Lab Background and Setting
Like many other countries, in the 20th century Turkey was transformed by rapid urbanization. Today, roughly 70 percent of Turkey’s 73 million inhabitants live in cities, with the greatest populations concentrated in the western Marmara, Aegean and Mediterranean regions. Straddling Europe and Asia, Istanbul bridges East and West, putting it at a critical crossroads for commerce, trade and cultural exchange for centuries. The significance of its geographic location cannot under-emphasized in our exploration of politics and governance in this booming metropolitan city. Spreading seemingly uncontrollably along both sides of the Bosphorus Straits Istanbul boasts a population of 12.8 million, making the largest city in Turkey and fifth largest city proper in the world. Three hundred miles to the east lies Ankara, the Anatolian town that Kemal Atatürk made the capital of the new Turkish republic in 1923. Center of a highly centralized political system, Ankara, too, has experienced rapid growth, especially since the 1970’s, when migrants flooding in from the impoverished countryside began to build sprawling squatter settlements.

Course Content and Description
The Istanbul Lab course accompanies the research seminar on Comparative Urban Politics and Policy (Poli 464). The purpose of the Lab is multifold. First, it provides students with an in-depth examination of one city in particular—Istanbul—so that they can gain micro-level knowledge and understand about how politics and policy work in a specific case and also apply theories and concepts from the more macro-level focus of the seminar course. Second, the Lab is the setting for both the research project and the field research trip to Istanbul.

In the Lab course, we will begin with a very broad overview of Turkish political economy since the founding of the Republic in 1923. From here we will examine local and transnational forces that have driven (and continue to drive) contemporary urbanization in Turkey, focusing primarily on Istanbul, but also considering Ankara and other municipalities where appropriate. The primary content of the Lab course will however, be on the key issues and problems that have emerged in Istanbul as a result of its rapid urbanization over the past several decades. In particular, we will focus the causes and consequences of growing income inequality, socio-economic exclusion and environmental
challenges. We will also concentrate on how rapid urbanization in Istanbul has affected the politics of land-use, political representation (for migrants, women, the poor), the relationship between local and national politics, and the evolution of democracy and the secular Turkish Republic.

Woven into our substantive focus on politics and policy in Istanbul, will be regular attention to the building blocks of conducting social scientific inquiry in general and comparative analysis in particular. The Lab will be the setting for learning how to design and conduct the research project and planning for the field research that students will engage in while in Istanbul. Some weeks we will meet together with the Buenos Aires Lab (Poli 348) so students can work collaboratively on the research projects. Other weeks we will have guest speakers and/or discussions of the readings and class materials (e.g., films) that focus explicitly on Istanbul and Turkey. Similar to the parent course, the Lab has an explicit interdisciplinary perspective and our readings will cover a wide range of disciplines, theories and methodological approaches.

Course Topics and Schedule of Readings

Jan 9        Course Introduction & Overview (in Poli 464)

Jan 17       Settlement and Urbanization of Istanbul

• Sumner-Boyd, Hilary and John Freely. 2010. “The View from the Bridge” (1-16). In Strolling Through Istanbul. NY: Tauris Parke Paperbacks


Jan 24       Turkish Politics and Governance 101—Guest Speaker


Jan 31  **Federalism-Power Sharing**

Feb 7  **Local Government Organization, Function, Power in Turkey**

Feb 14  **Political Economy of Urbanization/Housing in Istanbul**

Feb 21  **Housing and Urban Transformation Continued**

Feb 22-  Istanbul Lab (Depart 4:30, AA3786 IAH)
March 3  Istanbul Lab (Return 3/4 12:15 am, AA 3785)

March 7  **Research Team Meeting-Poli 349 & Poli 348 Meet Together**
March 14   Urban Policy Overview

March 21   Education Policy (Resources)

March 28   Spring Recess

April 4:   Transportation Policy (Resources)


April 12: Urban Poverty & Social Policy (Resources—see also Owlspace)


April 18  Project Work

(TBA):  Poster Session/Reception

May 8:  Final Papers Due