

## **UAP 5244: Multicultural Cities**

Tuesdays, 7-9:45pm (Polycom Blacksburg/Alexandria)

Instructor: Dr. Karen Till  
Office: 212 Architecture Annex  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 4-6 pm

Spring 2009  
email: [ktill@vt.edu](mailto:ktill@vt.edu)  
Phone: 540-231-1109

Over the past thirty years, cities across the globe seem to have become increasingly fragmented, multiple and diverse, despite unprecedented levels of economic interconnectedness at the global scale. How might we understand 'cities of difference' in the context of globalization? What challenges and opportunities do multicultural cities present to city-building professionals, residents, and policy makers? How might planning and public policy at all levels of government become more inclusive to reflect the plurality of cities? Can or should residents and visitors feel 'at home' in today's multicultural and multiethnic cities? This course attempts to address these questions in the U.S. and other parts of the world through a combination of seminar discussions, studio work and writing assignments.

The seminar is divided roughly into three parts. The first part will be devoted to acquiring a common vocabulary, to examine dominant theories of the city and urban life, and to explore possible alternatives. We will look at how the Western experiences of nineteenth century industrialization, and twentieth and twenty-first century postmodernism, globalization and segregation have influenced how the city is understood and represented. In the second and third parts of the seminar, we will discuss how these models have failed to include the diversity of social groups that constitute contemporary cities through local projects and case studies. The second part of the seminar will be devoted to studio fieldwork in a local setting. This part of the course will provide students with an opportunity to gain experience in collaborative planning, qualitative research methods and community capacity building. Students should plan to spend time in Roanoke (or in the D.C. area if at the NCR campus) working with local residents and NGOs (see below for details). The culmination of the studio will be to facilitate a neighborhood meeting, which will include presenting the outcomes of local group work. The third part of the course explores multicultural cities through particular themes and case studies, including Los Angeles, New York, Calgary and Cape Town.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (London and New York: Continuum Press, 2003).

Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995).

Additional articles and book chapters available on Scholar course webpage.

### **TEACHING PHILOSOPHY**

In this seminar, I will facilitate discussion, occasionally lecture, offer my expertise, and act as a resource -- directing you to bodies of literature, providing feedback on your ideas and pointing out tools to help you in your journey of critical thinking. I will also try to

encourage you to make connections between the readings and discussion in seminar with case studies on the ground. Assignments are also organized to help you develop skills in your future roles as professionals and/or scholars whose job it will be to listen to the needs of city dwellers, to create institutional and community networks, to work collaboratively in diverse groups, to help imagine and create better cities, and to produce knowledges that will hopefully be of benefit to our society.

## **EVALUATION/GRADES**

This seminar is intended to make you more self-aware of imagining, living in and planning for multicultural cities, and to help you learn ways to situate those knowledges within an interdisciplinary framework. To this end, evaluated coursework will ask you to reflect upon course concepts and consider their applicability in particular contexts through written and field-based assignments. Students will also be asked to contribute to larger seminar discussions, as well as actively help shape a field-based research exercise with a local community in Roanoke, VA and, for the NCR students, in the Alexandria and Washington D.C. area. To this end, the final grade you earn will be determined by:

- *20%: Weekly questions/reflections and seminar participation*  
To encourage thoughtful consideration of the week's readings, you will be asked to distribute your reflections and questions about the week's readings **by Monday 5 pm** the day before we meet to the rest of the seminar participants via email and/or our Scholar webpage. You should write on themes, passages, or ideas that "jump out" at you and demand attention as you read the various selections. I also expect that you provide at least one more synthetic/comparative question each week. In addition, your contribution to seminar discussion will constitute part of this grade.
- *40%: Studio: Field exercises, fieldnotes, participation and neighborhood presentation*  
As a means of linking course themes to a real case study, as well as gaining practical research and collaborative planning experience, the seminar will work with a local neighborhood in Roanoke, Hurt Park, to help the neighborhood association conceptualize projects that might build community capacity, and assist with identifying possible projects for the Community Development Block Grant. We will have one dedicated week in seminar before the research phase to discuss the context for the research, and overview qualitative and collaborative research methods and how to take notes. Students are expected to conduct field-based research for at least three weeks at a local setting. Two additional weeks will be dedicated to meeting with project partners and presenting the outcomes of the research/project. We will collectively try to coordinate times and carpools to facilitate this process.

During the studio phase of the seminar, you will be asked to write a series of reflective field notes; an edited version of this, in the form of a memo, will be posted to the larger seminar via the Scholar wiki page. The culminating group project will be to facilitate a neighborhood meeting. Students will need to meet outside of seminar to agree upon the format and responsibilities for student work. Using the outcomes of the research and collaborative techniques, students will discuss possible projects with the neighborhood association and/or relevant parties involved in the project/process.

- *40%: Short seminar paper and class presentation*  
You will be asked to turn in a short paper, of about 10-15 pages, during the last week of classes. Students exploring possible research topics or desiring additional research/field experience are encouraged to continue working with the Hurt Park (or other local) neighborhood group and write a final report. More advanced students may choose to write a short, critical literature review, draft of a major paper, Ph.D. proposal, chapter for a master's or dissertation thesis, draft for an article, or grant proposal.

All students must submit a brief one-paragraph proposal for their seminar paper topic and format by February 10 (week 4). By March 31, each student will be asked to meet with me individually to discuss the seminar paper he/she is working on. (Failure to meet these two deadlines will result in failed mark for this part of your grade.) Students are also encouraged to submit a working draft to get feedback from me in mid-April; the latest date I will accept drafts for feedback is April 24. During the last class session, May 5, all students will present a short (10-15 minute) presentation of the seminar over a meal. All papers must be turned in no later than the end of the working day on Friday, May 8.

Course Schedule:

**PART ONE: FINDING A COMMON VOCABULARY**

- Jan. 20 A Multicultural America? Barack Obama's 'renewed American Dream'  
No class meeting; Watch the inauguration; assigned reading
- Jan. 27 Modernist theories and planning histories of the city
- Feb. 3 Theorizing and planning for multicultural cities/cities of difference
- Feb. 10 Transformative planning practices

**PART TWO: STUDIO WORK: Multicultural planning in practice**

- Feb. 17 Mini-lecture: An overview of Hurt Park, Roanoke  
Mini-lecture: Qualitative research and collaborative planning methods
- Feb. 24 Visit to project partners (in Hurt Park, Roanoke; tba in NCR)
- March 3 Research Week: Studio work in Hurt Park
- March 10 Spring Break
- March 17 Research Week: Studio work in Hurt Park
- March 24 Research Week: Studio work in Hurt Park
- March 31 Charrette with neighborhood (in Hurt Park)

**PART THREE: Case Studies**

- April 7 Los Angeles: The Power of Place
- April 14 New York: Queer Geographies
- April 21 Calgary: Being homeless and female in a boom town
- April 28 Cape Town: The post/Colonial and Apartheid City
- May 5 Final Seminar/Student presentations/Pot Luck Meal

Seminar papers due: Friday, May 8