

School of Urban Planning and Development
University of Southern California

PLUS 527: Social Context of Planning
2 units, spring 2007

Instructors: Professor David Sloane, Teaching Assistant Stephanie Frank
Time and Classroom: Monday and Wednesday, 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. The goals we aim to achieve are:

- (1) Illuminate some of the obstacles to good community planning,
- (2) Understand through your contributions whether social issues transcend national boundaries,
- (3) Illustrate the importance of examining the societal context in which planning professionals work,
- (4) Test some skills and methods used in assessing communities and "improving" communities.

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)

The readings for the class are included in the *PLUS 527 Reader*, which is available from the University Bookstore. I will provide any additional readings.

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 24
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.
1. Planning Problem Literature Review (20%) INDIVIDUAL GRADE February 7
Produce a no-more-than-seven-pages paper with bibliography discussing the literature on one of your neighborhood's planning issues.
2. Planning Problem Report (25%) GROUP GRADE February 21
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 27
Complete a 4-6 page paper that requires you to use some of the readings to discuss a planning and development issue.

OFFICE HOURS

My office is in 313 Ralph and Goldy Lewis Hall. My office phone is (213) 740-5768, home phone (310) 577-7907. Please call me at home only after 10:00 a.m. and before 10:00 p.m. My email is dsloane@usc.edu. I check it every day. My office hour will be Wednesday from 2-3. I am also available by appointment. I look forward to meeting with you. Stephanie will inform you in class of when she will be available.

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.

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 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.

PLUS 527: Social Context of Planning
Class Schedule/Assignment Due Dates

January 8 Introduction to the Class

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

Readings: None, however, we will discuss readings in class on Wednesday

January 10 From Congestion to Sprawl

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

Readings: Marsh; Sloane; Ryan, Wilson & Fulton

January 15 Celebrate Diversity!

January 17 People, Population, and Mobility

American society is a demographic cauldron, constantly being stirred into a new mixture. How does that demographic dynamism affect the society's understanding of social issues?

Readings: Myers, Pitkin, & Park and Waldinger

January 22 Blight and Disorder

Since the Pittsburgh Social Survey of the 1910s, planners and social critics have been trying to develop standard assessment measures for communities. A crucial reason is the perceived relationship between physical conditions and crime, as explained by "broken windows."

Readings: Wilson and Kelling; Harcourt and Ludwig

January 24 Ethnicity and Race: Does an Underclass Exist?

The social context of planning is foremost concerned with describing and involving the many voices of the people in the planning process. First, let's examine the people, and the tensions that ethnic and racial diversity raise.

Readings: Lee and Gans

January 24 PLANNING PROBLEM DESCRIPTION DUE

January 29 Defining Communities, Describing Planning Problems

Today, 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

January 31 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? Do we need to rethink that process to consider any perceived differences?

Reading: Ritzdorf and Addams

February 5 Toxic Environment as Social Issue

The physical environment is a topic of key interest to planners. What are the current approaches to environmental planning, and are those approaches open for improvement?

Reading: Corburn

February 7 **Social Environment 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?

Readings: Harwood and Sloane et al

February 7 **LITERATURE PAPER DUE**

February 12 **Community Assets and Social Capital**

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

February 14 **Citizen Participation and Civic Engagement**

Let's consider how we take this from contention to participation in the changing social environment of American society. The discussion will focus around the idea of social mobilization and its implications for contemporary planning practice.

Reading: Arnstein and Forester

February 19 **President's Day**

February 21 **Social Conflict and Urban Planning**

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?

Reading: Jacobs and Crawford

February 21 **GROUP REPORTS DUE**

Groups should bring copies of their reports for everyone, plus originals for Stephanie and me.

Feb. 26 **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 27 **READINGS PAPER DUE AT 5 PM**

PPD 527 Readings

*These readings are available electronically.

1. *Benjamin C. Marsh "Economic Aspects of City Planning," Municipal Engineers of the City of New York, *Proceedings*, Paper 57 (1910): 73-87. Access it at: <http://www.library.cornell.edu/Reps/DOCS/masrcheco.htm>.
2. David C. Sloane, "From Congestion to Sprawl," *JAPA* 72/1 (Winter 2006): 10-18.
3. Christine M. Ryan, John P. Wilson, and William Fulton, "Living on the Edge: Growth Policy Choices for Ventura County," in Jennifer Wolch, Manuel Pastor, Jr., Peter Drier, editors, *Up Against the Sprawl: Public Policy and the Making of Southern California* (2004): 309-341.

