



Municipalidad de Asunción



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Plaza de la Libertad, Asunción, Paraguay 2011

GEOG 3425: Urban Sustainability | Spring 2014

Tues. & Thurs. 2p – 3:50p | Olin Hall 142



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Office hours: Mondays 12-1p and Thursdays 1-2p, or by appointment

Course materials are located on Canvas (not Blackboard) <https://du.instructure.com>

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

“Urban sustainability” is a very new field of study and practice; only a limited formal academic ‘legacy’ exists. Thus the primary objective of this course is to develop a core understanding of what *urban sustainability* means by drawing upon relevant literatures from many different urban-related disciplines. We also seek to identify elements across all environmental, social, and economic parameters of sustainability. Finally, during this current era of marketability and trendiness we seek to think critically of that which falls short of real action or achieves *deep* sustainability.

This will be accomplished primarily through engagement with academic and popular literature, as well as examining best practices and unique implementations of sustainability. Students will develop core knowledge and critical thought through: extensive reading and reflective writing; exploring real-world examples of the terrain and boundaries of ‘urban sustainability’; and verbally articulating ideas and opinions.

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 Anderson Academic Commons. Additional reading requirements, as noted on the course calendar, will be made available on Canvas.

- 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.

Course Policies

- Participate and respect others.
- Please turn off cell phones and computers during class. Please request permission if using laptops for note taking.
- *Honor yourself, Honor the code.* Please adhere to the University of Denver's [Honor Code](#).
- Please contact the [Disabilities Services Program](#) office if you need special accommodations in this class.

Course Requirements¹

1. Reading and reflective writing (40%)

- As a discussion based course, it is imperative that students come prepared, having read the assigned readings.
- Come to class ready to discuss. Bring questions or new insights. Students will be called upon.
- My primary concern: *have you read the material? Have you formed an opinion?* When you read, read for learning, not in preparation for an exam.
- *Requirement 1.* Before each class, post your reading notes on Canvas, or according to an agreed upon method.
- *Requirement 2.* Due each Friday – a “*Weekly Pager*” a 350-word reflective writing on the contents of the week: readings, discussions, presentations, fieldtrips, etc... This can be summative, reflecting on key highlights, and to discuss remaining questions or concerns.

2. Participation (20%)

- Thoughtful participation in class discussion, on a daily basis
- Daily class attendance
- Serving once as a ‘**discussant**’ following a presentation
- Completing mini-assignments / exercises not otherwise incorporated into the reading and reflections

3. Self-guided field trip (10%)

- During Week 3 you will take a self-guided field trip exploring 2 sustainable community neighborhoods across Denver, resulting in a written critique. More details forthcoming.

4. Exploring the terrain and boundaries of ‘urban sustainability’: In-class presentations (15%)

- The purpose of this requirement is for us to learn about new and different practices that may or may not fit with the confines of urban sustainability. During each class session there will be 1-3 presentations
- I have already identified numerous potential interesting topics of interest; although you may name your own.
- Presentations should be limited to about 11 minutes; thus practice for conciseness.
- Please prepare a handout / document to distribute. (If submitted early enough, I can make copies)
- A student-**discussant** will provide a brief response, draw connections, and pose questions for discussion.

5. Annotated Bibliography (15%)

- The purpose of this requirement is for you to explore in-depth a topic of your interest.
- You will find and read 10 scholarly publications, then write a brief summary and critique (a paragraph each) for each article. Then, you will also include a succinct summative 500-word synthesis.
- This end of the quarter assignment takes the place of a term paper. More details forthcoming.

Course Grading Scale:

94 – 100% = A; 90 – 93% = A-; 87 – 89% = B+; 83 – 86% = B; 80 – 82% = B-; 77 – 79% = C+;
73 – 76% = C; 70 – 72% = C-; 67 – 69% = D+; 63 – 66% = D; 60 – 62% = D-; below 60% = F

¹ These requirements are exclusive to undergraduate students. There are no graduate students enrolled this quarter.

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Course Calendar
Spring Quarter 2014**

Note: [W + B] = Wheeler and Beatley, "...Reader"

Week 1

T, March 25 Course introduction
In what ways is Denver (not) a sustainable city?
Readings: None
Presentations: None

Th, March 27 Urban thought before sustainability discourse: The Industrial City

Readings: - F. Engels "The Great Towns"
 - Warner "The American Industrial Metropolis"

Presentations: None

Week 2

T, April 1 Urban thought before sustainability discourse: Utopian visions beyond the industrial city

Readings: - [W + B] Ch. 1 *The Three Magnets...* (7p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 2 *Cities and the crisis...* (5p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 46 *Streets of Ecotopia* (6p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 47 *Description of Abbenay* (4p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 48 *The View* (4p)

Presentations: 1) Topic: utopian cities???
 Volunteer:

Th, April 3 Modern Sustainability Discourse: Global agendas

Readings: - [W + B] Ch. 5 *Plight and prospect* (6p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 7 *Perspectives, problems, models* (5p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 9 *Towards sustainable development* (5p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 10 *The end of nature* (8p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 11 *Rio Declaration...* (9p)
 - Roseland, Mark. 1997. Dimensions of the Eco-city. *Cities* 14(4):197-202.

