

Social Context of Planning
School of Urban Planning and Development
University of Southern California
PPD 527: Social Context of Planning
2 units, spring 2010

Instructor: Professor Grace R. Dyrness

Time and Classroom: Tuesday/Thursday, (10 AM) RGL 105 and (4 PM) RGL 101

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES:

Far too often planning is defined in terms of physical structures and abstract economics. Planning's central concern is people, and the society that they create. This course examines the social context of planning, especially the ways in which race and ethnicity, gender, and class shape people's experience within the city, and how social attitudes towards others affect the planning profession. Specifically, we are going to look at some transcendental issues -- ones that could be defined differently worldwide, but are present in some form virtually everywhere -- such as discrimination, poverty, and identity, and discuss how those are manifested in the social and physical landscapes of the city.

That said, this course is not a history of social planning, nor a sociology of the city. Instead, it is a rather idiosyncratic approach to understanding the complex inter-relationship of urban landscapes and the people who live in them through the lens of planning values.

The course's learning objectives are:

- 1) Understand the basis of good community planning
- 2) Develop the ability to self-consciously discuss key planning and societal values
- 3) Acquire introductory skills to assess and analyze a community
- 4) Work to articulate your ideas in effective prose and analytical graphics

While we will use Los Angeles as a prism through which to look at these issues, the intention is to draw upon the broader experiences of class members and the readings to check the local focus against a national and international awareness. For instance, we will discuss crime as a community issue. However, crime in America is quite different than in other places. How it is different, and why it is different are questions we want to engage. How does that affect, or does it affect, physical planning precepts in those different places?

Since we could not possibly cover all the appropriate topics included under the rubric social context of planning, I have structured the course to allow students to delve into topics of interest to them while everyone examines some fundamental concerns. We will achieve this goal by having regular class readings, lectures and discussions as well as

group projects assessing neighborhoods with specific planning issues. I have kept the class readings as slim as possible to allow the groups to have time to research their neighborhoods, related planning topics, and potential solutions. This exercise is also good training for the comprehensive examination.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND READINGS: (All readings are required)

All the course readings are in pdfs on Blackboard. If you have trouble accessing these readings, you need to tell me immediately since a failure to access them is not a reason for not reading them.

Groups are responsible for reading materials on their topics and neighborhoods.

COURSE FORMAT

This course meets twice a week. The sessions will be a combination of lecture and discussion. My presumption is that each day you will be prepared to that day's readings.

GRADING

Your assignments are:

1. Participation (10%) INDIVIDUAL GRADE Throughout
Attendance is mandatory. Anyone who does not attend regularly will be given a failing grade even if they complete the assignments. Participation is an evaluation of how actively you contribute to class discussions, group projects, and other class activities. The most valuable participant is one who helps classmates better understand the material.
2. Planning Problem Description (20%) GROUP GRADE January 26
The assignment is to produce a 4-page description of the assigned area with highlights of key findings plus a discussion of the relevant planning issues.
 - a. Planning Problem Topical Review (20%) INDIVIDUAL GRADE February 11
Produce a 5-10 page paper with bibliography discussing the literature on one of your neighborhood's planning issues.
 - b. Planning Problem Report (25%) GROUP GRADE February 18
Groups will provide an 8-page summary (inclusive of all but the bibliography) of their findings outlining the critical demographic and social aspects, a summary of the planning issue, and recommendations based on best practices.
3. Paper on Readings (25%) INDIVIDUAL GRADE February 25
Complete a 4-6 page paper that requires you to use some of the readings to discuss a planning and development issue.

OFFICE HOURS

I work out of the adjunct faculty office in the student lounge on the first floor of Ralph and Goldy Lewis Hall. You can reach me on my cell phone: 626-675-8245. Please call only before 9:00 p.m. My email is dyrness@usc.edu. I check it every day. My office hours will be Tuesday from 2-4 p.m. I am also available by appointment. I look forward to meeting with you.

INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is of paramount importance. I take this responsibility seriously. The exams will be monitored, the papers will be carefully read, and checked. I want to trust you and treat you as adults, but I also know that the pressures on students to use unethical means to succeed are very strong. Anytime someone cheats that person is not only scamming the system, but also damaging the credibility of each and every student's achievements. For further information, such as the precise definition of plagiarism, please take a look at the Student Conduct Code material reprinted each year in SCAMPUS.

ACADEMIC ACCOMODATIONS

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Monday – Friday. The DSP phone number is 213-740-0776.

Class Schedule/Assignment Due Dates

January 12 Introduction to the Class

How does the social context of planning affect planning decisions? This class will be an introduction to class logistics and activities.

Readings: None

January 14 From Congestion to Sprawl

How do we recapture density and diminish the evil affects of sprawl? We start by examining early 20th century fears of congestion and the shift to central debate in planning today. Just as that early professional agenda was founded on social concerns today's debates are centrally about our vision of society.

Readings: Sloane; Baum

January 19 People, Population, and Mobility

How does demographic change affect society's understanding of social issues?

American society is a demographic cauldron, constantly being stirred into a new mixture.

Readings: Myers, Pitkin, & Park; Johnson

January 21 Assessing Communities

What are the appropriate, most telling measures of a good community? We will consider how planners assess communities, with the intention of (1) introducing to assessment techniques and (2) preparing you to complete your group assignment

Readings: Smart Growth Scorecards

January 26 Ethnicity and Race: Does an Underclass Exist?

Is planning colorblind and does it aspire to create communities for all economic classes? If we could tease out the implications of planning decisions, the profession's history would suggest that it favors white, middle class communities, and even has tried to impose those values on other communities.

Readings: Lee and Gans

January 26 PLANNING PROBLEM DESCRIPTION DUE

Groups should bring copies for classmates as well as instructors

January 28 Blight and Disorder

What is blight? The term has both a technical definition and a social meaning. In examining some current and past practices, we can explore how planning concepts contain planning values.

Readings: Wilson and Kelling; Harcourt and Ludwig

February 2 Defining Communities, Describing Planning Problems

Groups will discuss their findings. We will consider the challenges of assessing communities and framing planning problems.

Reading: Be ready to critique the assigned planning problems

February 4 Do We Plan Cities Based on Age and Gender?

Do all people experience the city similarly? Do women inhabit a city that men don't understand or planners ignore? Do children and adolescents get the same attention as adult workers in the planning process? How about street vendors who are women? Do we need to rethink that process to consider any perceived differences?

Reading: Ritzdorf and Addams; Dyrness

February 9 Toxic Environments as Social Issue

What are planning solutions to toxic environments? Planning emerged out of a concern for the environment's impact on people in the congested cities of the industrial age. Those concerns continue to drive a considerable portion of the profession's activities today.

Reading: Coburn

February 11 Social Environments as Social Issue

If we are rightly concerned as planners about the physical environment, what about the relationship of the physical and social environment? Is a stop sign an environmental concern? Is a fast food restaurant?

Reading: Harwood and Sloane et al

February 11 TOPICAL REVIEW PAPER DUE

February 16 Community Assets and Civic Engagement

Is community participation always good? Planners have long considered community problems, but recently have begun tallying community indicators through the social capital and such processes as asset mapping.

Reading: Putnam; Kretzmann and McKnight; Arnstein

February 18 Social Conflict and Urban Planning

Are the homeless and immigrants appropriate actors in every public space?

Crawford questions our definitions of public space and the "appropriate" uses of such space. How do her definitions of social conflict connect with our conceptions of planning? How does this fit in with what Irazábal and Dyrness say about immigrant use of space?

Reading: Jacobs and Crawford; Irazábal and Dyrness

February 18 GROUP REPORTS DUE

Groups should bring copies of their reports for classmates as well as instructors.

