

PSUS 6201

Principles of Sustainability | AKA: History, Theory, and Sustainability of Urban Planning
Fall 2015 | Mondays: 6 – 9 PM Room 601

Instructor:

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Overview:

This class is about developing, evaluating, and advancing knowledge of sustainable planning. We will explore some of the more traditional approaches of city and regional planning and in turn discuss their merits, shortcomings, and implications. We will also explore ideas that are related to, but not always considered within, the profession of urban and regional planning. Some of the readings will focus on writers working outside of traditional ‘planning,’ while some readings comprise the most oft-cited planning writings. Readings and discussion will address an array of present and future issues including community organization, blight clearance & renewal, urban design, first and third world slums, urban economics, race, and growth boundaries. We will also tour planning history, zoning & regulatory controls, and transportation. Students will leave the class having constructed their own ideas on the meaning and implications of urban planning theory within a framework of sustainability and be able to write and speak persuasively on these ideas.

Course Requirements:

1. Class Participation (discussion and weekly written reactions) | (10%)

This class is a seminar format, which means that students (and the instructor) are expected to come prepared to actively discuss their personal thoughts on, and impressions of, weekly readings. Do not simply see “Class Participation” and think this is an easy grade. It is not. Speak up. Read. React. You will not agree (or even like) some of the ideas and opinions expressed in the readings. Similarly you may not agree with other students’ reactions to the readings shared in class. That’s fine. In fact, that is great as it can add different perspectives. The important thing is that you do indeed *react*. Share your ideas. While understanding that an open class forum may not be the most comfortable environment for some people to share ideas, the profession of planning (and graduate school) require a level of participation that may take you out of your comfort zone. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to the group, please speak with me privately but please also use this opportunity to challenge yourself and practice sharing ideas orally. All ideas and opinions will be treated with respect.

In addition to coming to class having read the weekly reading(s) and being prepared for class discussion, each student should submit a short reaction to the writing. This should be no more than 150 words (this is a ballpark - don’t bother doing a word count). It should be *your personal reaction* to the reading and can be critical or complementary of the work. I want to know whether you found the reading useful or not, clear, confusing, etc. And why you felt the way you did. It should *not* be a summary of the book (or something you would read on Amazon). It should reflect *your* opinion of the importance of the book/reading overall or a particular aspect discussed in the reading that made a lasting impression with you. It does not have to have any citations nor be of a particular font/spacing. However it

should be written professionally. These should be printed and submitted *before* class starts. If you don't have access to a printer, you may email them to me (bernish@gwu.edu) before class but a printed version is **strongly** preferred (I look these over on the train ride home). No late submissions will be accepted.

2. **Planning in the News (presentation + report)** | (10% Presentation | 5% Written Report)

Each week, starting on September 21st and concluding on October 19th, two different students will report orally to the class on a timely (within the last six months) planning-related news item. The issue can be local, national or international in scope. It can relate to social, economic, physical or political environment. One can cast a broad net in defining a planning related news item, but ultimately, the student is responsible for explaining why it is a planning concern. Possible news sources can be magazines, professional journals, websites, etc. Planetizen, Greater Greater Washington, Atlantic Cities are just some examples of good sources of information for this (these are *not* peer-reviewed sources for the midterm however). If you find the issue/topic discussed in more than one website or magazine, feel free to discuss both sources. The oral report will (1) explain how and where you found the news and why it interested you, (2) describe the specifics of the issue, (3) explain why it is a planning concern, and (4) justify why it is newsworthy. The oral report should be accompanied by a PowerPoint or Prezi but should not be 'read' from the presentation medium. (In other words, do not put a lot of text in the PowerPoint or Prezi). The presentation should include the source of the item (web link or printed reference). The oral report will occur sometime during class, and should take about 10 minutes. The oral report is expected to be succinct yet informative. The speaker should cover the facts of the article, and maintain the interest of the class. The class should leave with an appreciation of the significance of the news item.

The oral report is to be complemented with a written summary submitted at the beginning of class the week after the presentation is given. It should be *roughly* 500 words. The written component should be clear and concise, not a stream of consciousness. It is a summary of your oral presentation, not a transcript. **The written summary may also include information not covered in the oral presentation and incorporate any questions that may have arisen from the students/the instructor following the presentation.** This may be printed and submitted at the beginning of class or emailed to me (bernish@gwu.edu).

The purpose of this exercise is to develop an appreciation of the breadth of planning issues that face the profession; to introduce students to various sources of planning information and to provide students an opportunity to practice oral presentation skills and writing skills. How one presents the message is as important as the message itself. Both the oral and written piece will be graded on style and substance, the ability to inform as well as the ability to engage. The presenter should connect with the audience, while maintaining an expected level of professionalism.

3. **Legal Portrayals (presentation + report)** | (10% Presentation | 5% Written Report)

Each week, starting on November 9th and concluding on November 30th, two students will act on two different sides in an assigned planning-related court case. The students may choose who plays the plaintiff and who is the defendant but should come to class prepared to convey the main points of each case. This should include, at a minimum, key names involved, what (if any) constitutional amendment is involved in the case, what planning-related issue is involved, and what the outcome ultimately involves. Prior to the announcement of the decision, the class will guess how the case was adjudicated.

The oral portrayal is to be complemented with a written summary by **each student involved in the portrayal** at the beginning of class **the day of the portrayal**. The written summary should be *roughly* 500 words and cover similar details covered in the portrayal but, of course, contain details of both sides of the case. This may be printed and submitted at the beginning of class or emailed to me (bernish@gwu.edu).

