

DEPARTMENT OF CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

PLAN 055: First Year Seminar – Sustainable Cities

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Office Hours: 2:00 – 3:00 Tues, and by
appointment

Office: New East 307

Fall 2014

9:30 – 10:45 T + TH

Murphy Hall 220

<http://sakai.unc.edu>

Objectives:

This seminar examines the sustainability of cities and regions. A “sustainable community” is one in which new development improves the quality of life of people in the community while preserving environmental functions. It means that we do not narrow the choices of future generations in order to meet the needs of this generation. It means passing an environment and an accumulation of resources on to our children that will allow them to live at least as well as, and preferably better than, people do today. Many scholars have argued that a sustainable community also represents a just society, with adequate and affordable housing, health care, and other essential services to residents, a safe and crime-free environment, and humane work environments. Moreover, a sustainable community is one with a healthy economy where land and community resources are used efficiently and effectively.

As a seminar, we will look at how cities have evolved over the past millennia and how past and present approaches to property rights and urban development have both promoted and detracted from sustainability and the quality of life in America. We will critically examine a vision for more sustainable places, and we will look at actions that can be taken by citizens, businesses, and governments to help improve sustainability. By the end of this course, you should know what constitutes a sustainable urban community and be able to articulate the major threats to sustainable development. You should have developed a sound base of knowledge about the validity, effectiveness, feasibility, strengths and weaknesses of various strategies and methods for fostering sustainability.

The course is aimed not only at mastering facts and theories surrounding urban sustainability, but also at acquiring higher order skills such as the application of new knowledge, as well as creativity in evaluating and synthesizing new ideas. To aid in this, throughout this course we will be using a cooperative learning and application approach to the material we cover.

This approach will require you to take an active part in discussions during seminar sessions. To do this effectively, you should review and reflect on required readings prior to every class.

Format and Requirements

Our class meetings will consist of two 75-minute sessions each week. Class sessions include discussion of assigned reading, lectures that supplement the assigned reading, and periodic presentations.

Grades will be based on:

- (a) Seminar participation –weekly emails and discussion about readings, short presentations, and write-ups regarding your issue paper research (40 percent of grade).

Seminar Participation: Regular class attendance and participation are expected. Your participation grade will be partly based on your contribution to class discussions of the daily seminar topics. You are expected to attend all class sessions and participate. Unexcused absences from class will result in a reduction of the class participation grade.

Each week, you are required to submit in class a two to three paragraph response to the readings and discussion questions assigned for the week (these can be found on Sakai). Due dates are listed on each weekly question assignment. Assignments must be turned in via Sakai by the beginning of class on the due date, or they cannot be turned in and will not receive credit (No exceptions!). The lowest four grades will be dropped. While I will not return the reading responses to you, I will give you some brief feedback on their structure and content early in the course.

During the first week of class, students will be asked to sign up for a session to be a discussion leader. During this session, you will be responsible for leading the class in discussing the day's topic. Use the weekly discussion questions posted on Sakai will help to guide you.

A major component of this class involves becoming comfortable with **giving presentations to a group of your peers**. These presentations will be graded.

Towards the end of the semester, you will be assigned into groups that will make a team presentation (and lead a discussion) on a region that is assigned to your team (Portland, OR; Salt Lake City, UT; or Seattle, WA).

- (b) A photo essay in which you use photographs and words to illustrate an important feature of an urban environment that you choose (25 percent of grade).
- (c) A research term paper due in four installments during the semester (35 percent of grade).

Policy on Late or Incomplete Work: As is our Department Policy, and in order to be fair to your fellow students, late assignments, and assignments not submitted in the proper manner, will not be accepted. However, grades of incomplete may be given in the event of a medical or other emergency. A written application for an incomplete on any assignment, including the term project, must state the reasons for the request and propose a new deadline. A zero score will be assigned for presentations and written assignments not completed on time.

The University's Honor Code is in effect. Please consult with the instructor if you are uncertain about your responsibilities under that code with respect to this course. Assignments must be completed individually. Discussions with classmates about assignments are encouraged, but all final work must be entirely your own. The honor code can be found at: <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/>

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately early in the semester to discuss your specific needs. Students with documented disabilities should contact the Department of Disability Services at 919-962-8300 (SASB North, Suite 2126) to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

- Late homework assignments and assignments not submitted in the proper manner will not be accepted.
- All assignments must be completed individually.
- Please arrive on time and turn off cell phones and laptops in the classroom.
- Also, please remember that this is a discussion course. Please do not use laptops, do the DTH crossword puzzle, engage in side discussions, etc. as they are distractions to both your classmates and the instructor.

