DRAFT
PPDE 631 Public Space: Theory, Policy, and Design
Spring 2013

Time: Tuesday 6:00-9:20pm
Location: TBD
Instructor: Meredith Drake Reitan
Email: mereditd@usc.edu
Office hours: by appointment

Introduction and Objectives

Public spaces are an integral part of the culture of cities, often shaping a city’s image and identity. The production, distribution and use of public space is often described by planners and policy makers in terms of health, safety and welfare. Yet the concept is also inextricably linked to loftier ideas of community, memory, citizenship, identity and freedom of expression.

There are a number of positive trends in this area, for example there are accounts of formerly underutilized public spaces being claimed and contested at the grassroots level by neighborhoods and newly emergent immigrant communities. However more pessimistically, there is also a growing discontent with what is seen as a decline in the quality of the urban experience: an atrophying public realm, declining quality and quantum of public life and space, and more generally a weakening sense of place and community. There is widespread unease about the increasing privatization of public life and how it might encumber our freedom and rights. Some also worry about the rise of cyber-communities and cyber-places, and the impact of information and communication technology on the future of public spaces and public life.

The aim of this graduate seminar is to examine contemporary issues and practices in the production and use of public space and to consider the implications for future design and public policy. While examples will be drawn from an international and comparative perspective, there will be a specific focus on public space in the greater Los Angeles area. The class will be roughly divided into three thematic areas. The first part will address the theoretical underpinnings of public space – the what and the why. The second part will focus on issues of equity and distribution. We will specifically address questions of access and availability, especially as it relates to issues of gender, age, race, ethnicity and poverty. In the class’ third section we will review the opportunities for community action, policy interventions and management of such spaces. The class will proceed through an interactive discussion of articles, book chapters, policy reports and films. It will also include a number of site visits to significant local public spaces and conversations with key activists and policy makers working in this area.

At the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Think critically about contemporary public space from a theoretical, a social, an experiential and a practical point of view
- Apply a number of planning and policy-related tools to the analysis of public space
• Conceptualize alternatives and develop recommendations for a particular public space in Los Angeles
• Communicate their ideas about public space effectively using a variety of means such as writing, speaking and multimedia presentations.

Readings

All required readings will be available electronically through Blackboard, on-line and/or on reserve at Leavey Library. See the class schedule below for a list of required readings (an additional list of recommended - meaning interesting and worthwhile, but not required reading is also attached).

Assignments

Final Paper: Students will write an individual research paper about a contemporary public space in the Los Angeles area. The total length of the paper is expected to be approximately 20 pages of double-spaced text with one-inch page margins (not counting bibliography, illustrations, and tables). This paper must draw from, and apply, the concepts and themes discussed in class and included in the required reading materials. A recommended paper outline will be distributed in class.

Reflections: Individually or in teams, students will be asked to briefly reflect and apply what they have learned through course readings and discussions. The first of these reflections will ask students to document a public space over time, the second, to document a space geographically. The third assignment asks students to evaluate a public space from the standpoint of its users. At least one of these assignments will require students to develop a non-textual (i.e. visual or aural) representation. One of these reflections may be used as a preliminary analysis of the final paper site. Specific details, including a summary of criteria used to evaluate each reflection will be discussed in class.

Reading Response: Students are expected to complete all required reading prior to class meetings and to discuss the texts during each session. Occasionally and on a rotating basis, a small group of students will be asked to post a “response” to the week’s reading on the class blackboard. A response can be a critical summary of the readings (no more than 1 page) or a series of questions for discussion. The reading response should be posted on blackboard by midnight on the night before class. The week’s designated students will be expected to join the instructor in initiating and leading a portion of class discussion based on their posts.

Informal class assignments: At various times, students will be asked to complete informal assignments that are designed to reinforce readings and to initiate class discussion.

A late assignment penalty in the form of a 10% grade reduction will be assessed for every 12-hour period beyond a given deadline, with exceptions granted only for documented medical & family emergencies.
Grading Criteria

Grades will be weighted according to the following distribution:

- Final Paper: 40%
- Reflections: 30%
- Reading Response: 10%
- Informal assignments: 10%
- Participation, including attendance, involvement in class discussions and group work: 10%

Course Outline

I. Theories and Experiences of Public Space
   a. Defining public space and determining its value
   b. Typology: parks, streets, plazas, “third spaces” and quasi-public places
   c. Evaluation and analyzing public space

II. Equity, Distribution and Use
   a. Women and public space
   b. Children and playgrounds
   c. Changing neighborhoods and changing expectations
   d. Threats to public space, including privatization and surveillance

III. Design and Policy Approaches
   a. Designing Public Spaces
   b. Advocacy and Community Action
   c. Future of Public Space
Schedule of Readings & Class Activities

**January 15:** Understanding public space and its value; developing an experiential sense of space, the built environment and the cultural landscape; identifying goals for the class and our expectations.

