

Department of Planning, Policy, and Design
University of California, Irvine

U239: URBAN DESIGN THEORIES AND APPLICATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

This course is organized around one central theme: How might the planning and design of the built environment contribute to making a good city? Mindful of this question, the course is organized around urban design theories that are grounded in urban design practice. In this course, we will focus on important innovations in urban design, their impact on urban form and their implications for

public policy. We will examine contemporary and traditional theories as well as important paradigms in the field of urban design and discuss their implications for urban form. For example, we will examine implications of recent innovations such as New Urbanism, LEED-ND rating system, and form-based codes for the practice of urban design. We will study how and under what circumstances these ideas are expected to improve physical characteristics of built environment. How might these ideas and innovations contribute to the quality of life of urban and suburban areas? We will focus on social as well as spatial aspects of built environments, and discuss national and international case studies. We will explore and critique perceptual, morphological, functional, symbolic, regulatory, social, cultural, and political-economic aspects of urban design.

We will also examine several related questions such as “What is urban design?” Do we really design cities? What are the issues in urban design? Who is involved in urban design? How is urban design different from architecture, landscape architecture and urban planning? How do we implement urban design? How might urban design play an important role in enhancing the quality of our built environment? **Please note that this is not an urban design studio. You will not design anything in this course.** For the assignments, you will write research papers, and develop a “research question.” The classes will consist of instructor-led discussions, introductory lectures, video and slide presentations, student-led seminars and presentations, and

presentations by guest speakers (TBA). The first-half of the class meetings will be devoted to presentations. The second half will be reserved for discussion and question/answers on the topic covered earlier that day. The course is organized in the following three sections:

Section One: Urban Design and Urban Form

In this section we will discuss criteria for evaluating urban form. We will first discuss some of the fundamental issues and core concepts in urban design and examine the basic values, themes and approaches that are central to the field. Next, we will examine normative theories and performance criteria to explore what makes a good urban form. Here we will also review and critique some of the transformations evident in the contemporary urban form in the United States. Finally, we will discuss contemporary and traditional paradigms in the field and examine how these paradigms influence urban design theory and practice.

Section Two: Urban Design and Perceptual/Visual/Social Dimensions

In this section we will explore the different ways in which we perceive and interpret urban environments. We will discuss how urban environments have different meaning for different people depending on their gender and race, as well as their cultural and economic backgrounds. Mindful of this, we will examine various techniques of observation, interpretation, and analysis of urban space. Here we will discuss selected urban design theories that focus the perceptual, visual, and social dimensions of urban design. We will also review, very briefly, the link between the activity of urban design and the political-economic contexts of urban development process.

Section Three: Urban Design and Morphological/Functional/Temporal Dimensions

In this section we will focus on theories, principles, and approaches that focus on morphological, functional, and temporal dimensions of urban design. Here we will examine the link between morphological (pertaining to form or structure), functional, and temporal approaches in urban design and its implications for generating “good city form.” More specifically, we will discuss dimensions such as the scale, size, and density, of certain types of urban spaces and evaluate how these might affect their use. We will examine the reasons for conservation, recycle, and reuse of built environments in this section.

All these theories and dimensions overlap, and involve several related issues even as they focus on a particular subject matter related to urban design. While discussing these diverse theories and dimensions, the overall focus of the seminar will be on “good urban form.”

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS

It is expected that, by the end of the term, students will be able to develop a critical understanding of the field of urban design. This course is developed to help you understand the basic concepts, core issues, important values, classic and emerging theories, analytical approaches and implementation processes in urban design.

Students are required to complete assigned readings in advance of the class and participate in class discussions. You are also encouraged to participate in the classes using additional information. You will be required to question theories and methods presented in the course of discussion and evaluate their applications to urban design. This course is expected to contribute to your ability to “read” and interpret different dimensions (not just social but also spatial dimensions) of the built environment. This approach is expected to enhance your analytical and communication skills in urban design and in urban planning.