February 23 Group Project Discussions

We will use this class to discuss the group summaries. Each group will be assigned three other groups that they should be prepared to question about their format, approach, and recommendations. The groups will not make formal presentations; rather they will spend no more than a few minutes highlighting their findings.

February 25 Group Project Discussions

We will continue to discuss the group summaries. Each group will be assigned three other groups that they should be prepared to question about their format, approach, and recommendations. The groups will not make formal presentations; rather they will spend no more than a few minutes highlighting their findings.

February 25 READINGS PAPER DUE AT 5 PM

Readings

1. David C. Sloane, "From Congestion to Sprawl," *JAPA* 72/1 (Winter 2006): 10-18.
Howell Baum, "Smart Growth and School Reform," *JAPA* 70/1 (Winter 2004): 14-26.
2. Smart Growth Scorecards: <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/scorecards/project.htm>
3. Dowell Myers, John Pitkin, Julie Park, "California's Demographic Futures," USC Urban Initiative Policy Brief (2005), Summary Report. Access at: http://urban.usc.edu/main_doc/downloads/california_demographics.pdf.
Hans Johnson, "Illegal Immigration," Public Policy Institute of California (April 2006): access at: <http://www.ppic.org/main/publication.asp?i=676>
4. Jennifer Lee, "Constructing Race and Civility in Urban America," *Urban Studies* 43/5-6 (May 2006): 903-917.
Herbert Gans, "The Dangers of the Underclass: Its Harmfulness as a Planning Concept" in Gans, *People, Plans, and Policies: Essays on Poverty, Racism and Other National Urban Problems* (1991): 329-343.
5. James Q. Wilson & George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982): 29-38.
Bernard E. Harcourt & Jens Ludwig, "Broken Windows: New Evidence from York City and a Five-City Social Experiment," *University of Chicago Law Review* 73 (2006).
6. Marsha Ritzdorf, "Zoning Barriers to Housing Innovation," *JPER* 4/3 (1985): 177-184.
Jane Addams, "Youth in the City," in *Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909): 3-24.
Dyrness, Grace. Policy on the Streets: A Handbook for the Establishment of Sidewalk Vending Programs in Los Angeles. USC Center for Religion and Civic Culture (2001).
7. Jason Corburn, "Combining Community-Based Research and Local Knowledge to Confront Asthma and Subsistence-Fishing Hazards in Greenpoint/Williamsburg, Brooklyn, New York," *Environmental Health Perspectives* 110/2 Supplement (April 2002): 241-248.
8. Stacy Harwood, "Environmental Justice on the Streets: Advocacy Planning as a Tool to Contest Environmental Racism," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 23/1 (2003): 24-38.

DC Sloane, LM Nascimento, G Flynn, LB Lewis, JJ Guinyard, L Galloway-Gilliam, A Diamant, AK Yancey. "Assessing Resource Environments to Target Prevention Interventions in Community Chronic Disease Control." *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, (May 2006).

9. Robert D. Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" in *Journal of Democracy* 6/1 (January 1995): 65-77. Access it at: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/detoc/assoc/bowling.html>.

John Kretzmann and John McKnight, "Building Community from the Inside Out" in *National Civic Review* 85 (Winter 1996): 23-29.

Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" in *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 8/3 (July 1969): 358-375, published in Jay M. Stein, ed., *Classic Readings in Urban Planning* (1995).

10. Jane Jacobs, "Some Myths About Diversity," in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961): 222-238.

Margaret Crawford, "Contesting the Public Realm: Struggles over Public Space in Los Angeles," *Journal of Architectural Education* 49/1 (September 1995): 4-9.

Irazábal, Clara and Grace Dyrness. "Promised Land?: Immigration, Religiosity and Space in Southern California," *Space and Culture* (2009) TBD.

PPD 527 Team Projects Spring 2010

Planners are constantly being asked to distill material and present it in ways that are comprehensible not only to commissioners, but also to community members. This skill is essential to your professional career as well as the basis for the comprehensive examination. This team project requires that you do exactly that task. You must take far too much material and distill it into a short, compact form, while still persuasively and professionally presenting your material. The task is not simply to produce a beautiful document, it is also to present a vivid and compelling case for the planning issue(s) in your assigned community. The assignment has three components and a set of general requirements.

