The “Smart” Equitable City
Spring, 2015
Wednesday: 2:30-4:25
CRP 5850 – Special Topics
2 credits

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar course will focus on the potential for a “smart equitable” city. We will first examine why cities, both large and small, have become engines of economic growth, attracting international capital and interest in technologies that improve urban governance and expand urban consumption. “Smart city” approaches are based in knowledge economy and data-driven urban management techniques, affecting every facet of the city: transportation, land use, infrastructure, energy, waste, and communications. They frequently address symptoms of urbanization, such as system inefficiencies in transportation, energy, and communication. Innovative or smart city advocates believe that addressing these systemic inefficiencies is critical to making urban environments attractive for private investment and making them engines of growth. Progressive economic development planners support the concept of the innovative or “smart” city but are concerned with questions that go beyond capital accumulation. They want to know how new technologies will improve the quality of life for all urban residents and create jobs for them.

The concept of the “equitable or just city” emerged from an understanding of urban environments as places of both dramatic inequality and of opportunity. A concept of urban equity is based on analysis of how policy decisions construct inequalities in access to health care, communication, and jobs. The concept of the equitable city has emerged from a tradition in urban planning that is currently reviving, that of “equity planning”. Its goal is purposeful policy decisions to address inequities with collective goods that increase opportunity for disadvantaged neighborhoods and individuals.

The challenge for contemporary planners is to understand whether the tools and applications made possible by the data revolution and increasingly sophisticated urban design can be applied in ways that create smarter cities but also more just and equitable cities. What examples are there for equity-oriented smart cities?
Although some lectures will be presented, this will primarily be a “flipped course”, with video lectures and readings providing the basis for discussion around a set of questions in each week’s session.

The final products for this course will be 1) a poster describing examples of “smart equitable city” approaches in arenas such as housing, transportation, environmental quality, communication, internet access, or food deserts, and 2) a 2-3 page report in memo format, describing what urban officials and policy makers can learn from your case study.

Learning Objectives:

Critical thinking – through assignments that encourage comparison
Writing/ Oral Communication – ability to write a memo; develop a visual presentation of a concept
Research: policy oriented research on examples of smart city applications
Concepts underlying social justice, governance and participation

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

This course will consist of a series of lecture/discussions, videos, and guest speakers. The course grade will be determined on the following basis: 1) performance on and quality of participation each week; 2) a poster assignment on a smart equitable city approach. We will learn how to make a poster.

Special lectures:

Lecture by Jim Rokakis, March 10. See: http://www.thrivingcommunitiesinstitute.org/key-staff-JimRokakis.html

Cleveland has undertaken an aggressive effort to eliminate the blight caused by foreclosure and housing abandonment and to save housing and neighborhoods where possible. Cleveland is one of a number of American cities using data on foreclosures and abandonment to make more effective decisions on how to deal with urban “shrinkage” and to encourage more rapid reinvestment.

Honor Code and Citations

In this course, students are expected to turn in original work. As such, all assignments should properly cite the work of others (this includes work gleaned from electronic sources as well as books and articles). Please refer to a style guide
We will be making use of materials (lectures, case studies etc.) on the internet as well as readings posted on BB.

Reading for each topic is available on Blackboard. Please make sure you have a Blackboard account.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Introduction to the course**

*January 21*
Introduction to the course -- course resources, blackboard sign-up, survey; policy memo assignment.

What is the question behind this short course? An introductory lecture

Questions to guide your thinking this week:

1) Different interests have different definitions of innovative or smart cities. Can you identify them?
2) Do you identify any contradictions or unanswered questions?
3) Does the utopian vision of an automated city have any precedents in urban history? What links those earlier visions with the “smart city” being proposed today?

**Reading and other Materials for January 28 discussion:**


What is Big Data?

A Business Perspective:  
http://www.forbes.com/sites/lisaarthur/2013/08/15/what-is-big-data


**Week 2: The City as an Economic Engine: Is the “Smart City” the Answer?**

**January 28**

How do we sort out the various interests behind the “smart city”?  
Who stands to benefit? Are there losers?  
Is there a difference between the smart city “narrative” and what is happening on the ground?

Reading and other Materials for **February 4** discussion:

tions-in-Planning-Theory-final-UAR.pdf

Lisa Bates and Marisa Zapata. Revisiting Equity: The HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative.  

Journal of Planning Literature August 1996 11: 112-126 (posted on BB)


Questions to guide your thinking this week.

What is the difference between equity planning and community development?  
What role do ideas about equity and how to achieve it play in planning theory?
Why do you think ideas about equity planning are re-emerging?

**Week 3: The Just City and Equity Planning:**

*February 4*
Is there a role for equity planning in the smart city concept?

Reading and other Materials for **February 11** discussion:


Masdar City, available at: [http://www.masdar.ae](http://www.masdar.ae)


Questions to guide your reading this week:

If cities follow different development paths, how applicable are models like Songdo and Masdar?

What do we need to think about if we want to make already existing cities into “smart cities”?

**Week 4: Is the Smart City Something New? Is it a Universal Model?**

*February 11*

How do we think about smart existing cities?
AND How to make a poster