Meeting Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30AM – 10:45AM
Meeting Space: New West, Room 219


Course Materials And Communication: Sakai

Instructor: Bill Bishop
billbishop@unc.edu

Teaching Assistant: Brad Sherman
BSherman@unc.edu
401-484-1386

Appointments: as requested
Office hours: Wednesday 12:30 – 1:30 pm.
New East

course description

From the catalogue: “This course is an introduction to the methods used in urban planning for solving urban problems. Students will learn the methods used in various sub-fields of planning and will develop an ability to critically evaluate different techniques and approaches used within these disciplines.”

PLAN 247 is to be presented as an introductory seminar. “Drawing on diverse disciplines and subject areas, the seminar shares a focus on how scholars pose problems, discover “truths,” resolve controversies, and evaluate knowledge.” [DCRP Course Listing] The seminar is a form of academic instruction involving small groups for recurring meetings in which all students are requested to participate actively. The seminar will provide a place to consider assigned readings, raise questions and issues, and engage in discussion. Participation is a major component of the final grade.

This course considers how we might find, or at least seek, solutions to those problems in the context of tools provided by urban planning, or those we might conceptualize. How and why do some patterns of human experience, or settlement, become understood as “problems” that justify solutions? Through what standing or justification do we presume to intervene in other people’s lives under the banner of “problem solving”? Who decides the nature, extent, and urgency of such problems? What is the state of urban policy in the United States? How do we most effectively and justly confront the urban problems that matter to us?

Throughout the semester, we will work to identify and develop a set of skills relevant to the identification and framing of urban problems and to the prospective success of urban problem-solvers. We will be concerned with the actions that might be taken in attempting to address many urban problems confronted by planners. Although we may consider urban problems as they exist anywhere in the world we will focus primarily on those within the United States. We will introduce a number of key urban planning concepts and apply these to a number of pressing urban American problems.
This course is intended for students completing a Minor in City and Regional Planning as well others interested in learning about urban planning, or considering urban problems from a planning perspective. This course is a companion of PLAN 246: Cities of the Future, which focuses on the history of U.S. cities and early urban planning movements. There are no course prerequisites, other than an energetic interest in public policy, and a willingness to participate.

**Course Objectives – in Four Areas**

- **Provoke conversations about planning**
- **Provide an evaluative skillset**
- **An introduction to urban planning**
- **A consideration of urban problems**
a bit more detail regarding three of our objectives:

**Introduction to (urban) Planning**
- Context
- Theories, realities, objectives
- Methods & means
- Planning specializations
- Professional practice
- Consider the relevancy & legitimacy of planning
- Why do we plan?

**Consideration of (urban) Problems**
- Social
- Economic
- Physical
- Aesthetic
- Ideological
- Who decides which human circumstances are problematic?

**Development of a more (discerning) Perspective**
- Defining the problem and framing an argument
- Think systematically, analytically
- Evaluate dispassionately
- Appreciate wickedness, complexity, interconnectedness
- Question conventional wisdom and accepted views
- Through what standing and moral authority do we presume to intercede
rules of engagement

It may or may not be true that one should “never discuss complex, controversial, or contentious subjects in polite society.” But these are the very building blocks of persistent and recurring urban problems. In their absence we would not have much to talk about in this course. So we must address them. In fact your active class participation and engagement with the essence of urban problems, and with each other, is necessary component of the learning opportunity afforded by this course. The class will no doubt be comprised of diverse, interesting, and animated individuals. As such we will have varied perspectives, viewpoints and opinions. In expressing these in the context of confronting America’s urban problems, and in challenging ourselves and each other to consider alternative views, we shall at all times respect the dignity and legitimacy of perspective of every one our classmates. Every idea is welcome, as is every person, so long as all are expressed with respect, deference, and civility. Disagreement is good; disrespect and disparagement are not.

Urban problems are founded on contentious issues. Many are “wicked” problems. Such problems often suggest prospective remedies or solutions as contentious as the problems themselves, or no apparent solutions at all. In the course of considering these problems or prospective solutions, I may sometimes assume the role of devil’s advocate; not to undermine any particular perspective or point, but to tease out subtleties and confounding complexities.

