

Mega-Cities: Design Anthropology and Urban Landscapes

ITASIA 904 Information Technology and Society in Asia 904
Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, Tokyo University
Visiting Lecturer Jared Braiterman PhD

Day and Time: Every other Tuesday, from 8.30 am to 11.45 am, Summer semester 2011 (see Schedule)

Room: Fukutake Hall, Learning Studio 2, Floor B2

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Course Description

The Tohoku earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis are changing life now in Tokyo, the world's largest city. This graduate seminar examines historical, global, and contemporary visions of urban life. Will this year's reduced energy supplies lead to changes in shelter, food, transportation, and culture? Can mega-cities improve life in the larger regions that provide their essential social infrastructure?

Students will use academic texts, experiential observation, and social media to gain insights into urban landscapes and the rise of the mega-city as the defining feature of 21st century global life. Academic texts will include Tokyo and world history, urban planning, and architecture. Making Tokyo a case study allows us to also examine government, corporate, and independent sources.

Design anthropology theories and methods will be introduced, and students will apply them to issues of mobility, aging society, commerce, sub-cultures, urban agriculture, and sustainable living. Students will choose a Tokyo location for close observation and online documentation.

Course Evaluation

Students must complete all readings as assigned before class so that they can contribute to class discussion. The online project requires multiple visits per week to the selected Tokyo location, online documentation, and semi-weekly postings that connect student observations with course readings. Attendance at bi-weekly seminars is mandatory, and students will be assigned presentations of course readings and individual research projects. A 10 page research paper is due on July 4, 2011. The final online project is due July 26.

Attendance – 10%
Class participation – 20%
Online project – 30%
Written Work – 40%

Course Reading

Required books

Brown, Azby. *Just Enough: Lessons in Living Green from Edo Japan*. Kodansha, 2010.

Rowe, Peter. *East Asia Modern: Shaping the Contemporary City*. Reaktion Books, 2005.

Seidensticker, Edward. *Low City, High City: Tokyo from Edo to the Earthquake*. Knopf, 1983.

Steel, Carolyn. *Hungry City: How Food Shapes Our Lives*. Random House, 2009.

Availability: Brown's book can be found at Kinokuniya and other Tokyo bookstores. All books should be available new or used at Amazon or Amazon Japan. The first edition hard back copy of Seidensticker's book is available used on Amazon for under \$3, plus shipping.

Online sources and articles

Mori Building's Vertical Garden City

http://www.mori.co.jp/en/company/urban_design/vgc.html

Tokyo Metropolitan Government 10 Year Project for Green Tokyo (2007)

<http://www.kankyo.metro.tokyo.jp/kouhou/english/pdf/Project%20for%20Green%20Tokyo.pdf>

Chris Berthelsen's Fixes

<http://a-small-lab.com/fixes/>

World Policy Journal special issue on Megalopolis: The City of the 21st Century, winter 2010/2011. "New Urbanism" expert panel and Bruce Mau's "Urbanity, Revised."

Additional articles may be assigned.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings	Online documentation
Seminar 1 April 26, 2011	Introduction to Mega-cities and Design Anthropology		
Seminar 2 May 10, 2011	Competing Visions of Tokyo and its Future	Tokyo Metropolitan Govt, Mori Building, Fixes, and Brown Part I	Select 2-3 potential sites; 1-2 online platforms; share
Seminar 3 May 17, 2011	Edo Japan and sustainable living	Brown, Parts II and III World Policy Journal	Can you sense Edo traces? What could Edo-inspired reinvention look like?
Seminar 4 June 7, 2011	Food and urban life	Steel	Compare your location with attribute of historic cities: city/region; food/waste; mobility
Seminar 5 June 21, 2011	Tokyo modernism	Seidensticker	Signs of urban culture and change; larger stories embedded in specific places
Seminar 6 July 12, 2011	Asian mega-cities	Rowe	Connections between Tokyo and other Asian mega-cities: exchange, competition, uniqueness
Seminar 7 July 26, 2011	Student presentations	TBA	Final reflections on close observation: how can urban spaces be understood over time?