



Course Manual

Course Title:	Reading Cities
Programme Name:	
Course Code:	J-ET-0137
Credits	3
Course Type	Cross-listed Elective
Semester	Fall 2026
Course Instructor(s)	Arundhathi
Academic Year	2026–27
Contact Details	arundhathi@jgu.edu.in
Office Hours	By appointment

Course Information:

Course duration: 15 weeks

Credit hours: 45 hours (3 hours per week)

Meetings: Individual meetings by appointment

Location: Classroom as directed by APCI, individual meetings in FOB

Prerequisites: This is a cross-listed elective and there are no formal prerequisites for this course.

Equivalent courses: NA

Exclusive courses: NA

About the Instructor:

Dr. Arundhathi completed her PhD in Women's Studies from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She has considerable experience in using qualitative research methodologies and methods, including but not limited to ethnography, interviews, participant and non-participant observation, and content analysis. Her research interests lie in gender, mobility studies, urban studies and media studies. She has published her work in edited book volumes and national and international academic journals.

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Course Outline and Objectives:

Traditionally, cities have been studied by architects and urban planners in order to enable improve infrastructure and provide better services to the inhabitants. However, our perceptions of the cities we live in are shaped by not just factual information and everyday lived experiences, but by the narratives we hear, see, and read. This course attempts to study cities through literary and cinematic narratives, in order to understand how both fictional and non-fictional narratives shape our identities and spaces. The course is centered specifically on fictional and non-fictional writings on three major Indian metropolises, but also familiarizes students with some key theoretical perspectives from urban studies. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Understand how narratives shape identities, aspirations and the urban imagination in the Indian context.
2. Engage with the representations of Indian city life in literature and cinema.
3. Evaluate the politics of urban spaces and how these impact the narratives and discourses on cities.
4. Analyse the contribution of lived experiences to existing narratives and discourses on Indian cities.

Course work and teaching methodology: The course aims to help students build a theoretical foundation in urban studies so that they can use the critical theoretical insights to analyse various works of literature (fiction, poetry, etc). Hence, the course work involves engaging with both fictional and non-fictional texts on urban studies, postcolonial cities, and literature. Some units also include cinematic texts. The teaching methods will include lectures, class discussions, screenings, city walks, and other activities as appropriate. While all readings mentioned in the course manual are compulsory, some of the assigned material may change if required, and additional readings will be suggested wherever necessary.

Evaluation:

1. Internal: 70% — This will be made up of several components, including but not limited to class participation (10%), mapmaking, designing your own city walk, writing critiques or analytical essays, and other exercises (will be conveyed in due course).

Internal assessment 1: 30 marks (conducted on or due by 15 September 2026)

Internal assessment 2: 30 marks (conducted on or due by 20 October 2023)

Class participation: 10 marks

2. External: 30 % — This will comprise an in-class, closed book examination scheduled in the final week of the semester (or as directed by the Exams Office).

Unit 1: Theorising the Urban

Week 1

Introduction to the course

Simmel, Georg (1903): “The Metropolis and Mental Life,”

https://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/bpl_images/content_store/sample_chapter/0631225137/bridge.pdf.

Week 2

De Certeau, Michel (1984): “Spatial Stories,” *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Dear, Michael (2011): “The Urban Question after Modernity,” *Cities and Fascination: Beyond the Surplus of Meaning*, Heiko Schmid, Wolf-Dietrich Sahr and John Urry (eds), Ashgate, pp 17–33.

Week 3

Harvey, David (2012): “The Right to the City,” *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso: London.

Week 4

Bhattacharjee, Subashish and Goutam Karmakar (2023): “Introduction: Writing Cities: Appropriating the Urban in Indian Literatures,” *The City Speaks: Urban Spaces in Indian Literature*, Subashish Bhattacharjee and Goutam Karmakar. London: Routledge, pp 1–15.

Unit 2: Delhi

Week 5

Dasgupta, Rana (2014): *Capital: A Portrait of 21st Century Delhi*. Fourth Estate. (selections)

Week 6

Kumar, Ravish (2018): *A City Happens in Love*. Trans. Akhil Katyal. Speaking Tiger.

Week 7

Katyal, Akhil (2020): *Like Blood on the Bitten Tongue: Delhi Poems*. Speaking Tiger. Series: *Paatal Lok*

Unit 3: Mumbai

Week 8

Prakash, Gyan (2011): *Mumbai Fables*. Princeton University Press. (selections)

Week 9

Mahale, Amrita (2019): *Milk Teeth*. Westland.

