00-4:00. They begin by the Security Desk at the main (Yard) entrance of Widener.