Oh, and:

**UNC HONOR CODE:** “It shall be the responsibility of every student at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to obey and to support the enforcement of the honor code, which prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing when these actions involve academic processes or University, student or academic personnel acting in an official capacity.”
motivating questions
(these may bear repeated consideration)

- What motivates us to confront complex, controversial, even wicked, urban problems?
- Why do “we” (or you) care about these difficult problems?
- Who decides which human conditions are “problems”?
- Through what legitimate interest or moral authority do we propose to intervene in other people’s lives or livelihoods in attempts to “remedy” urban problems?
- Why have some urban problems proven so difficult to correct?
- What do planners bring to the table as experts?
- Why plan at all?
- What are the benefits?
- From where do planners get the power to intercede?
evaluation and grading

Class attendance, preparation, and participation are required. Active and engaging class participation is intended to provide opportunity to engage in critical thinking and peer to engagement in the complex and value-laden realm(s) of urban planning, urban problems and their prospective solutions. We seek a friendly, constructive, exploratory space in which the multiple individual perspectives brought to the classroom can be developed, expressed, and explored. Students will be graded based on the scale to the left.

Students who attend class, read the material and come to class prepared and ready to participate actively cannot help but score well. There will be at least two opportunities for students to earn “extra-credit.” These include 1) particularly productive class participation and/or particular initiative in adding value to our classroom experience, and 2) exploitation of “explanatory research opportunities,” and subsequent presentation of findings to class.

There will be no grading “curve.” Every student who performs at a level of excellence will be graded accordingly. The evaluation metrics are as follow:

grade components

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Lower Bound</th>
<th>Upper Bound</th>
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<td>96%</td>
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The University Honor Code is in effect as always. All assignments must be completed through your own individual effort unless otherwise instructed. In keeping with the Honor Code you must properly cite the sources of all data, ideas, and information that are not your own, particularly as these are presented in your written work. Please visit the UNC Writing Center website for assistance with proper citation style and how to avoid plagiarizing: [http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html).
## INTRODUCTION(S)
- Classroom introduction 08/19
- Human Populations 08/21
- Global Urbanization (introduction) 08/21

## PLANNING AND GOVERNMENT
- Urbanization chapter 2 08/26
- The Nature of Planning chapter 1 08/28
- Governing and Planning Urban Areas chapter 3 08/28
- Planning and Sustainability chapter 4 09/02

## MOVIE NIGHT
- 09/04

## LAND USE REGULATION
- The Evolution of Planning and Zoning chapter 5 09/04
- The Institutional and Legal Framework of Planning and Zoning chapter 6 09/09
- The Comprehensive Plan chapter 7 09/11
- The Techniques of Zoning and Subdivision Regulations chapter 8 09/16
- City Financing and Planning for Development (postponed) chapter 9 09/23

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT
- Growth Management and Local Government chapter 10 09/25
- Growth Management and the States chapter 11 09/30

## MIDTERM EXAMINATION
- 10/02

## INTRODUCTION OF GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING PROJECT
- 10/07

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES
- Environmental Policy and Planning chapter 12 10/09
- The Limits of Environmental Policy chapter 13 10/14
- Transportation chapter 14 10/21
- Housing chapter 15 10/28
- Community and Economic Development chapter 16 10/30
- Urban Design and Aesthetics (after you VOTE) chapter 17 11/04
- Heritage and Historic Preservation chapter 18 11/06

## INCOME, EQUITY, POVERTY & RACE
- 11/11

## LAND AND (OTHER) REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT
- 11/13

## GROUP PROBLEM SOLVING PRESENTATIONS
- 11/18
- 11/20

## TECHNOLOGY IN PLANNING
- 11/25

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS
- 12/02

- What are the most pressing urban problems - Why do “we” (or you) care about them?
- Through what legitimate interest or moral authority do we propose to intervene in other people’s lives in attempts to “remedy” the urban problems we perceive as most pressing?
- What are your solutions?