

Modernizing Barcelona: Urban Transformations & Social Movements

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: BCLA 3035

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: xxx

Course Description

This course explores the historical and contemporary transformations of Catalonia and Spain through the lenses of urban development, modernization, and social movements. From the Industrial Revolution to the present day, students will analyze key urban policies, economic shifts, and grassroots activism that have shaped the evolution of Spanish cities, particularly Barcelona. The course integrates historical case studies, urban planning debates, and field excursions to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of how cities function as political, economic, and cultural battlegrounds. Through critical readings, site visits, and discussion-based learning, students will engage with themes such as gentrification, labor struggles, anarchist movements, urban renewal, and the impact of global events like the Universal Expositions and the 1992 Olympics.

Content warning:

At times, this course intentionally invites students to engage with readings and content that are controversial. Students might find this disturbing. The intention is not to endorse perspectives but to rigorously engage with them. If certain material is emotionally challenging, students can discuss it with the faculty before or after class. Students may also leave the classroom without academic penalty if the discussion becomes too emotionally challenging. Students are, however, responsible for all missed material and so should arrange to get notes

from another student or see the faculty member individually.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- Analyze the impact of modernization and industrialization on urban development in Catalonia and Spain
- Examine the relationship between modernization, industrialization, and social movements in shaping urban landscapes
- Critically assess the role of international events (such as the Universal Expositions and the Olympic Games) in reshaping Barcelona
- Examine the impact of different political regimes on city planning and spatial organization
- Understand the historical and sociological dynamics of social movements in the region
- Evaluate the role of grassroots activism, labor unions, and citizen-led urban policies in resisting and shaping urban change
- Critically assess the role of Barcelona as a model for urban planning and social activism
- Apply fieldwork insights to critically analyze urban sites and integrate historical and contemporary challenges on urban transformation

Experiential Learning & Field Visits

Field study and experiential learning components may include:

- Visit the Barcelona History Museum (MUHBA)—explore Barcelona’s medieval urban structure and early modernization efforts.
- Tour of Colònia Güell—Visit one of Catalonia’s best-preserved industrial colonies and Gaudí’s unfinished crypt.
- Walking Tour of Eixample—Analyze Cerdà’s urban grid, modernist architecture, and its social impact.
- Poble Espanyol & Montjuïc—Explore the legacy of the 1929 Exposition and its architectural showcase.

- Air Raid Shelter Refugi 307—Visit an underground bomb shelter from the Civil War to understand wartime urban resilience.
- Spanish Civil War Tour with Nick Lloyd—Visit key sites in the Gothic Quarter and the Rambla related to the war (1936–1939). <https://thespanishcivilwar.com/>
- Bellvitge & Nou Barris Housing Projects—Examine Franco-era mass housing and urban planning policies.
- Visit Can Batlló, Sants District—a former industrial space transformed by community activism into a public center.
- Tour of the Olympic Ring at Montjuïc—Explore the urban transformations resulting from the 1992 Olympics.

Course Prerequisites

None

Required Reading / Materials

- Abelló, Teresa. “Anarchism in the Catalan-Speaking Countries: Between Syndicalism and Propaganda.” *Catalan Historical Review*, no. 3 (2010): 155–170. <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.1000.01.41>.
- Blanco, Ismael. “Does Barcelona Model Really Exist? Periods, Territories and Actors in the Process of Urban Transformation.” *Local Government Studies* 35, no. 3 (2009): 355–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930902854289>.
- Braudel, Fernand. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*. Translated by Siân Reynolds. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Brenan, Gerald. *The Spanish Labyrinth: An Account of the Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil War*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Brunet, Ferran. “The Economic Impact of the Barcelona Olympic Games, 1986–2004: Barcelona: The Legacy of the Games, 1992–2002.” Centre d’Estudis Olímpics UAB, 2005.
- Busquets, Joan. *Barcelona: Evolution of a Compact City*. Rovereto: Nicolodi, 2005.