Required Readings

You are expected to complete readings prior to the class for which they are assigned.

The following books are available for purchase at the UNC Student Stores:

- Peter Calthorpe and William Fulton. 2001. *The Regional City: Planning for the End of Sprawl*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Rutherford H. Platt. 2014. *Land Use and Society: Geography, Law, and Public Policy (3rd Edition)*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Optional reading (highly recommended for term projects):

- Douglas Farr. 2007. *Sustainable Urbanism: Urban Design With Nature*. Wiley: New York, NY.

Additional class material will be made available on the Sakai course website.

Weekly reading reaction due dates (Summary)

- 1: Sept 2
- 2: Sept 9
- 3: Sept 16
- 4: Sept 18
- 5: Sept 23
- 6: Oct 2
- 7: Oct 7
- 8: Oct 9
- 9: Oct 23
- 10: Nov 6
- 11: Nov 13
- 12: Nov 18
- 13: Nov 20

Course Schedule

This syllabus could be subject to change!

The course is divided into four modules. Within each module, sessions build a cumulative base of knowledge that can be drawn upon in creating sustainable urban places and regions.

Part I: Toward More Sustainable Urban Places and Regions

Introduction to Sustainability and the Course

The first week's material introduces the course and covers the various course requirements. We will also begin to explore the key questions and issues we will address throughout the semester. During the second week, you will be introduced to university resources, including career services and the UNC library system

August 19. *Course overview and introductions*

August 21. *Defining 'sustainability'*

John A. Vucetich and Michael P. Nelson. 2010. Sustainability: Virtuous or Vulgar? *BioScience* 60: 539–544
Peter Marcuse. 1998. Sustainability is Not Enough. *Environment and Urbanization* 10(2): 103-111.

August 26: Career Services Seminar – **Guest Speaker:** Jacquie Gist, University Career Services Assistant Director

August 28: Introduction to the UNC Libraries and Library Scavenger Hunt. More information **TBA**.

Thinking about Urban Regions and Sustainability

We will look at the “disappearing” state of Louisiana to illustrate two extreme cases of unsustainable urban areas and unsustainable uses of land. What are the forces that led to this outcome in Louisiana and other manifestations of unsustainability elsewhere? We will also examine the interdependencies that tie metropolitan regions together and share with each other our issue paper topics.

September 2. *Conflicting interests in land: two case studies*

Burby, Ray “Baton Rouge: The Making (and Breaking) of a Petrochemical Paradise” (available on Sakai course website)
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp.41-54

Video (in class): *The Lost City of New Orleans: A Case Study*

September 4. *Economy, ecology, and society*

Calthorpe and Fulton, Forward and pp. 1-12. (Introduction)
Thomas Prugh, Robert Costanza, Herman E. Daly, Herman Daly, Robert Costanza. 1999. The Minimum Technical Requirements for Sustainability (Chapter 2). *The Local Politics of Global Sustainability*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

September 9. *Land resources, urbanization, and sustainability*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 15-30.
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, Chapter 1, pp. 13-39

We will use this session to discuss progress on your issue papers. A paragraph describing the issue you are researching is due at the start of class. Be prepared to make a very short (2-3 minute), informal presentation on the issue you have selected. Please also bring alternative topics, as your topic may have to change so as to not overlap other students' topics.

Designing communities of place

We turn to a smaller scale to look at the role of social communities and urban neighborhoods in creating sustainable places and then to the idea that urban places can be designed to be more sustainable environments in which to live, work, and play.

September 11. *Communities of interest and communities of place*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 31-40.

September 16. *Designing the region*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 43-60.
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 54-64

Part II: A century of reform: Efforts over two centuries to bring about more sustainable urban places and regions

The role of legal institutions

Urban regions are shaped by legal institutions and concepts that define what individuals can and cannot do with their property. It is very important that we look at how legal institutions and concepts of property rights have evolved over time.

September 18. *The law, property and property rights*
Platt, *Land Use and Society* 151-172 (Chapter 6)

Local government and early efforts to bring about more sustainable cities

We will discuss how urban regions are also shaped by the actions of local governments, which 1) provide urban infrastructure and services that make possible urban development and 2) regulate how land is used. These materials trace the evolution of local governmental institutions from the 19th century to the present and initial efforts to use government to bring about more sustainable places.

September 23. *Local government in the United States*
Note: Part I of issue paper is due today at the beginning of class.

Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 173-190 (Chapter 7)

Urban reforms of the nineteenth and early 20th centuries

The material we cover here continues to trace efforts in the 19th and early 20th centuries to cure the ills of the industrial city, in this case by relocating urban residents to planned new communities. These efforts culminated in the 1909 National Planning Conference that led to profession of urban planning in the U.S.

September 25. *Urban reforms of the 19th century: regulation/redevelopment*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 67-89 (Chapter 3)

September 30. ***No Class. Individual work on issue papers, Part II***

October 2. *Ideal communities*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 89-93
Additional reading TBA

Evolving policy tools

We now observe a range of local government policy instruments that provide tools to bring about sustainable urban places. Zoning is the backbone of land-use controls, but over time a number of other tools have been developed.

October 7. *Land use zoning and Beyond*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 191-212 (Chapter 8).

Legal constraints

Governmental powers are constrained by basic Constitutional guarantees. We will look at the legal issues that have arisen and the standards the U.S. Supreme Court applies to determine whether governments have overstepped their bounds in regulating the private sector.

October 9. *Constitutional and policy issues*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 213-235 (Chapter 9).

October 14. *Student issue paper presentations (Part 1 + 2)*
Note: Part 2 of issue paper is due today at the beginning of class.

***October 16: No Class – FALL BREAK ***

Part III: The search for a broader vision and new institutions

Local and state policy visions

We will focus on policies (guides to actions) for addressing issues of social equity and environmental quality on a regional scale. We will also look at an array of state programs that address issues as diverse as the need for comprehensive local planning and protection of particularly important regions to the protection of sensitive environments such as wetlands.

October 21. *Public policy and the regional city*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 61-87.

October 23. *State and regional land use programs*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 185-193.

October 28 and 30: No Class: work to prepare group presentations and photo essays

Part IV: Policy in Action

Federal policy and regional case studies and student group presentations

The federal government does not have an “urban policy,” per se. However, this week we examine federal programs, which have had an enormous impact (both good and bad) on the way that urban regions grow and develop. In particular, we will examine federal programs—transportation, environment, housing, and redevelopment—that are being reformed to promote more sustainable urban development patterns. During this week we will also begin team presentations. The first region of interest is Portland, Oregon, an area that has been at the forefront of efforts to control urban sprawl, protect environmental quality, and more closely integrate decision making about transportation and land use. The material this week reviews the plans and programs launched by METRO, the regional government the state of Oregon established for the Portland area.

November 4. *Federal initiatives*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 88-102.

Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 237-263 (Chapter 10, skim).

We will continue our examination of the ways in which various U.S. metropolitan areas have sought to achieve greater sustainability in urban growth and development, as well as revitalization of core areas. The Salt Lake City example stresses the importance of process and learning. Our discussions of issues in Portland and Salt Lake City will center on group presentations given during each of the class sessions during this section. The Puget Sound/Seattle example shows how a number of policies and programs need to work together—state growth management laws, urban growth boundaries, urban centers strategies, and transportation policy.

November 6. *Portland Metropolitan Area*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 107-124.

November 11. *Salt Lake City Metropolitan Area*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 126-138

November 13. *Seattle and the Puget Sound Region*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 159-171.

Note: Part 3 of issue paper is due today at the beginning of class.

Super regions and mega regions

We will look at the difficulties of managing what are termed “super regions,” vast agglomerations of people governed by hundreds of political jurisdictions. New York, Chicago, and San Francisco exemplify efforts to deal with the Herculean problems facing super regions. We will also discuss the emerging concept of mega-regions, vast regions connected by economic trade and other partnerships that can stretch across states.

November 18. *Super regions*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 172-184.

Environmental Restoration and final presentations

Why do we restore the environment? What do we hope to accomplish? This week we will begin by exploring an important question along these lines, “what’s wrong with plastic trees?” Finally, the class session of the semester is devoted to student presentations of the policy analysis and recommendations proposed in the final two sections of their issue papers.

November 20. *Ecological Restoration*

Martin H. Krieger. 1973. What's Wrong with Plastic Trees? Rationales for preserving rare natural environments involve economic, societal, and political factors. *Science* 179(4072): 446-455. (On Sakai)

***November 25 and 27: No Class - Thanksgiving Break (Eating and Work on Issue Papers /Photo Essays!)

December 2. *Presentation of student photo essays*

Note: Final issue papers, along with Part 4, are due today at the beginning of class.

Note: Photo essays are due today at the beginning of class.