

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

PLAN 055: First Year Seminar – Sustainable Cities

Professor Todd BenDor, Ph.D.

Email: bendor@unc.edu

Phone: 962-4760

**Office Hours: 2:00 – 3:00 T,TH, and by
appointment**

Office: New East 307

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9:30 – 10:45 T,TH

Hamilton Hall 570

<http://blackboard.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. 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. 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 the present approaches to property rights and urban development have 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 think about the required reading 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)**.
- (b) A photo essay in which you use photographs and words in a Power Point presentation and term paper 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 with presentations made to the seminar at three times during the semester **(35 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. Additionally, four other items will contribute to your class participation grade:

- 1) **Prior to the last class (for which there is reading) of each week**, you are required to submit via Blackboard (Assignment tab) a two to three paragraph response to the readings and discussion questions assigned for the week (these can be found on Blackboard). This response should be short enough to fit into the assignment submission text box on Blackboard. Due dates are listed on each weekly question assignment (mostly Wednesdays at 5 pm and a few Mondays at 5 pm). Assignments must be turned in before 5 pm on the due date, or they cannot be turned in and will not receive credit. Blackboard will automatically disable your ability to turn in the assignment – so make sure not to wait until the last minute!
- 2) During the first week, students will be asked to sign up for a session to act as discussion leader. During this session, you will be responsible for leading the class in discussing the day's topic. The weekly discussion questions posted on Blackboard will help to guide you.
- 3) A major component of this class involves becoming comfortable with giving presentations to a group of your peers. During sessions designated in the syllabus, you will be asked to make four individual presentations on 1) three sections of your research paper, and 2) the photo essay you prepare. These short presentations will be graded by both the instructor and your peers in the class.
- 4) 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).

Your overall participation grade will be based on the quality of these items and your contribution to seminar discussion. You are expected to attend all class sessions and participate. Unexcused absences from class will result in a reduction of the class participation grade.

Issue Paper: Each student is required to develop a research paper that analyzes an issue related to the sustainability of cities and urban regions. The issue paper will be prepared, as if for an advocacy group, through four short assignments that cumulatively result in the completion of a paper on a state or local government land use/environmental policy problem that affects the sustainability of a particular place, region, or state. More details on this assignment will be given on the Blackboard course website.

Photo Essay: In this assignment, you will use a digital camera to take photographs of a sustainable, urban feature of an 'older' neighborhood (at least pre-1970s). You will choose three photos for use in a short PowerPoint presentation you will make to the seminar. Your PowerPoint presentation will be made to the entire seminar on April 16th when we will be looking at issues facing central cities and older neighborhoods and ways of enhancing their sustainability. You will also elaborate on this presentation by combining your photos (as many as you believe is necessary) with text into a 3-page paper. More details on this assignment can be found on the Blackboard course website.

Policy on Late or Incomplete Work: In order to be fair to your fellow students, late assignments will not ordinarily be accepted. 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 grade of F 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 are expected to be completed individually. Discussions with classmates about assignments are encouraged, but all final work must be entirely your own.

- **Late homework assignments will not be accepted.**
- All assignments must be completed **individually**.
- 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.
- **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

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. 2004. *Land Use and Society: Geography, Law, and Public Policy (Revised Edition)*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

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

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

Course Schedule

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

Week 1: Thinking about urban regions and sustainability

This week's material introduces the course and covers the various course requirements. We will begin to explore the key questions and issues we will address throughout the semester.

Session 1: January 13. *Course overview and introductions*

Session 2: January 15. *Land resources, urbanization, and sustainability*

Calthorpe and Fulton, *Forward* and pp. 1-12. (Introduction)

Platt, *Land Use and Society*, Chapter 1, pp. 3-27

Week 2: 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 un-sustainability elsewhere? This week's material also examines the interdependencies that tie metropolitan regions together. In addition, we will share with each other our issue paper topics and explore resources available in the Planning Library that can help in developing the issue paper.

Session 3: January 20. *Conflicting interests in land: two case studies*

Burby, Ray “Baton Rouge: The Making (and Breaking) of a Petrochemical Paradise”
(available on Blackboard course website)

Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp.29-44.

Video (in class): *The Vanishing State of Louisiana*

Session 4: January 22. *Economy, ecology, and society* (and ‘defining sustainability’)

Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 15-30.