- Calavita, Nicola, and Amador Ferrer. "Behind Barcelona's Success Story: Citizen Movements and Planners' Power." *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 6 (2000): 793–807. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009614420002600604>.
- Calhoun, Craig. *The Roots of Radicalism: Tradition, the Public Sphere, and Early 19th Century Social Movements*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.
- Carreras, Albert. "Typologies of industrialization: Lessons from Spain." *Revue française d'histoire économique* 1 (2019): 82–119. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rfhe.011.0082>.
- Casellas, Antònia. "Barcelona's Urban Landscape: The Historical Making of a Tourist Product." *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 6 (2009): 815–832. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144209339557>.
- Cazorla-Sánchez, Antonio. "Dictatorship from Below: Local Politics in the Making of the Francoist State, 1937–1948." *The Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 4 (1999): 882–901. <https://doi.org/10.1086/235362>.
- Ealham, Chris. *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898–1937*. Oakland: AK Press, 2010.
- Encarnación, Omar G. "Civil Society and the Consolidation of Democracy in Spain." *Political Science Quarterly* 116, no. 1 (2001): 53–79. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2657820>.
- Garcia, Soledad. "Collective Consumption and Urban Protest in Barcelona During the Franco Era." *Critique of Anthropology* 10, no. 2–3 (1990): 197–211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X9001000211>.
- Graham, Helen. *The Spanish Civil War: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Harris, Simon. *Catalonia Is Not Spain: A Historical Perspective*. 2014.
- Harvey, David. *Paris, Capital of Modernity*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Heywood, Paul. "The Labour Movement in Spain Before 1914." In *Labour and Socialist Movements in Europe Before 1914*, edited by D. Geary, pp. 231–267. Oxford: Berg, 1989.
- Jacobson, Stephen. "Interpreting Municipal Celebrations of Nation and Empire: The Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888." In *Nationalism and the Reshaping of Urban Communities in Europe, 1848–1914*, edited by William Whyte and Oliver Zimmer, 74–109. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011.

- Magrinyà, Francesc, and Fernando Marzá. *Cerdà: 150 Years of Modernity*. New York: Actar Editions, 2017.
- McNeill, Donald. *Urban Change and the European Left: Tales from the New Barcelona*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Mir, C. (2008). The Francoist repression in the Catalan countries. *Catalan Historical Review*, 1, 133-147. <https://doi.org/10.2436/20.1000.01.9>.
- Montaña, B. T. "Social Movements in the Political Transition: Inheritances, Singularities, and Transformations of Social Mobilization in the 1970s." *Debats: Revista de Cultura, Poder i Societat* 3 (2018): 65–79. <https://revistadebats.net/article/view/1748>.
- Muñoz-Rojas, Olivia. *Ashes and granite: destruction and reconstruction in the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath*. Apollo Books, 2011.
- Nadal, Jordi. "The Failure of the Industrial Revolution in Spain, 1830–1914." In *The Fontana Economic History of Europe*, edited by Carlo M. Cipolla, vol. 4.2, *The Emergence of Industrial Societies*, 532–626. London: Collins, 1973.
- Nieto-Galan, Agustí. "Scientific 'Marvels' in the Public Sphere: Barcelona and Its 1888 International Exhibition." *Journal of History of Science and Technology* 6 (2012): 33–63.
- Pallares-Barbera, Montserrat, Antoni Badia, and Joan Duch. "Cerdà and Barcelona: The Need for a New City and Service Provision." *Urbani Izziv* 22, no. 2 (2011): 122–136.
- Payne, S.G., 'Political Violence during the Spanish Second Republic', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 25, 2–3 (1990): 269–288. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/260733>.
- Payne, Stanley G. *Spain: A Unique History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.
- Pérez Eguíluz, V., Jiménez Jiménez, M., Fernández Maroto, M., & Santos Ganges, L. (2022). *Housing and Urbanism in Spain in Francoist period: Public policies and propaganda around the Obra Sindical del Hogar (1939-1977)*.
- Radcliff, Pamela. "Citizens and Housewives: The Problem of Female Citizenship in Spain's Transition to Democracy." *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 1 (2002): 77–100. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh.2002.0106>.
- Resina, Joan Ramon. *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008, 75–120.

- Resina, Joan Ramon. *Disremembering the Dictatorship: The Politics of Memory in the Spanish Transition to Democracy*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000.
- Rossi, Melissa. "The Barcelona Model." *Newsweek International*, February 2, 2004.
- Smith, Ángel. *Anarchism, Revolution, and Reaction: Catalonia, 1898–1939*. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Smith, Ángel. *Red Barcelona: Social Protest and Labour Mobilization in the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 2002.
- Tóibín, Colm. *Homage to Barcelona*. London: Simon & Schuster, 1990.