4. *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.
5. Roger Waldinger, "Not the Promised Land: Los Angeles and Its Immigrants" in *Pacific Historical Review* 68/2 (May 1999): 253-272.
6. James Q. Wilson & George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982): 29-38.
7. *Bernard E. Harcourt & Jens Ludwig, "Broken Windows: New Evidence from New York City and a Five-City Social Experiment," *University of Chicago Law Review* 73 (2006).
8. *Jennifer Lee, "Constructing Race and Civility in Urban America," *Urban Studies* 43/5-6 (May 2006): 903-917. Access it through the USC Electronic Resources, "Urban Studies."
9. 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.
10. Marsha Ritzdorf, "A Feminist Analysis of Gender and Residential Zoning in the United States" in I. Altman and A. Churchman, eds., *Women and the Environment* (1994).
11. Jane Addams, "Youth in the City," in *Spirit of Youth and the City Streets* (1909): 3-24.
12. *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. Access this article through JSTOR.
13. 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.
14. *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). Access this article through Medline, available through USC OVID.
15. *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>.
16. John Kretzmann and John McKnight, "Building Community from the Inside Out" in *National Civic Review* 85 (Winter 1996): 23-29.
17. 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).
18. John Forester, "Making Participation Work When Interests Conflict," *JAPA* 72/4 (Autumn 2006): 447-456.
19. Jane Jacobs, "Some Myths About Diversity" in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961): 222-238.
20. Margaret Crawford, "Contesting the Public Realm: Struggles over Public Space in Los Angeles" in *Journal of Architectural Education* 49/1 (September 1995): 4-9.

PLUS 527 Team Projects

David Sloane and Stephanie Frank
Spring 2007

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 24: 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 pollutants, 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 7: The second task is for each student to write a paper of no more than seven pages on a planning issue 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 21: 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 community 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.

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 where 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, Stephanie and I are your audience. That means that we expect a carefully documented, rigorously argued effort. However, on another level, we expect the summaries particularly to be accessible to the public and policymakers.

Group Topics

Students will be assigned to groups. We discourage changing groups, but you can only if you someone in the group to which you wish to go is willing to switch to the group you are leaving. Both students must stand before Stephanie and declare their willingness to shift.

1. Skid Row and Homelessness

Downtown is undergoing a dramatic demographic shift as empty-nesters and yuppies move into market-rate lofts and condominiums throughout downtown. In response to demands from these new populations and the businesses that serve them, the LAPD and Los Angeles city officials have opened a wide-ranging program to end homelessness. The target of much of their activities is the city's Skid Row. How does one change the routine of homelessness? What solutions offer the best outcome for everyone involved? What is the role for planners?

2. Bunker Hill and the Grand Avenue Park

Grand Avenue has emerged as the center of high culture for downtown Los Angeles. A ring of buildings, including Disney Hall, the Catholic Cathedral, and MOCA, ring the street. Now a group of city elites is leading a program to develop a park that would stretch from Grand Avenue to City Hall. Will this park, and its accompanying programming, actually achieve what its promoters hope? Will it serve the community that surrounds Grand Avenue, or the elite patrons of the high culture offerings in those magnificent buildings?

3. Malibu and the Mountains

Malibu is home to some of the world's most expensive property. How does such a wealthy community cope with also being home to some of the region's most beautiful public lands, the beach and the holdings of the Santa Monica Conservancy? What rights do the public have to use these lands? How do we compromise the collective public good with the individual property right?

4. Inglewood and Big Boxes

A few years ago, Inglewood famously rejected a ballot referendum funded by Wal-Mart that would have overrode the city's decision to reject the corporation's plans for a new superstore in the city. Why are big boxes so controversial? They offer jobs, sale taxes, and other benefits that apparently outweigh their costs, so why are so many communities frightened of their presence? From a planning perspective, what challenges do they present that other retail units do not? Do they bring social costs with them that may influence how people perceive their costs and benefits?

5. Crime and Vernon Main

Crime is down in Los Angeles; down dramatically since the 1990s. Yet, safety remains high on the agenda of almost all officials and residents. In July 2006, three Latinos were killed on East 49th Street in Los Angeles. Residents worried that the killings were by African Americans, and represented another sporadic example of inter-racial assaults. How do we maintain a safe neighborhood in a multicultural community? Using the Vernon/Main Neighborhood Council district as the location, consider how safety, planning, and neighborhood related to each other.

6. Hollywood and Redevelopment

The "problem" of Hollywood has fascinated city officials and commentators for decades. While Hollywood is an international brand, closely associated with Los Angeles, the area itself has only recently begun showing signs of prosperity and life. The CRA's redevelopment project has spent millions trying to bolster economic development in Hollywood. How should we measure the success of such activities? Is economic development a sufficient barometer?