



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Scandinavia Program, Summer 2027

GEOG 475 Topics: Urban Geography: Everyday Life in Stockholm and Helsinki (3 credits)

26 May to 10 June 2027

Instructor: Prof Matthew W. Wilson, PhD

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change



Section from "Carta Marina" by Olaus Magnus, 1539

1. Course Description:

This course will consider how "the city is everywhere and in everything" (Amin and Thrift 2002). To do so, we will consider the multiplicity of relationships that compose the city and examine how a world marked by urbanization blurs traditional boundaries including rural-urban, nature-human, and technical-cultural. We will examine ways in which local experiences and

conditions of urban life are affected by processes of globalization and the emergence of new information technologies. We will examine various social dimensions in the context of urban life, as a way of exploring how identity and place shape one another in cities. We will explore changes in the urban politics and governance practices that shape the place we live. We will reference Stockholm and Helsinki as case studies, through active learning exercises designed to get you out of the classroom. The readings and activities will expose you to primary research, data visualizations, and writing by urban geographers, urban planners, and other researchers who have contributed to the rich body of scholarship that informs our understanding of the changing cultural, economic, and political geographies of cities.

2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:

KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:

Cities provide rich phenomena for advanced study. This course in urban geography will overview several aspects of these phenomena as well as present a more developed understanding of the social and political implications of technological developments in cities. Following this course, students will have been exposed to a number of introductory concepts in political, economic, and social geography. Students shall be able to:

- Identify and situate historical periods of the city;
- Identify multiple conceptual approaches to understanding the city;
- Demonstrate introductory competencies in field methods, including survey techniques, participant observation, and landscape analysis;
- Develop techniques for drawing urban geographic themes from popular culture;
- Cite key examples of existing theory and research in the field of urban geography; and
- Explain the relationship between social processes and urban forms.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

Urban compactness: Students will examine the concept of urban compactness as an impact on everyday experience in Stockholm and Helsinki. Histories of urban development and transportation will be considered alongside planning for housing, commercial, and leisure activities. Experiences in Stockholm and Helsinki will be problematized using theories of urban transition and urban form.

Urban culture: Students will explore dimensions of urban culture through everyday experiences in Stockholm and Helsinki. Exercises will include investigations of “fika” (coffee breaks) in Stockholm and draw comparisons with coffee-oriented leisure time in Helsinki (“kahvitauko”), as well as participating in public swimming and sauna spaces.

Urban nature: Students will examine allotment gardens as well as other green spaces in Stockholm and Helsinki to better understand the role of the environment in urban development, urban climate activism, as well as tourism and leisure. Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement will be considered alongside examples of US suburban development.

Urban North: Students will consider what is meant by the “urban North” as represented by Stockholm and Helsinki, drawing distinctions with Western European urbanism and US urbanism.

Urban representation: Students will utilize their mobile phones as platforms to explore the relationship between digital and algorithmic representations of Stockholm and Helsinki and individual and group experiences of these places. Touristic sites, historical markers, and other places captured in global circulation of images will be considered.

5. Fulfillment of General Education Requirement:

This course may be used as an equivalent at the University of Kentucky for GEO222 Cities of the World, which fulfills the Global Dynamics requirement of the UK Core. UK students should discuss with the Department of Geography Director of Undergraduate Studies.

6. Required Readings and Materials:

This course will require that students have use of a mobile device and a data plan while on the study abroad, including an account to use for WhatsApp. Readings and other materials will be provided to the students electronically, including the following readings:

- Clark, Peter. "Northern Cities in European Perspective." Chap. 1 In *Urban Life in Nordic Countries*, edited by Heiko Droste, 1-24. New York, NY: Routledge, 2024.
- Hannikainen, Matti O. "New Towns? Urbanisation in Finland between the 1920s and the 1970s." Chap. 7 In *Urban Life in Nordic Countries*, edited by Heiko Droste, 147-79. New York, NY: Routledge, 2024.
- Nilsson, Lars. "Phases of Urbanisation: Sweden, 1800-2020." Chap. 13 In *Urban Life in Nordic Countries*, edited by Heiko Droste, 291-303. New York, NY: Routledge, 2024.

7. Graded Assignments:

Assessment Overview: Students will be assessed in this course using a variety of methods, and is distributed in the following ways, for a total of 400 points:

- Preparations Essay (30 points)
- WhatsApp Check-Ins (100 points)
- Stockholm Photo Essay (30 points)
- Helsinki Photo Essay (30 points)
- Applying Concepts Essay 1 (50 points)
- Applying Concepts Essay 2 (50 points)
- Final Group Presentation (80 points)
- Reflections Essay (30 points)

Preparations and Reflections Essays: Prior to and at the conclusion of the study abroad, students will prepare two short essays in response to a prompt. These will be mostly based on experiences, meant to document assumptions and the underlying bases for further learning and growth.

WhatsApp Check-Ins: Throughout the study abroad, students will respond to prompts sent by the instructor via WhatsApp. These may be used to direct learning in a particular excursion or to assist in interpreting and unpacking experiences for later discussion and development in class.

Photo Essays: Students will create two photo essays (from Stockholm and from Helsinki) of 7-10 photographs taken by the students that help to illustrate a concept from the course. The concept should be discussed with the instructor prior to creation of the photo essay. Observe restrictions regarding photography in all places, and refrain from photos that center on individuals. Consider the sequencing of the photographs, such that a clear narrative would emerge without textual support.

Applying Concepts Essays: Students will compose two essays (500-1000 words) that will demonstrate their ability to apply a concept from the course. Essays should draw upon experiences during the study abroad and on additional materials/lectures from the course, and should be discussed with the instructor prior to development. Essays may be based upon either Stockholm or Helsinki, individually, or taken up in both cities comparatively.

Final Group Presentation: Students will pair up to create and present a 20-min presentation for the class at the conclusion of the study abroad. The presentation should highlight primary observations and analysis from the course, including experiences and insights from course materials, discussions, and lectures. Students should synthesize as group, share contradictions, and any remaining questions that might guide their future investigations around course topics or visits to Stockholm and Helsinki. Groups should plan to meet with the instructor to discuss ideas and plans for this final presentation.

Work will be graded on this scale:

- 90 – 100 A
- 80 – 89 B
- 70 – 79 C
- 60 – 69 D
- Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.

8. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can “hallucinate” (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.
- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

“I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.].”

9. Attendance Policy:

KIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused

absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

10. Disability Accommodation:

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, maria.canning@wku.edu, to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, haley.mctaggart@wku.edu, if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

11. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / ena.demir@wku.edu) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / michael.crowe@wku.edu). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered

"Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.