Attendance in all classes and timely submission of all assignments is mandatory. A sign-in sheet will be distributed at the beginning of each class and absences will affect class participation component of your grade. Please note that attendance is a necessary but not a sufficient criterion for class participation component of your grade. You will need to actively participate during discussions and presentations.

ASSIGNMENTS, DUE DATES, AND GRADING PROCEDURES

For this course, you will complete three assignments and lead one seminar session. There are no exams. For the first assignment, you will write a brief critical review of the text “Good City Form” (~750 words, counts for 10 points). For the second assignment, you will analyze both, the New Urbanist critiques of contemporary urban development as well as scholarly critiques of New Urbanism (a research paper ~1000 words, counts for 40 points) [doctoral students may write a research paper (40 points) on any other relevant topic for this assignment]. For the third assignment, you will submit a “formal research question” for in-class discussion (40 words maximum, counts for 10 points). These assignments will be evaluated primarily in terms of critical/analytical thinking and careful writing.

All assignments are due at the beginning of the class on the due dates. Any assignment not submitted in the class on the due date will be considered late. Students must submit a plain paper copy of the papers; electronic submissions are not acceptable. It is your responsibility to make sure that I have received your assignment. Late submissions are discouraged; a 10% deduction of received points will apply per day. I may consider late submissions due to illness if a doctor’s note supporting your case is attached. Any assignment not received by the last day of class will not be considered for final grade calculation.

All assignments should be clearly written, well-organized, and edited for spellings, style, and grammar. The final grade will be based on total percent points received for this course and will be calculated using the grade conversion table included below. Grades will be calculated on “absolute” standards and will not be based on “the curve.” Assignments will be weighted according to the following distribution:

Assignments*	60%	Two papers for 50% , and a “research question” for 10%
Seminar	20%	Student-led seminar and presentation (may involve groups)
Class Participation	20%	Attendance, participation in class, and instructor evaluation
Total	100%	

*See Course Schedule for due dates

Grade Conversion Table

100 Points Scale and Corresponding Letter Grade

95-100 (A)	89-94.99 (A-)	85-88.99 (B+)	82-84.99 (B)
79-81.99 (B-)	75-78.99 (C+)	72-74.99 (C)	69-71.99 (C-)
65-68.99 (D+)	60-64.99 (D)	0-59.99 (F) (No Credit)	

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND UNIVERSITY POLICY ON PLAGIARISM

Acts of dishonesty in any academic work constitutes academic misconduct. You should familiarize yourself with university policies concerning academic integrity. I will follow the university policies in the event of academic misconduct.

COURSE TEXTS

The required texts for this course include Good City Form (Lynch 1981) and Time Saver Standards for Urban Design (Watson et al. 2003). Together, these texts cover variety of topics and provide a broad account of the subject matter. The Good City Form (Lynch 1981), provides an in-depth account of the main theme of this course. The Time Saver Standards for Urban Design (Watson et al. 2003) is a comprehensive reference text that provides a broad overview of the field of urban design. Chapters in this text are condensed versions of other books. In addition, several articles included below are used as required reading for this course. The assigned readings provide important background information for class discussions and critiques. I will discuss selected parts of these books and articles but will not rehash these in my presentations. Moreover, I will use selected topics from other texts throughout the quarter as and when appropriate.

REQUIRED READINGS

Banerjee, Tridib. 2001. The Future of Public Space: Beyond Invented Streets and Reinvented Places. Journal of the American Planning Association 67(1): 9-24.

Ewing, R. (1997). Is Los Angeles Style Sprawl Desirable? *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 63(1), 107-126.

Garde, Ajay M. 2009. "Sustainable by Design? Insights from U.S. LEED-ND Pilot Projects. Journal of the American Planning Association. 75 (4), pp. 424-440.

Garde, Ajay M. 2008. "Innovations in Urban Design and Urban Form: The Making of Paradigms and the Implications for Public Policy" Journal of Planning Education and Research 28 (1), pp. 61-72.

Gordon, P., & Richardson, H. W. (1997). Are compact cities a desirable planning goal? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 63(1), 95-106.

