



Municipalidad de Asunción



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Plaza de la Libertad, Asunción, Paraguay 2011

GEOG 3425: Urban Sustainability | Winter 2012

Mon. & Wed. 12p – 1:50p Boettcher West room 124

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Office hours: Thursdays 2 - 4p, or by appointment

Course Description

The 21st century is being called the ‘century of the city’. Now more than ever, humans across the globe call the city their home. Many of the world’s most pressing crises are manifest in cities, including: greenhouse gas emissions, land degradation, high mass production and consumption, widespread poverty and hunger, and expanding socio-economic disparities. As ‘sustainability’ becomes part of mainstream discourse, this course will explore what sustainability means for urban contexts around the globe. Arguably, the city has the potential to be the most efficient, equitable, and environmental form of modern human settlement. Covering all dimensions of sustainability from a social science perspective, this course will focus on theoretical groundings, practices of urban sustainability, and new research agendas. Major topics include: cities and nature; planning and land use; urban form; community and neighborhoods; transportation systems and accessibility; livelihood and urban economies; and social justice and the city.

Course Objectives and Goals

By the end of this course, students should be able:

[1] To understand and situate sustainability concepts in the urban context, by:

- Devising a workable meaning of urban sustainability
- Making some sense of the equity and economy dimensions of urban sustainability, in balance with the environmental issues
- Engaging the academic literature and other useful readings

[2] To observe practices of urban sustainability, through:

- Identifying sustainability issues and solutions across various urban scales: global, national, regional, metropolitan, neighborhood, and individual
- Making comparisons across global contexts, between the global North/South

- Observing ‘best practices’ from select cities
- Identifying useful and successful measures or indicators of urban sustainability
- Critically evaluating the over-abundance of sustainability-related resources on the web, in print, and in popular and commercial contexts.

[3] To articulate intelligently and explicitly (verbally, and in writing) about what sustainable cities means, the diversity of practices, and problems and potentials. This skill will be developed through:

- In class discussions and activities
- Posts and comments on the course blog
- Quizzes and exams
- A presentation of best practices / case studies

Course Readings

Students are expected to read all the assigned course readings. The following book will serve as the primary text for this course. Many used copies are available. One copy will be available on closed reserve at Penrose@Driscoll Library. Additional reading requirements, as noted on the course calendar, will be made available on Blackboard.

- Wheeler, S. and T. Beatley, Eds. (2009). *The sustainable urban development reader*. 2nd. ed. London: Routledge.

Course Format

This is an advanced level course that relies more on student participation than instructor lecturing. Class sessions will consist of reading discussions, mini-lectures, activities, and student presentations. This is a reading-intensive course. All students are expected to fully read the material before class. As noted in the schedule, there are particular days scheduled with field trips.

Course Policies

The course policies are simple:

- Participate and respect others.
- Turn off cell phones and computers during class. Please request permission if using laptops for note taking.
- Due dates are firm. Let me know if you are facing an unusual circumstance.
- *Honor yourself, Honor the code.* Please adhere to the University of Denver’s Honor Code: <http://www.du.edu/studentlife/ccs/>
- Please contact the Disabilities Services Program office if you need special accommodations in this class. <http://www.du.edu/studentlife/disability/dsp/index.html>

Course Requirements

Requirements Summary

- Reading, in-class participation, and attendance, including scheduled field trips
- Best Practices presentation and short paper
- Course Blog
- 2 quizzes and 1 exam
- Graduate students have slightly different requirements (see details below).

Undergraduate Students

1. Reading, discussion participation, and attendance (25%)
 - This is a discussion based course. It is imperative that students come prepared, having read the assigned readings.
 - Actively participate in the small-group and full class discussions.
 - Come to class with discussion questions, new insights, or questions of clarification. Students may be called upon each class period.
 - Towards the end of the course, you will be asked to provide a self-assessment of your participation and completion of reading assignments.

2. Two quizzes, 10% each, and final exam, 20% (40%)
 - There are two quizzes scheduled. They are non-cumulative. These will be administered through Blackboard. While you will have several days in which to do the quizzes, once you start the quiz you are limited to 1 hour to complete. Quizzes are not open note or open book.
 - i. Quiz 1 is after Feb 1 and covers material through Feb 1
 - ii. Quiz 2 is after Mar 7 and covers material from Feb 6 – Mar 7.
 - The final exam is scheduled for March 14. This is in class and will cover the entire course.
 - Material for the quizzes and exam will consist of: lecture material, discussions, readings, and basic information from student presentations

3. Best Practices / Case Study Presentations (20%)
 - During each regular class session, 1 or 2 students will give a 10 – 15 minute presentation based on some ‘best practices’ or ‘case study’ on any aspect of sustainable cities.
 - The purpose of these presentations is to acquire knowledge on a broad range of relevant real-world examples. Good presentations will stimulate discussion.
 - For topic ideas, you can utilize the examples in the back of Wheeler and Beatley.
 - Presentations are scheduled throughout the quarter. The earlier you present, the sooner you can check off the requirement. *Volunteers to present early – Jan 18 or 23 are welcome!!*
 - You are also required to submit a succinct 1,500 word paper on your topic, as well as any presentation documents. The paper and presentation documents are due 2 weeks after presenting, unless you present Feb 20 or later. In this case your paper is due at the time of the presentation.