Week 10

Zaidi, Annie (2022): *City of Incident*. Aleph.

Week 11

Series: *Sacred Games*

Film: *Salaam Bombay*

Unit 4: Kolkata

Week 12

Hazra, Indrajit (2013): *Grand Delusions: A Short Biography of Kolkata*. Aleph. (selections)

Week 13

Desai, Anita (1965): *Voices in the City*. Orient Paperbacks.

Week 14

Films: *Kahaani*, *Mahanagar*

Week 15

City walk and revision.

Disability Support

JGU endeavours to make all its courses accessible to students. The Disability Support Committee (DSC) has identified conditions that could hinder a student's overall well-being. These include physical and mobility related difficulties, visual impairment, hearing impairment, mental health conditions and intellectual/learning difficulties e.g., dyslexia and dyscalculia. Students with any known disability needing academic and other support are required to register with the Disability Support Committee (DSC) by following the procedure specified at <https://jgu.edu.in/disability-support-committee/>

Students who need support may register any time during the semester up until a month before the end semester exam begins. Those students who wish to continue receiving support from the previous semester, must re-register within the first month of a semester. Last minute registrations and support might not be possible as sufficient time is required to make the arrangements for support.

The DSC maintains strict confidentiality about the identity of the student and the nature of their disability and the same is requested from faculty members and staff as well. The DSC takes a strong stance against in-class and out-of-class references made about a student's disability without their consent and disrespectful comments referring to a student's disability.

All general queries are to be addressed to disabilitysupportcommittee@jgu.edu.in

Grade Scale

Course Letter Grades and Their Interpretation

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	Interpretation
O	80 and above		Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75–79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70–74		Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation .
A-	65–69		Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60–64		Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55–59		Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and

			reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50–54		Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills
P1	45–49		Pass 1: Pass with basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40–44		Pass 2: Pass with rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
	Below 40		Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.
	Pass		·p· represents the option of choosing between Pass/Fail grading system over the CGPA grading system in the COVID 19semester/s. The option is provided when students attain a minimum of 40 percentage marks under the current grading structure in a given subject.
	Incomplete		Extenuating circumstances preventing the student from completing coursework assessment, or taking the examination; or where the Assessment Panel at its discretion assigns this grade. If an "I" grade is assigned, the Assessment Panel will suggest a schedule for the completion of work at a later date.

Operational Grades and Consequences

IP	In Progress	Assessment will be completed in the subsequent or another semester.
S	Submitted	"S" grade is assigned when a student's dissertation has been submitted for assessment.
P#	Pass	For subjects with pre-decided Pass/Fail grades.
IM	Improvement	When the student has given an improvement examination in the subsequent semester.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Plagiarism is a serious offense which happens if one uses already published material without citing the source. Below are the ways in which a student may be judged to have plagiarized:

1. If a student is using an argument, or a fact, or a figure, or an idea from some published source (either electronic or print) to substantiate a work, s/he needs to mention the author and year of publication in the text wherever it is used. Also, the student needs to cite the source with author name, where it was published, full title and year in either a footnote or end-note. Failure to do any of the above will be interpreted as plagiarism.
2. For journalistic articles, while using arguments, facts, or figures from a particular source, students are required to attribute them to the original source even if full citation may not be required by the course instructor(s).
3. If a student is directly quoting from a source, in the words of the author, s/he needs to put it within quotes. This needs to be followed by citation in the manner indicated in the first bullet point. Either the absence of quotes or the citation will be interpreted as plagiarism.
4. If a student is quoting from a speech or a media bite, s/he needs to put the text within quotes. The students also need to mention who said that and cite the source of the speech or the article/material which reported the person having delivered that speech. Failure to do this will be interpreted as plagiarism.
5. Note that even when using a picture or graph or figure, one needs to cite the source of that image right underneath that figure.
6. If a student uses material from a source by replacing the words from the original source with synonyms but keeping the basic structure of the text unchanged, and has not acknowledged the original source, then this will also be interpreted as plagiarism.
7. If the student uses her own previous work or uses the same work as her response to evaluation components in different courses without acknowledgement and permissions from all instructors involved, it will be interpreted as plagiarism.