

**School of Liberal Studies**  
**Ambedkar University Delhi**

**Course Outline**

**Time Slot-**\_\_\_\_\_

**Course Code:**

**Title:** Urban Societies

**Type of Course:** Discipline History Seminar paper

**Cohort for which it is compulsory:** MA History

**Cohort for which it is elective:** Only for History students

**No of Credits:** 4

**Semester and Year Offered:** 4th Semester

**Course Coordinator and Team:** Dr. Shailaja Menon

**Email of course coordinator:** shailaja@aud.ac.in

**Pre-requisites:** Only for MA History Students

**Aim:** Cities and urban areas have set the foundation of modern civilisation – they have proved to be the engines of economic growth, and the centres of innovation, culture, knowledge and political power. Cities are known to be places where money, services and wealth are centralized. Cities are where fortunes are made and where social mobility is possible. Businesses, which generate jobs and capital, are usually located in urban areas. Whether the source is trade or tourism, it is also through the cities that foreign money flows into a country. Due to their high populations, urban areas can also have much more diverse social communities allowing others to find people like them when they might not be able to in rural areas.

Despite the fact that India has engaged in far-sighted economic planning since Independence, and despite the considerable success of the Five Year Plans, remarkably little constructive attention has been paid to the spatial aspects of social and economic change. There is no difficulty in securing agreement that the social and physical conditions of Indian cities today are bad, from almost any standpoint, and that they are deteriorating. Many Indian urban dwellers are without employment, many more are literally homeless (they sleep on the streets)--and yet, year

by year, each of the major cities becomes measurably larger, and the relative size of the rural population falls a little more.

Globalization have further sharpened the internal dissensions of the cityscape. Within the globalising cities a new geography of centrality and marginality shows up. Essentially the metropolitan space under globalisation tends to become a contradictory space, characterised by contestation and internal differentiation. This gives rise to a metropolitan dilemma that gets intertwined with the politics of urban space and built environment. The above dilemma, reflected in the contemporary urban restructuring process, is increasingly getting included in the globalisation discourse in the field of urban studies in recent years. Central to the theme is the link between ideology and socio-spatial formations and the role of power in controlling urban space. Here, power gets expressed largely through its economic parameters and is used repressively to support and intensify class divisions and thereby appropriate space.

The following themes would be taken up for discussion:

- a) Historicizing the City- this involves a review of literature of major historical texts across time
- b) The City and its many Lives- analyse socio-cultural accounts, biographies, films etc
- c) The Spatial Reproduction of Inequality in the City- Migration Patterns and Provisioning of Resources
- d) Urban Governance
- e) Power and Contestation in the City- conflicts over identity, space, built environment, communal violence etc.

The sources include archival, textual, oral and audio-visual material. The student is free to choose the sources depending on the themes taken up for discussion.