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 take a walking tour of the North End to observe the physical spaces of the neighborhood.

We then turn to one of the most tumultuous times in Boston’s history as we investigate the protests surrounding the use 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 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 read scholarship on “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 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

**Texts:**
- Course pack available at Gnomon Copy
- Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*
- Jim Vrabel, *A People’s History of the New Boston*

¹ For more information on the goals of Expos, see [http://writingprogram.fas.harvard.edu/pages/expos-20-0](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)*

Explore the connections between a short passage in Jane Jacobs’s *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* and the larger argument of the book. Explain the importance of the passage in understanding that larger argument. Your evidence should derive directly from the text, and your analysis should be based on your close reading of key selections.

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

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

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

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.

**Tentative Due Dates (subject to change):**

*Essay One*
Mon Sept 19 – Pre-draft Introduction of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM
Sun Sept 25 – Draft of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM
Sun Oct 2 – Revision of Essay One Due at 11:59 PM

*Essay Two*
Sun Oct 9 – Response Paper for Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
Sun Oct 16 – Draft of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM
Wed Oct 19 – Outline of Essay Two at 11:59 PM
Tues Oct 25 – Revision of Essay Two Due at 11:59 PM

*Essay Three*
Sun Nov 6 – Research Proposal for Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
Sun Nov 13 – Annotated Bibliography Due at 11:59 PM
Sun Nov 20 – Draft of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
Thurs Dec 8 – Revisions of Essay Three Due at 11:59 PM
Mon or Tues Dec 12 or 13 – Panel Presentations at the Harvard Ed Portal in the evening