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.

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.**

We will also visit the planning library on the second floor of New East Hall for a presentation by the librarian on the resources available there.

Week 3: Designing communities of place

This week 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.

Session 5: January 27. *Communities of interest and communities of place*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 31-40.

Session 6: January 29. *Designing the region*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 43-60.

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

Week 4: 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. This week we look at how legal institutions and concepts of property rights have evolved over time. We also pause to take a look at our designs of contemporary American cities.

Session 7: February 3. *Designing the region – continued*
Start reading: Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 44-94, 209-235 (Chapter 2, 3, and 7).

Session 8: February 5. *The law, property and property rights*
Continue reading: Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 44-94, 209-235 (Chapter 2, 3, and 7).

Week 5: Personal visions and perspectives

This week is partly devoted to crafting your personal visions and perspectives on the city, as well as presenting your interests for the semester term project (issue paper). Your time during the week should be devoted to working on your photo essay. You should also focus on completing part 1 of your issue paper for presentation on Thursday.

Session 9: February 10. **Photo essay fieldwork – No Class**

Session 10: February 12. *Student issue paper presentations (Part 1)*.

Note: Part 1 of issue paper is due today in class.

Week 6: Local government and early efforts to bring about more sustainable cities

Urban regions are also shaped by the actions of local governments that both provide urban infrastructure and services that make possible urban development and regulate how land is used. The materials we look at this week 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. Your time during Thursday's class session should again be devoted to working on your photo essay.

Session 11: February 17. *Local government in the United States*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 236-259 (Chapter 8)

Session 12: February 19. **Photo essay fieldwork – No Class**

Week 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.

Session 13: February 24. *Urban reforms of the 19th century: regulation/redevelopment*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 94-135 (Chapter 4).

Session 14: February 26. *Ideal communities*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 135-149 (Chapter 4).

Week 8: Evolving policy tools

This week we look at 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.

Session 15: March 3. *Land use zoning*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 260-273 (Chapter 9).

Session 16: March 5. *Beyond zoning: Urban land use control by other means*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 273-290 (Chapter 9).

Week 9: Spring Break (Rest, Relaxation, and work on issue papers!)

*****March 10 and 12: No Class*****

Weeks 10: Legal constraints

Governmental powers are constrained by basic Constitutional guarantees. The material this week covers 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.

Session 17: March 17. *Constitutional and policy issues*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 291-332 (Chapter 10).

Session 18: March 19. *Student issue paper presentations (Part 2)*
Note: Part 2 of issue paper is due today in class.

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

Week 11. Local and state policy visions

The material this week focuses 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.

Session 19: March 24. *Public policy and the regional city*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 61-87.

Session 20: March 26. *State and regional land use programs*
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 335-367 (Chapter 11).
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 185-193.

Part IV: Policy in Action

Week 12. Federal policy and regional case studies, Part 1 (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.

Session 21: March 31. *Federal initiatives*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 88-102.
Platt, *Land Use and Society*, pp. 368-418 (Chapter 12, skim).

Session 22: April 2. *Portland Metropolitan Area*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 107-124.

Week 13: Regional case studies. Part 2 (Student Group Presentation)

The material this week continues 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 week. 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.

Session 23: April 7. *Salt Lake City Metropolitan Area*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 126-138

Session 24: April 9. *Seattle and the Puget Sound Region*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 159-171.

Note: Part 3 of issue paper is due today in class.

Week 14: Super regions

This week we 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. The second class session this week will also consist of student presentations of photo essays.

Session 25: April 14. *Super regions*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 172-184.

Session 26: April 16. *Presentation of student photo essays.*

Note: Photo essays are due today in class.

Week 15: Renewing suburbs and cities and final presentations

Although much of our attention in this course has focused on managing development at the edge of metropolitan areas, sustainability can only be attained if the problems of central cities and older neighborhoods are also addressed. As we bring our exploration of sustainable cities to a close, this week we will focus on older communities. 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.

Session 27: April 21. *Renewing suburbs*
Calthorpe and Fulton, *The Regional City*, pp. 198-222.

Session 28: April 23. *Student issue paper presentations (Part 3 and 4).*

Note: Final issue papers along with Part 4 are due today.