

UP446 | Sustainable Planning Seminar | Spring 2017

Time: T/TH, 9:30am – 11:00am

Room: 223 Temple Buell Hall (TBH)

Instructors: Brian Deal (deal@illinois.edu)

Credits: 4 Hours

Prerequisite: Graduate or Senior standing

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Schedule: compass

Course Description

Examination of sustainability issues of concern to planners (from a climate change perspective) including conflicts among interests such as resource conservation, urban growth, environmental justice, industrial development, social equity, sustainable agriculture, and economic development, among others. Holistic approaches combining urban and regional land use, physical design, and policymaking are examined, ranging from theoretical concepts to detailed case studies.

Course Objectives

One of the most active debates of the current age is the question of sustainable development. This has become increasingly poignant in terms of its implications to our climatological system. Observers in the United States and from around the globe contend that current human development patterns and lifestyle choices are leading to impending social, economic and ecological crises. Human population growth shows little sign of slowing, yet resources are being depleted at ever increasing rates. Planners face formidable obstacles when attempting to reduce the negative impacts of development while still creating and facilitating livable, equitable places. “Sustainability” has become an almost ubiquitous goal, and “sustainable development” an increasingly mainstream strategy for meeting that goal. However, what does “sustainable” really mean? How does it implicate the affect of human activities on the carbon cycle? The goal of this course is to examine, debate and address the sustainability question from a variety of scales and contexts, to understand the utility or dangers inherent in using sustainability as an orienting device for planners and designers, and to develop strategies for integrating the useful elements of sustainability into urban development practices.

The concept of sustainability is almost as difficult to define as it is to create sustainable development, and despite much time and effort, sustainability in planning is still an elusive and contentious issue. The World Commission on Environment and Development’s Brundtland Report (1987) offers the following definition of sustainability that has been widely adopted and promulgated: “Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” But the idea of sustainability is not without detractors. Peter Marcuse (1998), for instance, argues that a focus on a traditional definition of sustainability, that is, maintaining the status quo, may mask important social and equity considerations of development.

Why do we care about the concept of sustainability? Historically, ecological stimuli shaped the development patterns of the human community. Traditional design solutions were the products of parochial regionality, based in large part on available building and landscaping materials, energy sources, climatic conditions and navigable transportation routes. These inherent ecological conditions directly influenced the community or building design outcome. Geographically specific design solutions were important for the development of a community that derived its identity from the ecology of place. But the ecology of place is rapidly being replaced by the invention and machine age, systematically removing our natural connections and ecological decision making processes. Meanwhile, as Campbell (1996) reminds us, sustainable planning is about more than just good design. The so-called “3 E’s” of Equity, Economic development and Environmental stewardship are the backbone of effective sustainable planning. True sustainability requires planners and designers to balance high quality site and building design with a host of other elements that will impact the well-being of the residents of the site, the city, the region and, ultimately, the world. These decisions require a broad knowledge base and the ability to weigh the

tradeoffs inherent in every decision that planners and designers make.

This course will engage existing debates and examine how sustainability has been defined by scholars with a variety of foci, including ecology, education, economics, and urban design, to better understand how the concept of sustainability has been conceptualized and how lessons from these seemingly disparate sources can be integrated into a holistic understanding of sustainable development. This investigation will provide us with a broad basis from which to address the issues, contradictions and conflicts inherent in development generally and sustainable development specifically. Because sustainability can be defined as practices that have impacts at varying scales, from the micro scale (building, site, local) to regional, national, global and climatological scales, we will seek to understand what role planners can play in sustainable development and climate neutrality. The over-riding question we will try to keep in mind as we proceed through the semester is, “Why do we call this sustainable planning instead of just good planning?”

Learning Philosophy and Course Format

The course involves reading, classroom learning and outside research. This course is designed as a seminar. This means that we are all going to learn and discuss the material together. The instructor will not lecture. Students are expected to do most of the talking. Student discussion leaders will facilitate the majority of the discussions and participatory learning will be essential and stressed throughout. Each student will maintain a weekly blog about the upcoming week’s assigned readings as a way to demonstrate your engagement with the readings.

Course Organization

The course is organized into 5 major themes: the first is an introduction to sustainable ideas and theories placed in the context of climate change; the next three are constructed around the three main tenets of sustainability and climate – environmental issues, economic issues and social issues; and the final theme is the role of sustainability and climate in planning. Each section contains one book and a number of articles, meant to give you a basis for understanding these issues in some detail and to prompt discussion. Each student will prepare a weekly blog on the readings for that week, write 3 response papers after we discuss the readings from these sections, and a final research paper and presentation on a topic of relevant interest to the student. At the end of the semester we will spend some time specifically discussing how the issues we have examined in the course relate directly to planning practice.

You are responsible for completing the readings on time and coming to class prepared to participate in discussions. We will also have some in-class exercises exploring the sustainability of your own actions and your community. The final class session of the semester will consist of short class presentations on topics pertinent to sustainable planning chosen by each of you based on your own research interests.

