

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE CITY MHC 250.00.002 (#0405)

Professor Laxmi Ramasubramanian

Class meets: Tuesdays, 2.10 PM to 4.40 PM
Classroom: HW 623
My Office: HW 1645; My Email: laxmi@hunter.cuny.edu
My Office Hours: Tuesdays, immediately after class, or by appointment
GTF: Fiona Lee, flee@gc.cuny.edu or fiona.lee@gmail.com
GTF Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10 AM to 4 PM

Course Overview

Cities are places of contradiction --- extreme affluence often exists alongside severe poverty. Global cities such as New York offer the best and the worst to their citizens. The past 50 years have brought unprecedented changes to our urban world; suburban population shifts, the restructuring of urban economic bases, social fragmentation, new immigrant populations, and the complex forces of globalization. Each of these changes has a lasting impact upon the urban experience. For many of us, built form (the city skyline, for example) defines the culmination of these intersecting forces. The resultant consequences – pollution, population growth, and natural hazards also shape city form and our experience of the city. In this course, we will use the lens of physical planning and urban design to better understand the interplay between the social, political and economic forces that shape the urban environment. This knowledge will be used to create innovative urban policies that will create vibrant public spaces, healthy communities, and sustainable urban environments. This course has a strong New York City focus, but will include discussions about other cities in the United States and abroad.

Learning Goals and Objectives

In this class, students will learn:

- contemporary theories and concepts of urban spatial design;
- how planning works in New York;
- about formal “official” planning and informal “community-based” planning;
- conduct a planning study using established protocols and guidelines

In terms of skills, this class is designed to help student improve their:

- research skills including the use of qualitative and quantitative data;
- writing skills (by drafting a policy brief);
- use of primary and secondary sources of information to support policy making; and,
- public presentations skills using digital technologies.

Structure and Format of Class

The class will meet once a week. Students are expected to arrive before the designated start time (2.10 PM) and should plan their schedule so as to stay in class until 4 .40 PM. Tardiness and/or absence (2 or more instances) will negatively impact your final course grade. Although this class is primarily a lecture class, students are expected to have completed assigned readings ahead of time and will be expected to participate actively in class discussions. Typically, the class will be a mix of lecture and discussion. During the second hour of the class, we will discuss assigned readings and relate them to contemporary and situational contexts.

Required Textbooks

LeGates, Richard & Frederic Stout. 2007. The City Reader, 4th edition. New York: Routledge (ISBN-10: 041577084X ISBN-13: 978-0415770842).

I recommend that you buy the paperback edition. Amazon.com is selling the book for \$56.66, but used books are a little cheaper. I will place one copy of the book on reserve at the Hunter Library after classes begin.

Other assigned readings will be posted on BlackBoard, handed out in class, or posted on the course blog.

University Policies

University policies and procedures will be followed to address issues related to accommodation for disabilities, religious observations, dealing with discriminatory conduct, sexual harassment and other related matters. In general, if you need special accommodation to meet any of the requirements of this course, you must see the instructor during the first week of classes.

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The college is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. In this class, I will be using Turnitin to review your submitted work.

Recommended Reading

Jacobs, J. 1961. The death and life of great American cities. New York: Vintage

Caro, R. 1974. The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of the New York. New York: Vintage (Originally published by Knopf, Inc in 1974)

Course Materials Online

1. **BlackBoard**, CUNY's on-line course management system
2. **Course Blog** at: <http://macaulay.cuny.edu/eportfolios/laxmi/>

Grading Scheme

- Regular Attendance and In Class Participation: 10 %
Attendance at every class is expected. Each student is expected to have completed the readings assigned for a particular day as preparation for that session. We will be discussing the readings in class.
- Online Participation 10 %
Each student will be responsible for summarizing comments about readings/topics for one session
- Assignment 1: Planning Issue Brief 30 %
You will write a report (approximately 2000 words double spaced) on a planning issue, choosing from a list of issues provided by the instructor.
- Assignment 2: Mini Planning Project 25 %
Working individually or in very small self-selected groups, you will provide an analysis and recommendations to solve a planning problem in New York following guidelines provided by instructor.
- Assignment 3: Final Written Exam (based on readings) 25 %
In class exam, short answer, closed book format

Submission Deadlines

I take submission deadlines seriously. **Unexplained late submissions will not be graded.** In special circumstances such as illness or family emergencies, the student can negotiate a later submission deadline by contacting me via e-mail. Note that all assignments for this class must be submitted electronically using Blackboard since it provides the student and the instructor with an electronic record of submission. If Blackboard crashes (as it sometimes does), you can either attach your submission to an e-mail message or hand in a paper copy that is date/time stamped by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning main office in Room 1611 Hunter West.

Overview of the Class Schedule

Date	Session	Topics
Feb 2	1	Introductions; Course Overview; Experiencing the City
Feb 9	2	Exploring City Form
Feb 16	3	Overview of City Planning/Policy (Formal Planning)
Feb 23	4	Community Planning (Informal Planning)
Mar 2	5	Planning in NYC
Mar 9	6	Qualitative Urban Research Methods
Mar 16	7	Quantitative Urban Research Methods
Mar 23	8	The Anatomy of a Planning Study
Apr 6	9	Planning Topic 1: Housing and Economic Development
Apr 13	10	Tech Day
Apr 20	11	Planning Topic 2: Infrastructure and Transportation
Apr 27	12	Planning Topic 3: Sustainability and Public Health
May 4	13	Planning Topic 4: Planning in Poor Countries
May 11	14	In class presentation of Mini Planning Projects
May 25	15	Final Exam (In Class)