Additional Sources

- Amenábar, Alejandro, dir. *Mientras dure la guerra*. 2019; Madrid: Movistar+.
- Aranda, Vicente, dir. *Libertarias*. 1996; Madrid: Sogepaq.
- Artigas, Xavier, and Xapo Ortega, dirs. *Ciutat Morta (Dead City)*. 2013; Barcelona: Metromuster. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/51921/Ciutat-Morta--Dead-City>.
- Carnicer, Alonso, and Sara Grimal, dirs. *Barraques: La ciutat oblidada (Shantytowns: The Forgotten City)*. 2010; Barcelona: TV3-Televisió de Catalunya. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://www.3cat.cat/tv3/sales/shantytowns-the-forgotten-city/production/930/>.
- Carracedo, Almudena, and Robert Bahar, dirs. *The Silence of Others*. 2018.
- Chibás, Eduardo, dir. *Bye Bye Barcelona*. 2014; Barcelona: La Lupa Produccions. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kdXcFChRpml>.
- Dowling, Andrew. "A New History of Catalonia with Andrew Dowling." Interview by Alan. *The Sobremesa Podcast*, October 24, 2022. Podcast, 35:16. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/a-new-history-of-catalonia-with-andrew-dowling/id1568663773?i=1000583649673>.
- Gamero, Juan, dir. *Living Utopia: The Anarchists and the Spanish Revolution*. 1997; Barcelona: TVE. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l0XhRnJz8fU>.

- █ Glider, Todd, dir. *Catalunya Barcelona: The Catalan Story of Barcelona*. 2019; Barcelona: Catalunya Barcelona Films. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://catalunyabarcelona.com/>.
- █ Huerga, Manuel, dir. *Salvador*. 2006; Barcelona: Mediapro.
- █ José González Morandi and Paco Toledo, dirs. *Can Tunis*. 2007; Didac Films. Video, 85 min.
- █ Lloyd, Nick. "Barcelona's Hidden Civil War Monuments." Interview by Catherine. *The Sobremesa Podcast*, January 23, 2025. Podcast, 36:00. <https://podcasts.apple.com/pt/podcast/barcelonas-hidden-civil-war-monuments/id1522300257?i=1000678358730>.
- █ Martínez Lázaro, Emilio, dir. *Las 13 Rosas*. 2007; Madrid: Enrique Cerezo Producciones Cinematográficas.
- █ NO-DO (Noticiarios y Documentales). 1943–1981; Madrid: Filmoteca Española. Accessed February 20, 2025. <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/>.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Participation in class	15%
Quizzes (3 at 10%)	30%
Oral presentation	25%
Final research paper (proposal 5%, paper 25%)	30%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

Active participation is essential in this course. Students are expected to attend each class and field study course component as outlined in the CET Attendance Policy. The course integrates lectures, discussions, and collaborative group activities, encouraging students to critically engage with weekly readings and connect them to broader course themes. Students must complete all assigned readings (typically 30 pages per session) in advance and arrive prepared to contribute meaningfully to discussions. While close reading and analysis are essential, students are also encouraged to develop efficient reading strategies to manage the workload effectively. All assignments must be submitted via Canvas unless otherwise specified.

Graded assignments include:

- **Participation:** Assessed based on active contributions to discussions, group activities, and engagement in field study experiences. Students are expected to critically engage with readings, ask thoughtful questions, and contribute meaningfully to class dialogue.
- **Quizzes:** Three short-answer and essay-based quizzes assessing comprehension of key readings, lectures, and field study experiences. Quizzes are designed to encourage critical thinking and synthesis rather than rote memorization.
- **Oral presentation:** Each student will present on a historical site in Barcelona, analyzing its significance in relation to course themes. Presentations must include historical context, an analysis of its relevance to Spanish/Catalan history, and connections to

course readings. Students are required to incorporate visual elements (photos, maps, or video clips) and lead a brief discussion.

- **Final paper:** A 3,500-4,000-word research paper on a topic of the student's choice, developed in consultation with the instructor. Must include a clear thesis, engagement with primary and secondary sources, and connection to course themes. Students will be required to submit a proposal before the final paper.

Course Content

Unit 1

Modernization & Urbanization in Catalonia and Spain

- Pre-industrial Spain and Catalonia: Urban centers (e.g., Barcelona, Madrid, Seville) in Spain before modernization.
- Barcelona's Pre-Modern Urban Fabric: From a walled medieval city to early expansion, shaping its spatial and social dynamics.
- Public Space & Social Transformation: The rise of plazas, markets, and promenades (La Rambla) as symbols of modernization.
- Governance, Trade, and Urban Shifts: The role of the bourgeoisie, local elites, and Enlightenment ideas in reshaping cities.

Unit 2

The Industrial Revolution in Catalonia: Factories & Urban Growth

- Industrial Expansion and Urbanization: The rise of manufacturing districts (Poblenou, Raval) and their impact on city planning.
- Barcelona's Role in Spanish Economic Development: Textile industry, railway networks, and the city's integration into global trade.
- State and Urban Modernization: Infrastructure development, housing conditions, and early urban reforms.