**January 22:** More than a Neatly Trimmed Lawn
What is public space and what is the difference between it and either the public sphere or the public realm?

*Reading Required*


*Assignment:* Post to blackboard a graphic (i.e. a photograph, a video or some other non-textual representation from your own collection, from a book/magazine or from the web) of a public space. Be prepared to informally discuss what appeals to (or repels) you about the place and/or the graphic.

**January 29:** Historical Precedents and Global Examples

*Reading Required*


*Assignment:* Review the weekly themes and select one that you would like to “adopt”. At least one week before your adopted theme you will be asked to recommend an additional reading to complement the works already assigned.
February 5: Methods of Analysis

Reading Required
3. Lynch, Kevin and Malcolm Rivkin (1959) “A Walk Around the Block” Landscape 8:3 pp 24
4. SKIM: Active Living Research Tools and Measures for Active Living Environments and Physical Activity

Assignment: Evaluate a public space using one of the methods above. Be prepared to informally discuss in class the pros and cons and likely utility of the method.

February 12: Memory and the Didactic Public Landscape

Reading Required

Assignment: Reflection 1 due on blackboard by midnight on Monday February 11. Be prepared to informally discuss the assignment in class.

February 19: Plazas and Civic Space - Field Trip to La Placita and the Los Angeles Civic Center

Reading Required
February 26: Women and Public Space

Reading Required
2. Murphy, Amy (2006) “Traces of the Flaneuse: From Roman Holiday to Lost in Translation,” Journal of Architectural Education, 60; 1,

Assignment: Take a walk. Be prepared to informally discuss it in class.

March 5: Hitting the Streets

Reading Required

March 12: Youth Spaces; Children and Playgrounds; Healthy Public Spaces

Reading Required
1. The Trust for Public Land (2004) No Place to Play

Assignment: Reflection 2 due to blackboard by midnight Monday, March 11. Be prepared to informally discuss the assignment in class.

March 19 NO CLASS, SPRING RECESS
March 26: Changing Neighborhoods and Changing Expectations - Field Trip to MacArthur Park

Reading Required

April 2: Pacification by Cappuccino? “Third Spaces”, Markets and Quasi Public Places

Reading Required
1. Oldenburg, Roy (1999) excerpt from The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community, Da Capo Press

April 9: Privatization and Threats to Public Space

Reading Required

Assignment: Reflection 3 due by midnight Monday, April 8. Be prepared to informally discuss the assignment in class.

April 16: Privatization and Threats to Public Space (cont): “Security Zones”

Reading Required
4. SKIM: FEMA Mitigation Options
April 23: Activating Public Space

**Reading Required**


**Assignment:** Identify a public space in Los Angeles. How would you “activate” it?

April 30: Last Day of Class, the Future of Public Space; Reflection and Lessons Learned

**Assignment:** Final Paper due by midnight Tuesday May 7

Statement for Students with Disabilities

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 (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. Scampus, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/.
Supplemental and Recommended Readings

The following books and articles are not required, but complement topics that we will be discussing in class. They may also be useful sources for final papers…

Theories of Public Space

Arendt, Hannah (1958) The Human Condition
Habermas, Jürgen (1962) The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere
The Urban Institute, Beyond Recreation: A Broader View of Urban Parks
http://www.urban.org/uploadedPDF/311011_urban_parks.pdf

Plazas, Squares and Civic Space

Webb, Michael (1990) City Square Watson-Guittil

Memory, Monuments and Cultural Landscapes

Clay, Grady (1973) Close-Up: How to Read the American City University of Chicago Press

Streets, The Flaneur, Walking and Experiencing the City


Women and Public Space

Massey, Doreen B. (1994) Space, Place, and Gender Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press


Youth Spaces, Children and Playgrounds; Healthy Public Spaces


Changing Neighborhoods and Changing Expectations


Privatization and Threats to Public Space


Policies and Practices for Activating Public Space
Project for Public Spaces website “Great Parks We Can Learn From” http://www.pps.org/six-parks-we-can-all-learn-from/

Miscellaneous
Project for Public Spaces “10 Tips for Taking Great Photos of Public Spaces”
http://www.pps.org/phototips/