

**Human Rights and Urban Public Space**

Institute for the Study of Human Rights

Columbia University

212D Lewisohn Hall

Fall 2018

Professor Noah Chasin

W: 10:10–12:00 pm

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Office Hours: Kent 642, Tuesdays 10–11 or by appointment



## **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will explore the often-contested terrain of architectural and urban contexts, looking at cities from architectural, sociological, historical, and political positions. One of the fundamental questions we will explore is how, in various historical and geographical circumstances, have architecture and urban design been used towards the construction of ideological frameworks that impact upon citizens' access to—or denial of—rights to the city.

Modern architecture dreamt of a utopian ideal of social progress and a new understanding of the relationship between space and time. After World War II, the role of the architect and designer as an organizer and facilitator of space changed. In what ways has the rise of globalization and different modes of understanding “connectivity” interceded into the conception of a unified urban context? Can the ancient idea of a “right to the city” tell us something fundamental about both rights and cities? What roles have collective action and participation played in the transformation of the urban experience over the past sixty years? Though our notion of citizenship is based in the understanding of a city as a community, why is it that today millions of people live in cities without citizenship?

We will progress thematically and synchronically rather than diachronically in order to discuss such issues as the productive and inescapable nature of conflict in urban conurbations, debates around definitions of the public sphere, the consequences of architectural and urban design developments in relation to their peripheries (including questioning the normative idea of how urban boundaries are developed and sustained), nomadic urbanism, informal/ad hoc settlements such as slums and shantytowns, surveillance and control, refugees and the places they live, catastrophes and terror (both natural and man-made) and post-disaster reconstruction, and the exceptional spaces of sovereignty within cities.

**WEEKLY READINGS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE!!! PLEASE LOOK IN THE APPROPRIATE FOLDER ON COURSEWORKS/CANVAS FOR THE FOLLOWING WEEK’S READINGS**

**WEEKLY MEETINGS:**

**Week 1: 5 September**      **Introduction to Class and Syllabus**

**Week 2: 12 September**      **The Productive Value of Urban Conflict**

**READING:**

E. Laclau, "The Future of Radical Democracy," in L. Tonder & L. Thomassen eds., *Radical Democracy" Politics Between Abundance and Lack* (Manchester, UK: Manchester U. Press, 2014), pp. 256–62

G. Simmel, "The Sociology of Conflict," *American Journal of Sociology* 9/4 (January 1904): 490–525

S. Schulman, "Introduction: A Reparative Manifesto," in *Conflict is not Abuse: Overstating Harm, Community Responsibility, and the Duty of Repair* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016), pp. 11–25

**Week 3: 19 September**                      **[NO CLASS: TO BE RESCHEDULED]**

**Week 4: 26 September**      **The Right to the City: Citizenship & The Public Sphere**

**READINGS:**

N. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text* 25/26 (1990): 56–80

R. Caplan & D. Boyd, "Who Controls the Public Sphere in an Era of Algorithms? Mediation, Automation, Power," *Data & Society* (05.13.2016)

C. Squires, "Rethinking the Black Public Sphere: An Alternative Vocabulary for Multiple Public Spheres," *Communication Theory* 12/4 (November 2002): 446–68

H. Arendt, "The Rise of the Social," in *The Human Condition* (U Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 38–58

**THESIS PARAGRAPH DUE**

**Week 5: 3 October**                      **Signals, Calls, and Marches: Protest, Disorder, and Dissent**

**READINGS:**

H. Lefebvre, "The Right to the City" in Ockman, ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968* (Columbia University/Rizzoli, 1993), pp. 427-436

- E. Swyngedouw, "Interrogating post-democratization: Reclaiming egalitarian political spaces," *Political Geography* 30 (2011): 370–80
- Z. Tufekci, "Twitter and Tear Gas: How Social Media Changed Protest Forever," *Wired* <https://www.wired.com/2017/05/twitter-tear-gas-protest-age-social-media/>
- E. Uzer, "Commoning in Resistance: Gezi Park Protests and 'Yeryüzü Sofraları,'" in Benesch, Hammami, Holmberg, eds., *Heritage as Commons* (Gothenburg: Makadam, 2015), pp. 309–27

**Week 6: 10 October**

**Urbanism in the Anthropocene**

**READINGS:**

- J. Prieto, "Informal Urbanism and the Hard Question of the Anthropocene," *Journal of West Indian Literature* 24, iss 2: 46–62
- A. Weisman, "Chap. 3 The City Without Us" in *The World Without Us* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin Press, 2007), pp. 24–46.
- I. McHarg, "2. The Place of Nature in the City of Man (1964)" in Steiner, Frederick R. (ed.), *The Essential Ian McHarg: Writings on Design and Nature* (Washington, Covelo, London: Island Press, 2006), pp. 15–46.

