

Bicycling the Urban Landscape

Winter 2016 Markim 303 (or TBA)

Tuesday/Thursday 11:30-2:30

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“Där finns ingen dålig väder, bara dålig kläder.”

The English translation of this famous Swedish quote is, “there is no bad weather, only bad attire.”

Course Description

With escalating gasoline prices, pollution and congestion, more public awareness of the relationship between climate change and car driving, and more interest in improving physical activity, bicycling is experiencing a recent boom as a transportation option. Unlike other forms of transit, bicycles do not require costly, long-term capital investment or operating funds, and bicycle systems can be deployed relatively quickly. In many respects, bicycling is among the most equitable forms of urban transit because it is affordable and accessible to almost everyone. In many areas of the United States, the number of bicyclists is growing the most among the working class and people of color. Nevertheless, advocacy for bicycling has focused mainly on the interests of white upwardly mobile bicyclists and bicycle improvements do not often play out evenly within all demographic groups and communities.

The overarching objective of this course is to provide intellectual and active engagement with bicycling. This includes understanding transportation politics, equity, bicycle culture, local, national, and global trends in bicycling, and what needs

to be accomplished to increase mode share of bicycling locally and globally. We will begin the semester by examining bicycle politics and infrastructure in the Twin Cities and then extend from there to international trends. We will compare cases in which improving bike-ability has been successful with those cases when this effort has not been as effective. Finally, based on experience with field trips, guest lecturers, and the course assignments, students will develop a bicycle assessment on a community of their choice. Throughout the semester, the community will be our classroom and we will spend a good amount of time engaging in it.

Learning goals:

- Knowledge of the history and politics of biking on an international, national, and local level.
- Familiarity with local transportation politics and the complexity of bicycle planning.
- Exposure to how different communities have responded to bicycle improvements.
- Competency with winter bike skills, safety, and familiarity with our local bicycle system.

Field Trips are an important part of this course. They will require missing community time on a frequent basis throughout the semester and meeting for class early at 11:20. Regardless of plans that come up later on, if you take this course, you are committing to being here every week and extending your regular class time. You also need to approach this course with an adaptable frame of mind due to circumstances that may arise from inclement weather, the availability of guest lecturers and student feedback. You are allowed one unexcused absence this semester. Any additional unexcused absences (without an official note) will impact your participation grade by a point (for example, an A will be a B). I will be very firm about this policy, unless you have a note or you let me know of your absence in advance.



Photo from the winter 2016 course by Margot Higgins

All absences will be considered unexcused unless the student presents proper documentation (a note from a doctor, or college official on letterhead) for one of the following reasons:

- verified illness
- participation in athletic events or other group activities sponsored by Macalester
- family emergencies
- religious observances

Readings should be completed by the Tuesday class time each week, though we may not discuss them until Thursday. Unless otherwise noted, all written assignments are due electronically by Thursday. Late homework will be docked by half a grade.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: Reasonable adjustments are available for students with documented disabilities. Students should meet with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, at the start of the semester to ensure that accommodations are approved and in place. You can reach Lisa in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, at 651-696-6220, or by e-mail at llandrem@macalester.edu

Academic integrity: The best learning environment is one based on mutual respect and trust. Macalester has established codes concerning proper academic conduct and the consequences resulting from improper behavior. If you are unclear about what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, please ask me, or a librarian. Ignorance is not an excuse.

Please turn off all electronic devices including laptops, i-pads and cell phones during class time. Cameras are encouraged during field trips.

Office Hours: by appointment. I am committed to identifying ways for students to be successful and engaged in this course. Do not be shy. This is a great way to interact with me, learn about contacts and opportunities in the community, discuss course readings and projects, and share your goals and concerns that might extend beyond our time in class.

E-mail: I will do my best to respond to e-mail inquiries or phone calls within 24 hours.