4. Mid-Term Research Essay | (15%)

Students will be responsible for preparing a mid-term essay involving further research on topics covered in class readings. The essay should cite (and discuss at length) at least 2 pieces of *peer-reviewed scientific literature*. That is, professional journals and not websites or general publications. These essays should be roughly 1,500 words but content is more important than length. I do not care what font size or spacing is used but the writing should be professional. Part of the grade is based on your ability to write persuasively and professionally. The choice of topic is up to you but should relate to some aspect of a class reading. Please feel free to talk with me about your topic if you would like. (If you prefer, you may choose the topic from a list that I will provide closer to the due date). The essay should be emailed to me (bernish@gwu.edu) by the beginning of class on 10/26. Improvement is expected on the Final essay based on feedback received from this midterm essay.

5. In Class Final Test | (25%)

There will be a brief short answer & multiple choice exam in class on Monday 12/7. This will cover all of the readings and some of the *Planning in the News* Articles.

6. Final Take Home Exam | (15%)

There will be a take-home final exam that will be distributed on Monday 12/7 in class and will be due by 6 pm on Monday 12/14 by email (bernish@gwu.edu). The exam will be an essay that will probe you to think critically about one or more of the class readings and may tie in one or more of the *Planning in the News* articles presented throughout the course of the semester. The final essay will be expected to be roughly 1,000-1,500 words and be professionally written. More information on this will be given toward the end of the semester.

7. Sustainable Landscapes Discussion > Sustainable Philosophy Statement (5%)

This will be discussed by CJ Lammers on 11/02 with associated readings.

Required Texts:

PDFs will be emailed to the class and/or available on Blackboard. In addition, the following books are required:

1. Glaeser, Edward L (2011). *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier*.
2. Jacobs, Jane (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*.
3. Kunstler, James Howard (1994). *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscape*.
4. Montgomery, Charles (2014). *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design*.
5. Pietila, Antero (2010). *Not In My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*.
6. Speck, Jeff (2012). *Walkable City: How Downtown can save America, One step at a time*.

Course Schedule (Subject to Possible Minor Adjustments):

- 8.31 | First Day of Class (Intros, Overview, etc.)
- 9.14 | **Framework of Influential Planning Ideas Emergent in mid-20th Century**
- BOOK: *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*
- 9.21 | **Early Planners and Theories**
- PDF: *Historical Development of American City Planning*
 - PDF: *Urban Utopias: Ebenezer Howard & Le Corbusier*
 - PDF: *Garden Cities of To-Morrow (Optional – but recommended)*
- Planning in the News: Nina Aamodt
Fang Wang
- 9.28 | **Planning's Power: Zoning and Land Economics - Intro**
- PDF: *The Techniques of Zoning & Subdivision Regulations*
 - PDF: *Land Use & Land Economics (Chapter 1 of Zoning Rules!)*
- Planning in the News: Daniel McCombie
- 10.05 | **Planning Theory Manifested Part I: The Need for Better Planning**
- BOOK: *The Geography of Nowhere*
- Planning in the News: Calvin Clessas
Jennifer Solt
Nancy Tappan
- 10.12 | **Planning Theory Manifested Part II: Sprawl, Smart Growth, & Urban Boundaries**
- PDF: *Urban Renewal and Its Aftermath*
 - PDF: *The Limitless City*
 - PDF: *Growth Management, Smart Growth, & Sustainable Development*
 - PDF: *The Vanishing Automobile and Other Urban Myths*
- Planning in the News: Kara Pennino
- 10.19 | **Why is Urbanity Good?**
- BOOK: *Triumph of the City*
- Planning in the News: Jade Gaelyn-levai
Yangfang Hu
- 10.26 | **Planning in the Courts**
- PDF: *The Legal Basis of Planning*
 - PDF: *Kelo Vs. New London*
- *Midterm Essay Due**

- 11.02 | *Sustainable Landscape Track with CJ Lammers*
- 11.09 | **A Primer on Transportation Planning + Case study of Columbia**
- PDF: *Transportation Planning*
 - PDF: *The Next America Revisited*
- Legal Portrayals: *Midwest Media v. The City of Erlanger and City of Ft. Wright*
 Jade Gaelyn-levai
 Yangfang Hu
- 11.16 | **New Urbanism**
- PDF: *New Directions in Planning Theory (New Urbanism Section Only)*
 - Book: *Walkable City*
- Legal Portrayals: *Stop the Beach Renourishment vs. Florida Dept of Environmental Protection*
 Calvin Clessas
 Jennifer Solt
- 11.23 | **Racial Aspects in Community Development**
- BOOK: *Not In My Neighborhood*
- Legal Portrayals: *Koontz v. St. Johns River Water Management District*
 Daniel McCombie
 Nancy Tappan
- Sustainable Landscape Assignment Due**
- 11.30 | **Can Cities and Their Design Lead to Happiness?**
- BOOK: *Happy City*
- Legal Portrayals: *Rocky Mountain Christian Church v. Board of County Commissioners*
 Nina Aamodt
 Fang Wang
 +
Village of Arlington Heights v. Metropolitan Housing Development Corp.
 Kara Pennino
 Andrew Bernish
- 12.07 | **Wrapping it Up**
***In-Class Test**
 *Final Exam Distributed
- 12.14 | **Final Exam Due Date (6 PM)**

Please feel free to contact me at any time to set up an appointment. I will always be available after class and, if contacted, can be available before class to meet in person.