

CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
City and Regional Planning  
Fall 2017

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## CRP 384/584: Green Cities

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Location: West Sibley Hall, room 101  
Day/time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:25 – 2:40  
Instructor: Stephan Schmidt  
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Phone: 607-254-4846  
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Office hours: Wednesdays 9:30 – 12:30 and by appointment  
TAs: Elyse Belarge (elb266), Onam Bisht (ob82)

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### **Course Description**

Cities are centers of innovation, economic growth, social mobility, and they provide economies of scale in the provision of infrastructure and social services. However, cities are also sites of growing socio-economic inequalities and environmental problems. Do cities provide the opportunity to address environmental problems, or are they rather the source of pollution and environmental degradation? Are cities the appropriate scale at which to address environmental problems? Are these *really* urban issues or do cities just cluster resource use and problems so they are more visible? What role does the built or physical environment have in impacting our behavior and decision making? How can we achieve the equity and efficiency cities promise while avoiding or mitigating the negative aspects of their growth?

This course examines the political economy of green cities. In doing so, it takes into account the social, economic, cultural, political and environmental dimensions of sustainability and sustainable development in urban areas. Specific areas to be addressed include indicators of local (and personal) sustainability, sprawl and smart growth, open space preservation and green infrastructure, sustainable transportation, the built environment, climate change mitigation, sustainable water management, local renewable energy systems, environmental justice, food systems, and urban environmental challenges in the developing world.

This course employs a wide variety of formats to engage students in the material, including lectures, guest speakers, case studies, small group discussions, documentary films, student response pieces and activities (both in and out of class) such as role playing simulation, an in class design charette, a series of student led debates, and a final case study project and presentation. The format of the course will generally be organized around a lecture, presentation, or talk followed by small group discussion concerning the presentation, homework assignment, or readings. We will (obviously) deviate from this format to accommodate the student debates, documentary films, role playing simulation, and student presentations.

**The goals and learning outcomes of this course are as follows:**

*Sustainable and environmental quality:* The student should be able to understand and critically assess the concept of urban sustainability, various approaches taken by different cities, and the opportunities and constraints that affect a city's ability to implement sustainability initiatives.

*Emerging trends:* The student should be able to recognize, understand, and critically analyze new trends and best management practices and policies to enhance urban sustainability.

*Effective oral, written, and visual communication:* The student should be able to present an argument orally, in writing, and visually and assume/defend/ argue for a position on a major sustainability issue facing cities.

*Planning process methods:* The student should be able to be familiar with the skills of mediation and decision making between parties in dispute or contention.

**Grading:**

**Midterm: 5%**

There will be a take home midterm scheduled the week of fall break. This will be written and submitted on-line. The exam will cover concepts and ideas and ask you to assume a position and provide evidence.

**Debates: 20%**

Over the course of the semester, we will engage in a number of presentation-style debates over salient issues concerning sustainable cities. These will include 1) Smart growth vs. sprawl, 2) Public transit vs. automobile, 3) conventional fuels vs. renewable energy sources, and 4) Local economic development vs. globalization. At the beginning of the semester, students will sign up for a team, each of which will assume a position on a specific issue. Each debate team will be able to communicate with each other via Blackboard (go to 'Communication'/'Groups', and click on your debate teams to send email, share documents, etc.) Some background readings outlining the major aspect of each side is provided on blackboard, but the teams are encouraged to explore outside sources and examples, as each team is free to define the issue as they see fit. On the appointed day, each team will have 20 minutes to make its presentation and 10 minutes for rebuttal (5 minutes will be allowed to caucus prior to rebuttals). Teams are expected to provide a handout or outline of their main arguments. I am interested in how well you prepare and present your ideas, not on the point-of-view you adopted. You might want to think about taking a "side" that is contrary to your opinion in order to stretch your thinking. Each team performance will be given a group grade based on a composite score of peer evaluation (50%) and myself (50%). See grading rubrics for how the debates will be graded (located in the Course Documents folder on Blackboard).

**Assignments: 25%**

The course will include a total of 7 or 8 weekly assignments that will vary in content and nature. They will be due at the start of class, and (generally) should be no more than 1 page. They will be graded as follows (late responses will be docked a point, up to 3 days, after which they will not be accepted):

- √- Student has failed to fully complete all parts of the assignment
- √ Student has adequately answered the assignment requirements
- √+ Student has gone above and beyond the assignment requirements

Please submit the assignments via the 'Assignments' link in Blackboard. Do NOT email the assignments as an attachment to either myself or the TAs, nor should you place the assignments in the 'Drop box' on Blackboard. These will not be graded and you will receive no credit for them. In terms of their contribution to the final grade, the assignments will be graded as follows: If a student has received √'s for most or all of the individual assignments, the student will receive a B for the assignments portion of the final grade. Any √+'s or √-'s will move this grade up or down accordingly.