Unit 3

The Rise of Social Movements in the 19th Century: Workers & Anarchists

- Labor and Social Movements: the emergence of the working class, anarchism, and labor mobilization in response to industrialization.
- The Spread of Anarchism and Socialist Ideals: Influence of Bakuninist and Marxist thought in Spain; the role of Catalonia as a revolutionary hub.
- Labor Unions and Worker Mobilization: The creation of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and early strikes and protests.

- State Repression and Urban Conflict: The “Tragic Week” (1909), anti-clericalism, and government responses to labor unrest.

Unit 4

Urban Transformations: The Eixample & the Growth of Barcelona

- Cerdà’s Vision and the Eixample Plan: The rationale behind Barcelona’s 19th-century expansion and grid-based urban planning.
- Urban Expansion and Social Change: The transformation of neighborhoods, migration patterns, and class dynamics.
- Infrastructure and Connectivity: Transportation, public services, and how Eixample shaped modern Barcelona.
- Economic and Political Impacts: The role of Eixample in industrial growth, commerce, and city governance.

Unit 5

1888 & 1929 Universal Expositions: Showcasing Modernity

- The Role of World Fairs in Urban Transformation: How the 1888 and 1929 Barcelona Universal Expositions reshaped the city’s infrastructure, public spaces, and global image.
- National Identity and Economic Progress: The expositions as a tool for modernization, industrial promotion, and Catalan identity within Spain.
- Architectural and Cultural Impact: Modernist and Noucentista influences, the rise of Montjuïc as a cultural and exhibition space, and the legacy of these events in Barcelona’s urban planning.
- Comparative Perspective: How Barcelona’s exhibitions aligned with or differed from other world fairs in Paris, London, and Chicago.

Unit 6

The Spanish Civil War: Urban Spaces in Conflict

- Barcelona as a Battleground: The city as a center of revolutionary struggle, anarchist control (1936-37), and aerial bombings by Francoist forces.
- Urban Destruction and Reconstruction: The impact of bombing campaigns, street

battles, and post-war urban reorganization under Francoist rule.

- **Public Spaces and Political Symbols:** The transformation of Plaça de Catalunya, La Rambla, and Montjuïc into sites of resistance, propaganda, and repression.
- **The Role of Architecture and Infrastructure in War:** The destruction of working-class neighborhoods, transportation networks, and the adaptation of buildings for military use.

Unit 7

Francoism & Urban Planning: Suppression & Development

- **Repressive Urban Policies and Control:** How the Francoist regime reshaped urban spaces to enforce ideological control, limit dissent, and suppress working-class neighborhoods.
- **Industrial Expansion and Housing Projects:** The regime's push for economic modernization, large-scale industrialization, and mass housing developments like Polígon de Bellvitge and Nou Barris.
- **State-Sponsored Urbanism and Monumentalism:** The construction of Plaza de España, government buildings, and fascist architectural influences.
- **Shantytowns and Marginalization:** The rise of informal settlements and self-built neighborhoods due to rural-to-urban migration and inadequate housing policies.

Unit 8

The Transition to Democracy: Activism & Urban Renewal

- **Activism and Political Change:** How grassroots movements, labor unions, and neighborhood associations helped dismantle Francoism and shape democratic governance.
- **Urban Renewal and Public Space:** The impact of democratic reforms on housing, public spaces, and community-driven urban planning.
- **Cities in Transition:** The political and spatial transformation of Barcelona from dictatorship to democracy.
- **The Legacy of Francoist Urbanism:** Debates over demolishing, preserving, or repurposing Franco-era architecture and the rise of squatter movements fighting for housing rights.

Unit 9

The Olympics & the “Barcelona Model” of Urban Transformation

- From Industrial Port to Global Icon: How the Olympics reshaped Barcelona’s waterfront and skyline.
- Sport or Spectacle? The balance between urban renewal and commercial interests.
- Whose City? Gentrification, displacement, and the social costs of Olympic-driven development.
- Barcelona’s Olympic Legacy: Was it a lasting success or just a temporary boom?
- Selling the City: How the Olympics positioned Barcelona as a global tourism hub.

Unit 10

Challenges in Modern Barcelona—Social Movements & the Right to the City

- Citizen Mobilization and Urban Justice: How grassroots activism influences urban policies, housing rights, and environmental sustainability.
- Feminism, Housing, and Labor Movements: The intersection of social justice struggles in contemporary Spain.
- Gentrification and Displacement: The impact of rising living costs, tourism, and real estate speculation on local communities.
- The Right to the City: Examining Barcelona’s role as a hub for urban resistance and alternative models of governance.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).