Course Description

This course will explore theories and methods of planning at the neighborhood level. The primary focus will be on ways to address the issues of depopulation, housing abandonment, increased poverty and social problems faced by many inner-city communities in the United States. For comparative purposes, the course will also briefly examine neighborhood planning issues in other nations. The central questions the course will examine are: Why do neighborhoods experience prosperity or decline? Which approaches (e.g. economic development, urban design, social service delivery, housing rehabilitation, community organizing and empowerment) are likely to be most effective in revitalizing neighborhoods? What approaches have federal and local governments used to intervene in neighborhood development in the past? What role can and should non-profit organizations play? What theoretical perspectives have informed previous approaches to neighborhood planning? How do we assess these efforts? The course will utilize a combination of lectures, guest lectures and seminar discussion.

Prerequisites

Graduate or upper class undergraduate standing. An interest in discussing issues related to neighborhood planning.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

1. Be able to critically analyze major neighborhood planning initiatives being discussed and implemented in the United States;

2. Be familiar with the theoretical foundations of neighborhood planning programs and policies.

Required Course Materials
Materials for the course consist of a course reader and a book. The course reader is available at Accucopy, located at 518 E. William St. The book below is available at the Media Union bookstore.

Course Requirements

There are four requirements for the course: attendance and class participation, reflection papers, a collaborative project, and a final paper.

Attendance and class participation (10 percent): Attendance is mandatory, and more than two absences will result in a deduction from your grade. You will be expected to participate in class discussions. You will also be required to do presentations for the collaborative project and the final paper that will be included in your class participation grade.

Reflection papers (25 percent): During the semester you will be required to write six reflection papers on the readings for a session. You can choose to do the reflection papers for any week for which there are readings. They are due on the day the readings are to be discussed—no late papers will be accepted. These papers should be about 2 pages in length. They should not simply present a summary of the readings, but should also provide your critique and reflection on the main points addressed. The reflection papers will be graded based on the following criterion:

- Your ability to synthesize and critically discuss the main ideas of the readings.
- Your ability to provide your own reflections and critique of the material.
- Organization, grammar and spelling.

The class participation and reflection paper assignments require that you read the materials for the class actively and critically. You should read with the following questions in mind: What are the main points the author is trying to impart? How does the author’s perspective differ from others you have read on a similar subject? What assumptions does the author make? Are these assumptions valid? What do you agree and disagree with? Maintaining a critical stance towards the readings will help you to develop perspectives on the issues addressed in the course and articulate these perspectives.

Collaborative project (25 percent): For the collaborative project, you will be required to work in groups to analyze a neighborhood plan. You will be provided with a list of such plans. Your task is to read the plan, interview one or more individuals involved in formulating the plan (if possible), and write a paper of 7 to 9 pages critically addressing the following questions: With what purpose was the plan undertaken? What process was used to develop the plan? Whose input was included in the planning process, and how was it included? What groups were excluded from participation? Whose interests are reflected in the plan? What were the strengths and weaknesses of the plan both in terms of process and content? Before starting the project, you should consult Michelle Gregory’s paper entitled “Anatomy of a Neighborhood Plan: An Analysis of Current Practice” at the American Planning Association Website, [http://www.planning.org/casey/pdf/GREGORY.PDF](http://www.planning.org/casey/pdf/GREGORY.PDF). Papers are due on October 28, and each group will be required to give a brief presentation of their report to the class.

Final paper (40 percent): The final paper will be on a topic of your choosing, and should be 20-22 pages in length including cover page and bibliography. You may choose to do an academic research paper, or a project in a community. The paper is due on the last day of class. Five percent will be deducted from your grade for each day late without a documented excuse. You will be required to hand in a one-page paper proposal on October 21 discussing the topic you wish to pursue, the main research questions you hope to address, and some of the sources you plan to look at. The final paper is due at the beginning of class on December 9.
Class Schedule

The following is an outline of the material to be covered during each class session. The schedule is tentative and may change.

September 9: Introduction

September 16: Defining and describing neighborhood and community; history of American neighborhoods; theories of neighborhood change


September 23: History of neighborhood planning

Halpern 1-82

September 30: History of neighborhood planning (continued)

Halpern 83-149, 195-234

October 7: The role of non-profits in neighborhood planning

Field trip: CDCs in Southwest Detroit


October 14: No class

October 21: Neighborhood economic development: theory, history, and major initiatives; the neighborhood within the region: discussion of CDC trip


October 28: Presentation of analyses of neighborhood plans

Collaborative projects due.

November 4: Community reinvestment act; CCDIs; CDFIs; microlending in the US and abroad


November 11: Empowerment Zone

Panel on the Detroit Empowerment Zone.


November 18: Segregation; the role of religious institutions and schools


November 25: Progressive administrations and neighborhoods; an international comparative perspective on neighborhood planning


December 2: Presentations of final papers

December 9: Presentations of final papers

*Final paper due.*