4. Course Blog (15%)
 - We will all contribute to a course blog that is located on Blackboard.
 - The purpose is to have a forum to interactively post and comment on evidence/examples of urban sustainability, and critically discuss them based upon course themes.
 - Each student is required to **post** at least 6 *relevant and interesting* items, and to *thoughtfully comment* at least 6 times during the quarter. Please actively participate throughout the quarter; don’t leave this until the end.
 - Posts can take two substantive forms: they can be brief **reflections** on ideas from class or readings, or they can be **artifacts** of urban sustainability that you find.
 - Each post should include a descriptive title and a narrative that describes the artifact and reflects upon the connection to class themes. Use visuals, videos, and links. But please describe link enough so a reader isn’t forced to visit the site. Make the reader *want* to see the site.
 - All posts and comments must be completed by March 13.

Graduate Students

Graduate students will follow the undergrad requirements, with a few exceptions:

- **Discussion leading.** Graduate students should select one regular class session in which to lead the discussion of the assigned readings. You may bring in additional / supplemental materials. I will also likely contribute some outside content during the period as well. This will count towards participation grade.
- **Research paper / annotated bibliography.** Graduate students are expected to become more immersed in the urban sustainability research literature. This requirement is in lieu of the best practices presentation. You can do one of the following:
 - **Urban Sustainability as it relates to your thesis/dissertation.** Research and write on urban sustainability issues that relate specifically to your larger thesis/dissertation project (minimum of 10 journal articles / book chapters, beyond standard course readings)
 - **Annotated bibliography** – particularly for students who are *exploring* ideas, construct an annotated bibliography of 10 - 15 academic journal articles or chapters that you found of related interests.
 - This assignment is due March 9, 5pm. Submit via email.

W, Feb 1 **Field Trip: Metro Wastewater Reclamation District**
Depart: 12 noon sharp. We will be taking NSM vans. Please try and accommodate → we will not return before 2:30pm.

Note: due to several uncertain issues, this field trip may be postponed until Feb 8, or cancelled altogether.

Week 6

M, Feb 6 **Social dimensions: Equity and Justice**
Readings: [W + B] Ch. 24 *People-of-color...* (7p)
[W + B] Ch. 25 *Domesticating urban space* (7p)
[W + B] Ch. 13 *Outdoor space...* (5p)
[W + B] Ch. 26 *Fighting poverty...* (12p)
Presentations: 1. 2.

W, Feb 8 **Sustainable transportation in cities**
Readings: [W + B] Ch. 15 *Transit and the metropolis* (8p)
[W + B] Ch. 16 *Traffic calming* (7p)
[W + B] Ch. 17 *Bicycling Renaissance...* (7p)
additional reading TBA
Presentations: 1. 2.

Note: This is an alternative date for the Metro Wastewater Reclamation District fieldtrip.

Quiz 1 → administered through Blackboard

Week 7

M, Feb 13 **Urban agriculture, parks, biodiversity, and public space**
Readings: Miner, "Taking root in the city"
[W + B] Ch. 18 *City and Nature* (6p)
[W + B] Ch. 19 *Land development and endangered species...*(4p)
[W + B] Ch. 20 *What is restoration?* (6p)
Presentations: 1. 2.

W, Feb 15 **Urban governance and sustainability**
Readings: [W + B] Ch. 39 *A progressive politics of meaning* (7p)
[W + B] Ch. 43 *Collective action...* (16p)
→ Assignment: examine the governmental website of your home city for sustainability statements.
Presentations: 1. 2.

Week 8

M, Feb 20 **Green Buildings**
Readings: [W + B] Ch. 32 *Design, ecology, ethics...* (7p)
[W + B] Ch. 33 *Green architecture* (5p)
[W + B] Ch. 34 *Sustainability and building codes* (6p)
[W + B] Ch. 35 *LEED* (6p)
Presentations: 1. 2.

W, Feb 22 **Field Trip: Tour EPA Region 8 Headquarters (LoDo Denver) LEED certified green building**
Meet at University of Denver Light Rail Station
Depart: (11:56a) 12:11pm Line E to Union Station

Week 9

M, Feb 27 ****no class**** Please see Thursday/Friday requirement

W, Feb 29 **Sustainability and Urban Planning**

Readings: [W + B] Ch. 38 *Seeing change* (5p)
[W + B] Ch. 4 *Orthodox planning...* (5p)
[W + B] Ch. 41 *Urban Planning in Curitiba* (11p)
[W + B] Ch. 42 *Planning ...in European cities* (10p)
Presentations: 1. 2.

TR/F Mar 1/2

Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute Conference

Attend one session at the conference (in DU Law School building) More details later.

Quiz 2 → administered through Blackboard**Week 10**

M, Mar 5 **Urban Form: Is density ideal?**

Readings: [W + B] Ch. 12 *The next American metropolis* (12p)
[W + B] Ch. 14 *Infill development* (9p)

Choose one of the following:

Glaeser, "What is greener than blacktop?"

Owen, "Green Manhattan: Why NYC is the greenest city in the US"

Presentations: 1. 2.

W, Mar 7

Cities, sustainability and economics

Readings: [W + B] Ch. 27 *The economic system...* (6p)
[W + B] Ch. 28 *Natural capitalism* (9p)
[W + B] Ch. 31 *Strengthening local economies* (12p)

Presentations: 1. 2.

F, Mar 9

Special Field Trip: Prospect New Town, Longmont Colorado

This is scheduled for a Friday, and hope to accommodate most students' schedules. Time is to be determined. About 4 hours.

Week 11

M, Mar 12 **Sense of Place | Course Conclusion**

Readings: Newman and Jennings "Sense of Place"
[W + B] Ch. 3 *The Land Ethic* (10p)

Presentations: 1. 2.

W, Mar 14

Final Exam In class