Lynch, Kevin. 1981. Good City Form. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Southworth, M. (1997). Walkable Suburbs? An Evaluation of Neotraditional Communities at the Urban Edge. *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 63(1): 28-44.

U.S. Green Building Council (2010). LEED for neighborhood development rating system (use the most recent version of the rating system available online from USGBC).

Watson, Donald, Alan Plattus, and Robert Shibley (Editors). 2003. Time-Saver Standards for Urban Design. New York: McGraw-Hill.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Blakely, E. J., and Snyder M. G. 1997. Fortress America: gated communities in the United States. Washington, D.C., and Cambridge, Mass.: The Brookings Institute and The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

Crawford, Margaret. 1992. The World in a Shopping Mall. In Sorkin, M. (Ed.) Variations on a theme park. New York: Noonday Press.

Duany, Andres, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck. 2000. Suburban Nation. The Rise of Sprawl and the Decline of the American Dream. New York: North Point Press.

Parolek DG, Parolek K, Crawford, PC (2008) Form-Based Codes: A Guide for Planners, Urban Designers, and Developers. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS*

Wk	Date	Topic/Activity/Assignments	Readings
1	April 2	Introductions, Course Overview Instructor-led discussion: What is urban design?	
2	April 9	Urban Design & Urban Form Instructor-led discussion: Values, Issues, and Approaches of Urban Design Q&A session: What are the “urban design topics” and what is <u>not</u> urban design?	Required Reading: Lynch 1981, Prologue , Chs. 2 to 5 Recommended Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, & 8.4.
3	April 16	Urban Design & Urban Form Instructor-led discussion: Good City Form, Transformation of Urban Form Video: Sacred Ground Discussion: what matters?	Required Reading: Lynch 1981, Chs. 6 to 9; Banerjee 2001; Garde 2008 Recommended Reading: Blakely and Snyder 1997, Chs. 1, 2, & 7; Crawford 1992.
4	April 23	Urban Design & Urban Form Instructor-led discussion: Urban Design Paradigms & Urban Form Discussion: LEED-ND rating system Video: New Urbanism	Required Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 1.5, 2.4, 2.7, 3.10, & 5.11; Southworth 1997; Garde 2009; USGBC 2009 (LEED-ND rating system) Recommended Reading: Duany et al. 2000, Ch. 1, 2, 7, & 8.
5	April 30 1st paper due	Urban Design & Perceptual/Visual /Social Dimensions Student-led seminar: Sitte; Cullen; Venturi et al.; Spreiregen, Whyte	Required Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 2.1, 3.1, 3.6, 4.3, 2.12 Recommended Reading: Lynch 1981, Chapters 10 to 12
6	May 7 Research question due	Question and Answer Session Discussion topic: Main theme of the course Discuss issues that are central to urban design	Bring One Question for Discussion in Class (make sufficient copies for the class)
7	May 14	Urban Design & Perceptual/Visual /Social Dimensions (guest speaker TBA) Student-led seminar: Zucker; Lynch, Hagemann and Peets, Jane Jacobs	Required Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 2.8, 2.9, 2.3, 2.10
8	May 21	Urban Design & Morphological/Functional/Temporal Dimensions (guest speaker TBA) Student-led seminar: Sprawl versus Krier, Rossi, Alan Jacobs, Rowe and Koetter	Required Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 3.9, 3.7, 6.3, 3.8; Gordon and Richardson 1997; Ewing 1997 Recommended Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 6.4, 5.5
9	May 28	Urban Design & Morphological/Functional/Temporal Dimensions (guest speaker TBA) Student-led seminar: Form based-codes, Le Corbusier, Rasmussen, Bacon	Required Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 2.5, 2.6, 2.11, 5.6. Recommended Reading: Watson et al. Chs. 5.2, 5.9.
10	June 4 Final Research Paper due	Course Review Discussion: Rethinking Urban Design	

■ Indicates assignment due

* This schedule of classes, assignment due dates and course content are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.