Reading, listening, and viewing

- James Longhurst *Bicycle Battles* (2015)
- Elly Blue *Bikenomics* (2013)
- Blogs, articles, and other book chapters (These will be available on Moodle)
- Podcasts and video clips

Bicycle logs: Each week students will keep track of their bicycling activity. These entries will include mileage and possibly challenges, physical and cognitive experiences, and inspiration among other short reflections. At the end of the semester, students will weave these logs together into a Storymap. An example from last semester can be found here:

<https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/7c67b6e12d6ef23088f5202117174dd3/first-semester-cycling-biking-in-the-twin-cities/draft.html>

Field trips and/or guest lecturers:

- Lindsey Wallace (winter cycling)
- Luke Hansen (St. Paul City Transportation Planner)
- Reuben Collins (St. Paul Transportation Planner)
- Russ Stark (St. Paul City Council President)
- James Longhurst (author of *Bicycle Battles*)
- Lisa Bender Minneapolis City Council Representative
- Andy Singer (local bicycle improvement advocate and artist)
- Bill Lindeke (Bicycle media and local history)
- Jason Tanzman (Macalester Graduate and ED of Cycles for Change)
- Anthony Taylor (bicycle equity)
- Steve Clark, (former Bicycle Friendly Communities Director for the League of American Bicyclists)

Preparing for our Bicycle Field Trips:

- A well functioning bike with pumped tires and a greased chain. Students should be comfortable fixing a flat tire.

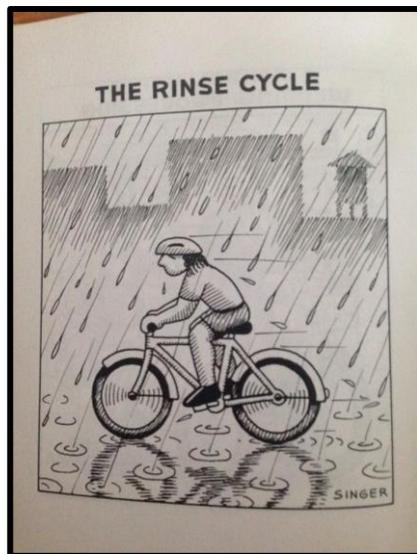
- A bicycle helmet
A backpack or pannier with a snack, water bottle, a note pad, layers, and rain gear (just in case)
- A spare tube and a bicycle repair kit that includes a simple bicycle tool and tire levers
- We will follow the utmost safety precautions while riding. We will go over these in class, but it is also very important that you stay with the group and pay close attention to the conditions of the road.

Here are some other common rules of the road to read carefully:

<http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/bicycle/rules/>

*Before our first field trip please sign the release form also posted on Moodle.

We will ride in inclement weather, but not if it is bitter cold or icy. I will post an update on Moodle by 10 am on field trip days.



Ongoing events that might interest you

- The Cycle for Change Events Calendar
<http://www.cyclesforchange.org/calendar>
- Monthly St Paul Bicycle Coalition meetings
<http://www.saintpaulbicyclecoalition.org/news/>

Grading

- Weekly bike logs and story maps: (15%)
 - Participation: (25%) This involves not only attending class, but also preparing readings and contributing thoughtfully to class discussion.
 - Bicycle op-eds (10%)
 - Small projects: (10% each)
 - Final projects
- *You are responsible to check for assignment revisions and updates on Moodle each week by Sunday. I will also send announcements via the class e-mail address. You are also responsible for reading these and keeping an eye out for them in your e-mail.**

Our schedule for the first three weeks of the semester

Week one: January 19

- Introduction to the course

Week Two: January 24 and 26

Guest: Lindsey Wallace on winter bicycling

- Bicycle Safety, an introduction to our local bicycle system

Assignments

- NYT article <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/14/science/the-bicycle-and-the-ride-to-modern-america.html? r=0>
- *Bicycle Battles*: Introduction and Chapters one and two
- Look through the examples at the NACTO urban bikeway design guide <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/>
- Personal Bike Essay
- Bicycle logs

*This week we will not discuss the readings until Thursday

Week Three: January 31st and February 2nd

- January 31 talk and field trip by transportation engineer Luke Hansen on the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan
- Field trip to look at parts of the Saint Paul Bicycle Plan with Professor Higgins

Assignments

Read *Bicycle Battles* Chapters 3-5

Skim the St. Paul Bicycle Plan

Bike logs

Week Four:

Guest Speaker Dr. Bill Lindeke St. Paul Bicycle History and Streets.MN February 7th

Guest speaker James Longhurst, author of *Bicycle Battles*, February 9th

Assignments:

Finish *Bicycle Battles*

Write a two- page review of Bicycle Battles

Write three questions for James Longhurst

Bike logs

Week Five:

Guest speaker and Field Trip with Reuben Collins, St. Paul Sustainable Transportation Planner, February 14th

Field Trip to Brake Bread, West 7th Street, February 16th

Assignments:

Jane Jacobs Introduction and Chapter 18

Bicycle logs

“The Low Hanging Fruit in Saint Paul.”

Bill Lindeke TED talk