Reading List and Schedule

1. Feb 2nd Course Overview, Experiencing the City

No readings

2. Feb 9th Exploring City Form

From the City Reader

- Mumford, “What is a City?” [lecture 1 and class discussion]
- Le Corbusier, “A Contemporary City” [lecture 1]
- Wright, “Broadacre City: A New Community” [lecture 1]
- Lynch, “The City Image and Its Elements” [lecture 2]

3. Feb 16th Overview of City Planning/Policy (Formal Planning)

From the City Reader

- Burgess, “The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project
- Harvey, “Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form”
- Olmsted, “Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns”

From the Power Broker

- Chapter 9: A Dream (p 143-171)
- Chapter 20: One Year (p 368-401)

4. Feb 23rd Community Planning (Informal Planning)

From the City Reader

- Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital”
- Arnstein, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation”
- Davidoff, “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning”

From the Power Broker

Chapter 37: One Mile (p 850-884)

5. Mar 2nd Planning in NYC

Review the PlaNYC website <http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/home/home.shtml>

Focus on the section “The Plan”:

- <http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/plan/plan.shtml>

Address the following questions:

1. What is the overarching goal of the NYC 2030 plan?
2. What are the underlying assumptions of the NYC 2030 plan? What are the conceptual relationships between these assumptions and societal values?
3. The plan is organized under six categories – land, water, transportation, energy, air, and climate change and under each of these categories, different topics are discussed. What do you think about the six categories and the sub-categories?
4. What kinds of information (data) are used to support the plan?

Review the Atlas of Community-based Plans <http://mas.org/planningcenter/atlas/>

6. Mar 9th Qualitative Research Methods

From the City Reader

- Whyte, “The Design of Spaces”

Field Observations to be completed before March 9th class

Visit **one** of the following locations:

- Verdi Square on the West Side
 - between 72nd and 73rd, Broadway & Amsterdam
- Gantry Plaza State Park in Long Island City
 - off Center Blvd., between 47th and 49th Avenues
- The High Line Park in the Meatpacking District
 - on Gansevoort St to 20th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues

Before you head off on your visit, download and print a map of the area. When you visit, write down all your observations in a journal, referencing them to corresponding locations on the map. This exercise will come in handy for your mini-planning project.

Explore the Project for Public Spaces website

<http://www.pps.org/>

7. March 16th Quantitative Research Methods

Browse the following websites before class

United States Census:	http://www.census.gov/
Social Explorer	http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/home/home.aspx
NYC Community Data Portal	http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/neigh_info/nhmap.shtml
NYC Data Mine	http://www.nyc.gov/html/datamine/html/home/home.shtml
NYC Building Info System	http://a810-bisweb.nyc.gov/bisweb/bsqpm01.jsp

Read:

Ramasubramanian, L. 2004. *Knowledge production and use in community-based organizations: The impacts and influence of information technologies*, **Cityscape** 7 (1), pp.165-191 [available on BlackBoard]

8. Mar 23rd Anatomy of a Planning Study

Before March 23rd, visit Roosevelt Island. Read more before you go:

Roosevelt Island Background: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roosevelt_Island

Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation: <http://www.rioc.com/>

Roosevelt Island Historical Society: <http://rihs.us/>

Also review the plan document prepared by Hunter College graduate students

Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, 2008. **Roosevelt Island Access Study: A Blue Print for Action** [will be available at the reserve desk at Hunter Library after March 1st]

9. Apr 6th Housing and Economic Development

From the City Reader

- W.E.B Dubois, “The Negro Problems of Philadelphia”, “The Question of Earning a Living
- William Julius Wilson, “From Institutional to Jobless Ghettos”
- Dolores Hayden, “What would a Non-sexist city be like? Speculations on housing urban design and human work”
- Michael Porter, “The Competitive Advantage of the Inner City”

Explore the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s website:

<http://www.hud.gov>

Explore KnowledgePlex, an affordable housing and community development resource

<http://www.knowledgeplex.org/>

10. Apr 13th Tech Day

Students work on their projects with Fiona Lee

11. Apr 20th Infrastructure and Transportation

From the City Reader

- Kenneth Jackson, “The Drive-in Culture of Contemporary America”
- Edward Soja, “Taking Los Angeles Apart: Toward a Postmodern Geography”
- Mike Davis, “Fortress LA”

Explore the Transportation Research Board Website:

<http://www.trb.org/Main/Public/Home.aspx>

Explore the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council’s website:

<http://www.nymtc.org/http://transportation.house.gov/>

Explore the Regional Plan Association’s website

<http://www.rpa.org/>

Explore the NYC Department of Transportation’s website

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/home/home.shtml>

12. Apr 27th Sustainability and Public Health

From the City Reader

- Jane Jacobs, “The uses of sidewalks: Safety”
- Andres Duany & Elizabeth Plater Zyberk, “The Neighborhood, the District, and the Corridor”
- Timothy Beatley, “Green Urbanism and the Lessons of European Cities”
- Wheeler, “Planning Sustainable and Livable Cities”

Explore the U.S Green Building Council website

<http://www.usgbc.org>

13. May 4th Planning in Poor Countries

Read “Dharavi, Mumbai's Shadow City” National Geographic May 2007:
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/05/dharavi-mumbai-slum/jacobson-text>

Additional readings may be posted closer to the date

14. May 11th Presentation of Mini-Planning Projects

No readings

15. May 25th Final Exam (In Class)

Class will meet in Room 1000 C HN at 2 PM for a 2.10 PM start