

## **FACEBOOK, URBAN LIFE AND YOUTH CULTURE**

### **Course Syllabus**

**Time and venue:** Monday, 14.10, r. 1/225 and Thursday, 14.10, r. 1/225

**Instructor:** Dr. Emil Nasritdinov, r.404 (Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 14.00-16.00) emilzn@gmail.com

### **Course description**

Cities have been looked at and analyzed from the multitude of perspectives: Ancient City, Industrial City, Garden City, Fractal City, Instant City, Post-City, Sustainable City, Green City, Ethnic City, etc. Where do cities around the world acquire so many different meanings and forms? What shapes the skylines of Manhattan, Tokyo, Delhi, Moscow and Bishkek? Who is the contemporary urban hero? Is it you, strolling down Sovetskaya to a beat from your ipod? Or a beggar, who spends most of her day sitting with a stretched hand on cold concrete in "podzemka".

We will look at these hubs of human life in their cultural context: sometimes shining and glamorous and sometimes dirty and disgusting. By learning what city people eat, whom they meet, where they work, and how they sleep, we will understand how urban cultures interact, clash, merge and how new culture comes to life – that of a Global CITY-zen.

More specifically, this course will look at how the culture of contemporary urban youth is formed at the intersection of virtual world of various kinds of social media (Facebook, Odnoklassniki, Namba, Twitter, etc.) with the real life of the city in all of its thematic complexity (subcultures, poverty, crime, religions, politics, etc.). The emergence and rapid growth of online social networks is one of the most recent and most significant phenomena in the life of urban residents, particularly young people. Students in this course will explore what constitutes their urban identity, worldview and sociability, how they engage with a real city "next door" and what role social media plays in their understanding of this world.

### **Assignments**

Attendance = 10%

Participation = 20%

Bishkek Pulp-Fiction: Treasure HuntGame (team project) = 20%

YoUFF (three blogs) individual project = 30% (3X10%)

Conference paper and presentation = 20%

### **Attendance**

If you don't miss classes, you automatically receive 10% for attendance. For each class missed without a reason - you will lose 2% of your grade. If you miss 4 classes without a reason - you automatically receive X for the course. If you are sick you should inform our office manager before the class and then bring the note from your doctor. Without a call to the office manager and without a note, your absence will not be excused.

### **Participation**

Participation is the discussion of readings. There will be 13 or so seminar classes where we will discuss texts. Questions for readings will be posted online at the e-course system. For each class you will receive 2% if you participate and give evidence that you have read the text. If you participate in all discussions of readings you will automatically receive the bonus of 6%. If you miss a class or opportunity to participate in discussion you can compensate by writing a reflection paper on that reading and submitting it on the e-course system. Your reflection paper should have the evidence of you reading the whole text.

### **Bishkek Pulp-Fiction: Treasure Hunt Game (team project)**

Early in the semester, we will form teams of 4-5 students in order to play a game of treasure hunting. Each team will start by writing a fiction story set in urban context and they will call themselves accordingly. The main character of the story should be of approximately your own age. The story should consist of ten short chapters, each corresponding to a certain unique place in the city or to a certain unique urban character. All ten places must be widely spread across the whole city and be very different from each other in terms of socio-cultural and economic practices associated with them. Then the team will have to hide the main treasure of their story behind nine consecutive keys – all hidden in those selected places. Each key should give directions to the next key. Once all treasures are hidden – teams will exchange the first keys and start treasure hunt. The first team that finds the treasure wins. However, it is not all. Once all keys and the treasure are found, the searching team will have to write their own fiction story connecting all ten places and the treasure into one interesting narrative. Finally, the original and the outcome story will be compared.

### **YoUFF (three blogs) individual project**

During the semester you have to produce three blogs. Any platform will do: googleblogspot, facebook page, diesel, odnoklassniki, etc. Three blogs will correspond to three main themes in this class: facebook, urban life and youth culture.

These three blogs should be based on your own individual research or observations. It can be one post that summarizes all of your thoughts, or it can be a series of posts developing one topic. What is important is that your blog/post must generate some discussion online. At the scheduled day, you will present both your blog and the online discussion it generated during the seminar class.

### **Conference paper and presentation**

Nearer the end of November, Anthropology department and Central Asian Studies Institute will organize a conference on Bishkek. The tentative title is “Этот город самый ... городназемле”, but let’s see if you have other suggestions. You will have to write a paper and present it at this conference. You can choose any topic related to the themes discussed in our class. However, if you want your paper to be considered for publication, there will be one special section titled Re/Claiming Bishkek and it is about various forms of activism and non-activism in our city, which will be published by the Central Asian Studies Institute as a book. Your paper should be 3,000 words long and it can incorporate materials from your blogs.

### **Reading materials**

All course readings will be available on the e-course system.

### **Grading scale**

100-96 = A

95-91 = A-

90-86 = B+

85-81 = B

80-76 = B-

75-71 = C+

70-66 = C

65-61 = C-

60-56 = D+

55-51 = D

50-46 = D-

45 and lower = F

## Schedule of classes

Week 1	
Mon, Sep 2	Independence Day
Thu, Sep 5	Course Introduction (lecture)
Week 2	
Mon, Sep 9	Youth Culture: <b>Generation Y</b>
Thu, Sep 12	Seminar
Week 3	
Mon, Sep 18	Facebook: <b>Grown-up Digital: Network Generation</b>
Thu, Sep 19	Seminar
Week 4	
Mon, Sep 23	Urban Life: <b>Networked Urbanism</b>
Thu, Sep 26	Seminar
Week 5	
Mon, Sep 30	Youth Culture: <b>Rockers, Bikers and Other Punks</b>
Thu, Oct 3	Seminar
Week 6	
Mon, Oct 7	Facebook: <b>Avatar</b>
Thu, Oct 10	Seminar
Week 7	
Mon, Oct 14	Urban Life: <b>Urban "I"dentities</b>
Thu, Oct 17	Seminar
Week 8	
Mon, Oct 21	Youth Culture: <b>Disposable Youth and Culture of Cruelty</b>
Thu, Oct 24	Seminar
Week 9	
Mon, Oct 28	Facebook: <b>Social-Media Activism</b>
Thu, Oct 31	Seminar
Week 10	
Mon, Nov 4	Urban Life: <b>City and Divided and Urban Otherness</b>
Thu, Nov 7	Day of October Socialist Revolution – No classes
Week 11	
Mon, Nov 11	Youth Culture: <b>Buy Buy Baby: Youth and Consumerism</b>
Thu, Nov 14	Seminar
Week 12	
Mon, Nov 18	Facebook: <b>Fakebook: Critique of Social Media</b>
Thu, Nov 21	Seminar
Week 13	
Mon, Nov 25	Urban Life: <b>Space, Place and Time</b>
Thu, Nov 28	Thanksgiving Day – No classes
Week 14	
Mon, Dec 1	<b>BI-shkek</b>
Thu, Dec 4	Seminar
Week 15	
Mon, Dec 8	<b>b-ISHKE-k</b>
Wed, Dec 12	Seminar