

History and Theory of African Urbanism (A006651)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 2) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Lagae, Johan TW01 lecturer-in-charge

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Languages(main subject African Languages and Cultures)	5	A
Master of Arts in African Studies	5	A
Master of Science in Engineering: Architecture	5	A
Master of Science in Urbanism and Spatial Planning	5	A
Exchange Programme African Languages and Cultures	5	A
Exchange Programme Architecture	5	A
Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context	5	A
Exchange Programme Global Studies and World Societies	5	A
Exchange Programme Urbanism and Spatial Planning	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Architecture, city, Africa, 19th – 20th – 21st centuries, (post)colonialism, globalization

Position of the course

This course provides an introduction to and reflection on the development of the African city from the 19th century onwards, focusing on architecture and urban planning as disciplinary perspectives. The course highlights various aspects of theory and historiography for the African city and its urban form. Cultural, ideological, social and political issues related to this development are addressed. In that sense, this course situates the topic within the wider field of urban history, urban geography and urban culture.

Contents

The development of the African city from the late 19th century onwards is discussed and analyzed, focusing on the specific formal and spatial characteristics of its urban form. The analysis draws on a number of basic concepts and themes from current theory and historiography on architecture and urban planning, as well as from urban theory, but also on insights from relevant other disciplines such as postcolonial studies and cultural studies are introduced. Themes that are addressed include: urban mapping & visualization (photography); urban segregation; architecture, power and nation building; urban/architectural heritage; migration,... Current developments in the African city are discussed within a wider historical perspective and with attention for historiographical shifts. Concepts and themes are each time related and discussed via case-studies: Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Johannesburg, Cairo, Asmara,...

Initial competences

Bachelor in African Languages and Cultures or equivalent (after approval by the main lecturer).

Possessing some background in architecture and urbanism is useful, but not essential. The content of the course is such that student with no such background can relate to the issues addressed. Yet having an interest in matters of (urban) space is recommended

Final competences

- 1 Have insight in the development of the African city from the late 19th century onwards and be able to name and discuss relevant themes and concepts related to the topic (using an apt terminology)
- 2 Be able to address the complexity and diversity of the current debates on the theory and historiography of the related domain of knowledge
- 3 Be able to develop a personal, critical reflection on a given or self-chosen theme related to the domain of knowledge
- 4 Be able to report in English, both orally and in written form, a personal, critical reflection on a topic linked to the domain of knowledge. Possess the research skills needed to do so (tracing literature, defining a bibliography, using footnotes and an academic writing style,...)

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

The course is organized around a series of thematic lectures that each take up 2, sometimes 3 slots in the time available in the time schedule. The remaining slots is used for guest lectures and/or consultancy session for the paper assignment or for independent work on the paper. Due to Covid19, the education methods may differ from the information displayed in the schedules and course details, in particular with regard to on campus or online lectures and consultancy. Any changes will be communicated on Ufora

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Syllabus met overzicht van lesinhouden & bibliografie

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Slides

Name: Slides per college

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

- an elaborate bibliography is provided
- in the library of the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture a select number of reference works will be available for consultation during the semester.

Course content-related study coaching

Feedback is possible after lectures, or on appointment (via email)

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

There is an oral examination with a short preparation time. Students are examined on one or more lectures of their choice, as well as on the paper they have submitted beforehand. Students cannot participate in the exam and pass for this course without submitting a paper before the deadline announced on Ufora.

The writing of the paper is on an individual basis. Students are guided in the choice of the topic, the collecting of the relevant literature and receive comments on a first submitted draft. This is done via the feedback menu in Ufora as well as via an individual session (on request of the student). Both the written version and the responses to the question posed during the oral exam with regard to the paper are taken into account in the final evaluation.

Calculation of the examination mark

60% on the oral examination, including oral assesment of the paper

40% on the written version of submitted paper

Special conditions: Participation in the paper is compulsory. The student should not have obtained for any of both components a significant failure (less than 8/20). If a student does not participate in one or more components, or has obtained a partial mark of less than 8/20, the student can not pass for the course. If a calculation of the final mark would yield a figure of ten or more (/20), this will be reduced to the highest mark with which one does not pass the course (i.e. 9/20). Students who pass the examen in the 1st session, but fail for the paper can submit a new version of the paper on which they will also be examined orally. Students who fail for the exam, but pass for the paper, keep their score for the paper and redo exam on the lectures in the 2nd session. In both cases the total score is calculated on the 60% exam/40% paper basis.