**Week 7: 17 October**

**Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism**

**READINGS:**

- R. Bullard and G. Johnson, "Environmental Justice: Grassroots Activism and Its Impact on Public Policy Decision Making," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (2000): 555–578
- T. Campanella, "A Katrina Lexicon," *Places* (July 2015)
- M. Ranganathan and C. Balazs, "Water marginalization at the urban fringe: environmental justice and urban political ecology across the North–South divide," *Urban Geography*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2015), 403–423
- UNHCR, "Climate Change and Disaster Displacement: An Overview of UNHCR's Role," eds. Ellen Hansen, Shahrzad Tadjbakhsh, Madeline Garlick, Marine Franck, Erica Bower (2017)

**Week 8: 24 October**

**Housing Crises: Slums, Shantytowns, and Informal Housing Sectors**

**READINGS:**

A. Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35.2 (March 2011): 223–38

A. Herscher, "'Blight,' Spatial Racism, and the Demolition of the Housing Question in Detroit," in *Housing After the Neoliberal Turn: International Case Studies* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2015), pp. 39–46

P. Gilroy, 'After the Love Has Gone': Bio-Politics and Etho-Poetics in the Black Public Sphere," in *The Black Public Sphere* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 49–76

R. Sanyal, "Squatting in Camps: Building and Insurgency in Spaces of Refuge," *Urban Studies* 48/5 (April 2011): 877–90

**LITERATURE REVIEW/ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

**Week 9: 31 October**

**Questions About Public Art and Participation**

**READINGS:**

Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents," *Artforum* (February 2006): 179–185

C. Mouffe, "Every Form of Art Has a Political Dimension," interviewed by Rosalyn Deutsche, Branden Joseph, and Tom Keenan, *Grey Room* 02 (Winter 2001): 98–125

Y. McKee, "Debt: Occupy, Postcontemporary Art, and the Aesthetics of Debt Resistance," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 2013 Volume 112, Number 4: 784–803

**Week 10: 7 November**

**[NO CLASS: TO BE RESCHEDULED]**

**Week 11: 14 November**

**Surveillance: Privacy in an Age of CCTV, Drones, and Security**

**READINGS:**

G. Deleuze, "Postscript on Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992): 3–7

E. Weizman, "Checkpoints: The Split Sovereign and the One-Way Mirror," in *Hollow Land* (London & NY: Verso, 2007), pp. 139–159

O. Jensen, "Drone City—Power, Design, and Aerial Mobility in the Age of 'Smart Cities,'" *Geographica Helvetica* 71(2016): 67–75

**FIRST DRAFT DUE**

**Week 12: 21 November**    **ACADEMIC HOLIDAY: NO CLASSES**

**Week 13: 28 November**    **Terrorism and Urbicide**

**READINGS:**

S. Graham, "The Urban 'Battlespace,'" *Theory, Culture & Society* 26: 7/8 (2009): 278–88

A. Shaar and R. Templer, "Urbicide, or An Elegy for Aleppo," *Tvergastein* 7 8/2016: 108–120

A. Rafique and A. Sarfraz, "Militarised Safety: The Politics of Exclusion," *Footprint* 19 (vol. 10, no. 2, Winter 2016): 95–114

**Week 14: 5 December**    **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**Week 15: 12 December**    **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**

**FINAL PAPERS DUE FRIDAY 20 December 2017**

**REQUIREMENTS:**

There are no textbooks for this class, as none really exists. All the readings will be available as PDFs on CourseWorks. Additional readings for research papers/projects will be at the student's discretion.

**READINGS MAY CHANGE AT THE PROFESSOR'S DISCRETION. TEXTS FOUND IN THE COURSEWORKS/CANVAS FOLDER FOR ANY GIVEN WEEK SUPERCEDE THE TEXTS WRITTEN INTO THE SYLLABUS AT THE START OF THE SEMESTER. I WILL EMAIL TO LET THE CLASS KNOW IF NEW READINGS HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED.**

As this is a seminar course, participation is essential for the class to work as intended. Professor will evaluate students at midterm and at end of semester on frequency of participation. Consistent attendance is a prerequisite for participation!

I will also expect that every enrolled student will diligently keep up with the international news so as to contribute timely and relevant articles for the class to read and engage with during class discussion. Articles, blog posts, and social media shares will be posted by students to the CourseWorks shared resources page. More will be said about this during the introductory session.

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

The main assignment for the course will be a research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the professor on a theme related to the course material (either an expansion of one of the themes of the syllabus or a separate theme chosen by the student). There will be four stages of writing the paper, with deadlines to be determined:

I. Thesis Paragraph: a paragraph describing the topic and thesis in general terms [26 September 2018]

II. Literature Review/Annotated Bibliography (utilizing all forms of sources available for and necessary to the topic [17 October 2018]

III. First draft: Professor will give written feedback and conduct individual meetings with each student to discuss progress [14 November 2018]

IV. Final draft [20 December 2018]

**GRADING:**

Midterm grade comprised of successful completion of thesis paragraph, annotated bibliography, participation in discussions, and first draft.

Final grade comprised of the midterm grade, presentation, final draft, and overall evaluation of participation throughout the semester.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Students are expected to attend every class. The class discussions, while informal, also are invaluable, and therefore the student's presence is obligatory. The Professor will allow three unexcused absences per student per semester. A warning will be issued after number three, with a fourth absence constituting an irrevocable failing grade for the course. Attendance will be taken at each meeting. Lateness (defined as arriving after attendance has been taken) counts for ½ an absence. Being late twice equals one absence. Lateness regarding both attendance and to the handing in of papers will not be tolerated except in the case of extenuating circumstances. Sleeping in class, being disruptive, exiting the classroom excessively, using one's laptop for anything other than class-related activities, or otherwise not paying attention will result in an absent mark for the day.

**PLAGIARISM:**

Do not, under any circumstances, copy text from any publication, websites, your friend's paper, etc. without proper citations. These activities constitute plagiarism. It will always be clear to me whether or not you are writing in your own voice. Any proven plagiarism, whether from published texts or another student's paper will result in a failing grade for the class and a report to the Director of the

Program. You can review Columbia University's plagiarism policy here:  
<https://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/dishonesty-plagiarism>