#### Attendance/Participation/Effort: 10%

The course is organized around a number of activities to engage the students in the material. Your participation, whether through discussion, questions and answer sessions, or small group activities, is vital to developing intellectual curiosity about the material. You should not only be present, but fully engaged.

#### Small group peer evaluation: 10%

Several in class activities, including the role-playing simulation and design charette, will be highly participatory in nature. This component of your grade will in part be determined through peer evaluation, on a scale from 1 (lowest) to 10 (highest). Peer review will be based on the following rubrics:

- 1) *Preparation*: Did the student come prepared to discuss the material?
- 2) *Comprehension*: Did the student understand the material?
- 3) *Engagement*: Was the student involved and engaged in group participation?
- 4) *Creativity*: Did the student offer creative and insightful input?
- 5) *Collaboration*: Was the student will to listen, negotiate, and compromise

#### Final project/presentation: 30%

Students should work in groups of 2 and 3 (grads should work on their own projects) to develop a case study of a green city best management practice. Although the overall format, scope and direction of the project is at the discretion of the student, some *suggested ideas* include:

- a) A case study of a green initiative, program or policy in a specific city or metropolitan area, with an eye toward explaining how or why it exists or gauging what the impact has been and what lessons can be learned.
- b) An examination of a particular sustainability-related issue (water, buildings, energy, etc.), and compare and contrast how a number of cities are addressing this issue.

You should address why this US or international city (or cities) is an interesting example, and provide a critical analysis of the city's overall efforts at sustainability: if it has a reputation for being green, to what extent is that justified? What are the specific practices, policies or projects that other cities can learn from and emulate? What are the most important lessons learned? In choosing a city (or cities), make sure it is one for which you will be able to collect relevant data.

Please do not rely on the city's web site for all of your information. Go through the city's newspapers to see how its initiatives are received. Find local environmental organizations to get their responses to the city's efforts. Ideally you should try to contact people in city government and other organizations for interviews. The paper should be between 10 and 20 pages. Please provide complete references (Chicago style preferred) for all material cited. For both the project and presentation, your target audience is a mayor, city council member or similar policy maker. We will discuss the paper more in class.

A no more than 1 page proposal is due by the end of September please submit via Blackboard). In addition, we will schedule time later in the semester for groups to meet with myself. Each group will also present for 10 minutes on their project at the end of the semester. These various requirements will allow for multiple opportunities for feedback, and ultimately allow for improved projects. The final project will be evaluated using the following rubric. These should be utilized in thinking about the overall format and structure of the paper:

- The creativity of the topic; how compelling is the idea?
- A strong, well-articulated introduction and conclusion
- The structure and organization of the argument (ie particularly the use of sub-headings and transition paragraphs to guide the reader through the argument)
- The methods, evidence, data used in constructing the argument
- The level and degree of the analysis: was the project primarily descriptive, or did it include analysis as well? How was the analysis included?
- Writing ability (ie everything from grammar to style)
- The scope of the project (does the amount of work match the number of people working on it?)

***Please note:*** In recent years, increasing numbers of students have been bringing their laptops or other web-enabled devices to class. Sometimes this is for note taking, but too often web surfing and e-mail checking becomes irresistible. This corrodes the classroom environment, and as a consequence I am asking that you not use your laptop or other web-enabled devices during class, unless you are using it expressly for note taking. If so, I ask that you email me your notes after class. There are no required books for this class. I will rely on supplemental readings that will be made available in digital format and will be posted on Blackboard (or if web based, a link will be available through Blackboard).

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the Cornell University Code of Academic Integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Although I try to foster a social work environment and encourage students to work together on labs, any and all work submitted for credit must be individual!

Direct quotations of other work should be enclosed with quotation marks, with a citation afterward that contains the page number of the work where available. When you rely substantially on another person's work without quoting from it directly, please use in text citations at the end of an appropriate section. Failure to provide complete and proper citations may constitute plagiarism, which violates the Cornell Code of Academic Integrity. If detected, plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the course. In compliance with the Cornell University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. You can view the Guide online at [newstudentprograms.cornell.edu/AcademicIntegrityPamphlet.pdf](http://newstudentprograms.cornell.edu/AcademicIntegrityPamphlet.pdf)

**Stress:** If you are experiencing a lot of personal or academic stress at any time during the semester, I encourage you to seek support early on. I am available to talk with you if you experience stress related to the class. Additionally, I can assist you in reaching out to any one of a wide range of campus resources, including:

Student Services Office, 255-6376

Cornell Learning Strategies Center at 255-6310, <http://lsc.sas.cornell.edu>

Gannett Health Services at 255-5155, [www.gannett.cornell.edu](http://www.gannett.cornell.edu)

Let's Talk Drop-In Consultation and Support [www.gannett.cornell.edu/Let'sTalk](http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/Let'sTalk)

Peer Support provided by Empathy Assistance and Referral Service at 255-EARS

**Syllabus:** The course outline, including topics, assignments, reading, as well as homework submission are available on Blackboard. Please click the 'schedule' tab.