1. January 26: The first task is to produce a community profile. This profile should use census and other data to illuminate your study area. On the syllabus, we describe the assignment in this way: "A four-page description of the area with highlights of key findings plus a discussion of the relevant planning literature associated with the chosen planning issue." However, focus on the neighborhood profile. The relevant planning issues should be noted in a couple of paragraphs, no more. You may use up to 4 pages on the demographic profile, including bibliography.

How does one profile a community? We would ask that you ask that question of yourselves. You have had professional and academic experiences that offer some guidance, but make sure that you talk among yourselves to think about alternative approaches. In addition, how is the planning problem related to your community tied to such a profile? In other words, in some cases, you might want to include crime statistics; in others, you might want economic data about housing or commercial rents. These examples suggest that census information is just the beginning, the most intriguing statistics might be about education, affordability of housing, transportation, environmental polluters, crime, health, and other related issues.

Each group will produce copies of the summary for each member of the class (roughly 30 copies). This requirement means that color is expensive, just as it is in the real world. It means that graphics have to be capable of repeated copying, just as in the real world.

2. February 11: The second task is for each student to write a paper of no more than seven pages on a planning topic relevant to your community. The planning problems associated with your communities on the list of team topics are very broad and could easily be separated into complementary topics. For instance, a group working on public safety might want to think about different styles of policing, the relationship of design and safety, the role of social capital in combating crime, and other topics that might aid you in your final project. Individual members of the group may also write papers on the same aspect of the topic. Group members are encouraged to share materials and ideas for sources. The actual paper, though, is the sole responsibility of each individual.

The papers should represent a reasonable effort to gather articles, books, and other materials about the topic. We do not expect that you will do a comprehensive study of the issue. Do not rely solely on Internet sites or a single academic article. The topics are all significant enough to have generated a considerable theoretical and professional literature. We all love the Internet, but planning articles are not as well indexed as many other professional fields, so consider making a trip to the library as well.

3. February 18: The final summary can be no more than eight pages. The three parts of the summary are: (1) the critical demographic and other features of your assigned community, (2) a concise description and analysis of the relevant planning issue, and (3) solutions or next steps and recommendations. Everything should be included in the 8 pages, including bibliography, footnotes, and any other material.

Each group will produce copies of the summary for each member of the class (roughly 30 copies). This requirement means that color is expensive, just as it is in the real world. It means that graphics have to be capable of repeated copying, just as in the real world.

Each student will also receive a group review sheet to evaluate the contributions of the people in your group. These sheets will be used as part of the overall evaluation of students for the class. Free riders beware: in the past, student evaluations have changed grades

4. General Requirements: Each component of this assignment should be carefully written, thoughtfully organized, and rigorously sourced. The summaries and the papers will be evaluated on the basis of content, form, and style. Please refer to the “Suggestions for Papers” that is available in Course Documents on Blackboard for comments on writing, organization, and citations. The profiles and summaries may be single-spaced, while the papers should be doubled-spaced. Each effort should have reasonable margins (1-inch) and should be in a font that could be easily read by a 60 year-old community resident or planning commissioner. If they are handed in after the beginning of the class session when they are due, they are late and will be penalized.

We recognize that composing these documents is not an easy task. We strongly encourage you to think “outside-the-box” both graphically and in your text. First, they will be evaluated on its substance. Have you developed the resources to understand and analyze the planning issue(s)? How has the group portrayed that issue in the summary? Is it persuasive and comprehensible? Second, we will consider the style. Is the summary graphically accessible? Will people “see” their community? Do the graphics and text work together? Is the text vivid and easy to understand?

On one level, we are your audience. That means that we expect a carefully documented, rigorously argued effort. However, on another level, we expect the summaries to be accessible to the public and to policy makers.