Week 3

T, April 8 Urban Design

Readings: - [W + B] Ch. 12 *The next American metropolis* (12p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 13 *Outdoor space...* (5p)
 - [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"

In class: *Urbanized* (2011), Director: Gary Hustwit, 85 minutes.
(please include your notes, comments, and reflections on this documentary into your daily reading journal)

Presentations: None

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Th, April 10 Self-guided fieldtrip: Sustainable residential communities

- Readings:
- [W + B] Ch. 38 *Seeing change* (5p)
 - The Charter of the New Urbanism http://www.cnu.org/sites/www.cnu.org/files/charter_english1.pdf
 - Mapes, Jennifer and Jennifer Wolch. 2011. 'Living green': The promise and pitfalls of new sustainable communities. *Journal of Urban Design* 16(1):105-126.

[Instructions on the self-guided fieldtrip are forthcoming]

Week 4

T, April 15 Urban Transportation

- Readings:
- [W + B] Ch. 15 *Transit and the metropolis* (8p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 16 *Traffic calming* (7p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 17 *Bicycling Renaissance...* (7p)
 - Kenworthy, Jeffery R. 2006. The eco-city: Ten key transport and planning dimensions for sustainable city development. *Environment & Urbanization* 18(1):67-85.

- Presentations:
1. Suggested topic: critiquing Denver's transportation
 - 2.

Th, April 17 Planning and urban redevelopment

- Readings:
- [W + B] Ch. 4 *Orthodox planning...* (5p)
 - Choose 1 of the following 2 readings
 - [W + B] Ch. 41 *Urban Planning in Curitiba* (11p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 42 *Planning ...in European cities* (10p)
 - Daniels, Thomas L. 2009. A trail across time: American environmental planning from City Beautiful to Sustainability. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 75(2): 178-192.
 - Chris Duerksen. 2008. Saving the world through zoning. *American Planning Association*.

- Presentations:
1. Two students to work together on the 10th and Osage area redevelopment.
 - 2.

Week 5

T, April 22 Cities and Green Building 1 (FIELDTRIP)

Fieldtrip: Green Building tour at History Colorado

Depart: 2pm sharp. We will be taking NSM vans. Please meet just outside the south doors of Boettcher West building, near the Geography offices. (** we will try to be back on campus by 4pm – please talk with me if you have a class scheduled at 4pm**)

- 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)
 - please include reflections on the green building tour in your reading journal

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Th, April 24 **Cities and Green Building 2**
Debrief green building tour

Readings: - Boschmann, E. Eric and Jessica N. Gabriel. 2013. Urban sustainability and the LEED rating system: Case studies on the role of regional characteristics and adaptive reuse in green building in Denver and Boulder, Colorado. *The Geographical Journal* 179(3): 221-233.
 - Lundgreb, Karin and Tord Kjellstrom. 2013. Sustainability challenges from climate change and air conditioning use in urban areas. *Sustainability* 5(3): 3116-3128.

Presentations: 1. Suggested topic: Masdar City
 Volunteer:

 2. Suggested topic: architecture and historic legacy
 Volunteer:

 3. Suggested topic: green roofs
 Volunteer:

April 25 – Earth Day Summit at DU. <potential extra credit>

Week 6

T, April 29 **Sprawl, Smart Growth, and Regionalism**

Readings: - Goetz, Andrew R. 2013. Suburban sprawl or urban centers: Tensions and contradictions of smart growth approaches in Denver, Colorado. *Urban Studies* 50(11): 2178-2195.
 - powell, j*. 2007. Race, poverty, and urban sprawl: Access to opportunities through regional strategies. In *Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity*, edited by Robert Bullard. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Presentations: Suggested topic for a pair of people: *What is the future of U.S. suburbia?*
 Volunteers:

Th, May 1 **Urban governance: Cities taking the lead**

Readings: - Rosenzweig, Cynthia, William Solecki, Stephen A. Hammer and Shagun Mehrotra. 2010. Cities lead the way in climate change action *Nature* 467: 909-911
 - Green, Emma. 2013. Can mayors really save the world? *The Atlantic Cities*
 - McKinsey and Company. 2013. *How to make a city great.*
 - Fallows, James. 2014. Why cities work even when Washington doesn't: The case for strong mayors. *The Atlantic* April, 66-72.