Course Materials

There are several books will be read over the course of this class:

1. David W. Orr. 2009. *Down to the Wire: Confronting Climate Collapse*. Oxford University Press: Oxford, NY.
2. James Howard Kunstler. 1993. *The Geography of No Where*.
3. Aldo Leopold. 1949. *A Sand County Almanac*. Ballantine Books: New York.
4. Paul Roberts. 2008. *The End of Food*. Houghton Mifflin: New York, NY

Only book number 3 (Leopold 1949) is required for purchase (online or at local bookstores – please contact me if you have trouble finding the book). Readings from the remaining books in addition to journal articles and other reading materials will be made available on the course schedule webpage (<http://urban.illinois.edu/courses/up446/sp13/schedule14.html>) for download.

Course Policies and Grading

This is a graduate level course based on reading, discussion and research. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings each week in a lively and engaging civil other sources, and actively participate in the class discussion. Some weeks of reading are heavy,

but I have tried to create a balance that allows us to explore the many complex facets of this issue while still recognizing that you have other courses to contend with. If you fall behind in the readings, please try to catch up, or meet with me to discuss strategies for staying on track.

Attendance is mandatory, and will be reflected in your class participation grade. Unexcused absences will reduce your participation grade. 3 unexcused absences will result in an up to 2 letter grade reduction in your final grade and a potential failure.

In addition to reading the assignments and coming to class prepared to participate in a discussion of the readings, you will be expected to:

- Maintain a weekly blog on the readings. These will be due before the start of each Tuesday's class. For each reading you should provide short summary of each readings main points and reflect on what you did and did not like about the readings, and how they relate to the course topic.
- Act as **discussion leader** during your assigned class session (see below).
- Write 4 response papers responding to the readings in the substantive areas we cover over the course of the semester. These are due at the start of class which begins the next topic section (see course schedule).
- Maintain a consumption journal. (Explained in more detail in class.)
- Conduct a sustainability assessment of your home and neighborhood. (Explained in more detail in class.)
- Prepare an in-class presentation on a topic of your choosing related to sustainable planning. This must be approved by me in advance.
- Prepare a research paper on that same topic, due during final exams.

Discussion leader dates will be assigned in Week 1. On the assigned dates, the discussion leader(s) will be responsible for leading the class discussion on the day's readings. Prior to the class session each discussion leader should develop a *brief* write-up on the assigned readings using the following outline to prepare for their role as facilitator:

- Reading #1: Title...
 - What do YOU think is the author's main point?
 - What did you like about the paper? What did you not like about the paper?
 - Identify some aspect of the reading that made an impression on you (new fact, enlightening observation, new twist to an old idea, writing style, relationship to another reading, etc.).
 - State two or three questions you would like to ask the class, or one aspect of the reading that you did not understand.
- Reading #2: Title... repeat... items 1 through 4.

Additional materials such as relevant newspaper articles (e.g. current events related to the topic) or videos, and activities can also be used to engage your classmates.

Your role as a discussion leader will be incorporated into your course participation grade and will be evaluated on the thoughtfulness of your questions, relevance of moderated discussions to the assigned readings, and your ability to engage a broad section of the class.

All final course grades will be assessed on the following basis:

- A: Excellent. Goes beyond requirements
- B: Good. Satisfies all the requirements
- C: Average. Satisfies many requirements
- D: Poor. Does not meet many requirements
- F: Failed. Does not meet most requirements

Grading will be based on the following elements (subject to modification):

- Course participation, Blogs and attendance: 15%
- Response papers: 25%

- Consumption journal 10%
- Sustainability assessment 10%
- In-class final presentation: 10%
- Final paper: 30%

Special Circumstances

Due to the participatory nature of this course, please also communicate any expected or unexpected absences with the instructor as early as possible.

Every effort will be made to work with students with unusual or unexpected obligations outside the course (family emergencies, health issues, participation in University sanctioned activities, etc.)

Students with disabilities or special needs who require any accommodations to facilitate full participation and completion of the course should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Student conduct

Students have an obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the University's function as an educational institution and suitable to members of the academic community.

Students are responsible for knowing their rights and responsibilities as found in the student code at <http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/index.html>

Schedule

Date	Tuesday	Thursday	Assignment
Introduction to Sustainability and Climate			
17-Jan	Course Introduction	Sustainability and Climate	
24-Jan	The Climate Dilemma	Climate Science	
31-Jan	The Morality of Climate Change	Climate Science and Politics	
Environment Issues			
7-Feb	Energy and Climate	Energy and Climate	Paper #1
14-Feb	Energy Production and Consumption	Energy Production cont.	
21-Feb	Land Use	Land Use cont.	
28-Feb	Water and Climate	Ecology	
Economic Issues			
7-Mar	Ecology and Economic Theory	No class 3 Poverty simulation	Paper #2
14-Mar	Markets and Solutions	Markets and Solutions cont.	
21-Mar	Spring Break	Spring Break	
28-Mar	Climate and Market Solutions	No class	Consumption Journal
Social Issues			
4-Apr	Collapse	Ethics	Paper #3
11-Apr	Food	Food	
18-Apr	Equity and Environmental Justice	No class 3 Allerton Visit	
Sustainability Planning and Design			
25-Apr	Land Use and Urban Design	Green Plans	Paper #4
2-May	Student Presentations		Sustainability Assessments
10-May			Term paper