→ Assignment: examine the governmental website of your home city for sustainability statements.

Presentations: 1.Suggested topic: Sustainability ranking systems
 Volunteer:
 2.Suggested topic: PlanNYC
 Volunteer:

* it is correct: he prefers to not capitalize his name.

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Week 7

T, May 6

Social dimensions: Equity and Justice

Readings:

- Agyeman, Julian. 2013. Introducing Just Sustainabilities. Ch. 1 In *Introducing Just Sustainabilities: Policy, Planning, and Practice*. London: Zed Books.
- Split up the following readings:
 - [W + B] Ch. 24 *People-of-color...* (7p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 25 *Domesticating urban space* (7p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 26 *Fighting poverty...* (12p)

Presentations:

1. Suggested topic: Grand Junction's (CO) health care program
Volunteer:

2. Suggested topic: Cities and human trafficking
Volunteer:

Th, May 8

Social dimensions: Denver and homelessness

Guest speaker: Marcus Hyde, The Catholic Worker

Readings:

- Duffield, Barbara. 2001. Poverty amidst plenty: Homelessness in the United States. In *International Perspectives on Homelessness*, edited by Valerie Polakow and Cindy Guillean. Westport and London: Greenwood Press.
- Tompkins, Phillip K. 2009. The history of homelessness: America and Denver. Chapter 3 in *Who is my neighbor? Communicating and Organizing to End Homelessness*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.

Reflect: Is homelessness a matter of urban sustainability? Why or why not?

Week 8

T, May 13

Where does 'economics' fit within cities and sustainability?

Readings:

- [W + B] Ch. 27 *The economic system...* (6p)
- [W + B] Ch. 28 *Natural capitalism* (9p)
- [W + B] Ch. 31 *Strengthening local economies* (12p)
- Grodach, Carl. 2011. Barriers to sustainable economic development: The Dallas-Fort Worth experience. *Cities* 28:300-309.

Presentations:

1. Suggested topic: the share economy / crowd consumption
Volunteer:

2. Suggested topic: inequalities in cities and the minimum wage movement.
Volunteer:

Th, May 15

Culture and Sense of place

Readings:

- Newman and Jennings "Sense of Place"
- Darlow, Alison. 1996. Cultural policy and urban sustainability: Making a missing link? *Planning Practice and Research* 11(3): 291-301.

Presentations:

1. Suggested topic: the role of 'third spaces' (e.g. bars, coffee shops) (Benfield 18)
Volunteer:

2. Suggested topic: Little Free Library movement <http://littlefreelibrary.org/>
Volunteer

3. Suggested topic: Art and sustainability in cities
Volunteer

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Week 9

T, May 20

Cities and ecology 1: Resources

- Readings:
- [W + B] Ch. 21 *Metabolism of cities* (8p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 22 *Waste as resources* (8p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 23 *Stabilization Wedges* (9p)
 - [W + B] Ch. 37 *What is an ecological footprint?* (9p)
 - Nelson, "Closing the nutrient loop"

- Presentations:
1. Suggested topic: Biophilic cities
Volunteer:
 2. Suggested topic: critiquing Denver's "Sustainability Park"
Volunteer:
 3. Suggested topic: a topic on urban water issues
Volunteer:

Th, May 22

Cities and ecology 2: City-Nature interfaces

- 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)
 - Chiesura, Anna. 2004. The role of urban parks for the sustainable city. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 68:129-138

- Presentations:
1. Suggested topic: Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge
Volunteer:
 2. Suggested topic: Local food movement: A 100-mile diet in Denver
Volunteer:
 3. Suggested topic: Local food movement: Critiquing "The Source Denver"
Volunteer:

Week 10

T, May 27

Population and urbanization

- Readings:
- Cohen "Human Population Grows Up"
 - Brand, Stewart. 2010. How slums can save the planet. *Prospect* 167.
<http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/how-slums-can-save-the-planet/#.UzCb7yixTys> --
 - McGranahan, Gordon. 2013. Evolving urban health risks: Housing, water and sanitation, and climate change.

- Presentations:
1. Suggested topic: slums/shantytowns
Volunteer:
 2. Suggested topic: other global south issue / city resilience to disaster
Volunteer:

Th, May 29

Course conclusion: Final Discussion

- Reading:
- [W + B] Ch. 3 *The Land Ethic* (10p) (this is the best reading of the quarter! -eeb)
 - (optional) [W + B] Ch. 39 *A progressive politics of meaning* (7p)

- Presentations:
- 1 Suggested topic: City and faith/religion/spirituality/ethics (Benfield 22)
Volunteer:
 - 2 Suggested topic: community (Benfield 9 and 10)
 - 3