

URP 573: Infrastructure Planning in the U.S. and 'Developing Countries' Winter 2021  
Thursday/ 6:00-9:00pm. REMOTE  
Martin Murray, Professor

**Course Description:** Infrastructural networks (water systems, sewerage, electricity, roadways, telecommunications, and the like) are constitutive features of metropolitan life. Infrastructural networks largely go unnoticed until they break down or are no longer capable of serving the purpose for which they were designed. This course focuses on the social life of infrastructure. The basic premise is that infrastructure refers not only to the physical elements from which it is constructed and the purpose it serves, but also to the meanings and ideologies it conveys. In cities around the world, large numbers of urban residents lack access to basic infrastructure and services. Many city dwellers in so-called (and mis-named) 'Third World' countries do not have regular access to such basic amenities as piped water, sanitary toilet facilities, electricity, sewerage, paved roads, and policing). In the United States, urban infrastructures often break down, sometimes with disastrous consequences (Katrina and New Orleans, or the slow strangulation of Detroit, for example). The COVID-19 pandemic offers an opportunity to explore across cases both the power and the weakness of infrastructural systems (e.g., information and communication networks, social facilities like hospital and clinics, testing centers, and the like) to assist in addressing the deleterious outcomes (like foreclosures, evictions, job loss, and catastrophic illness).

**Learning Goals:**

1. To introduce students to the role (often secretive) of infrastructure in urban planning decisions
2. To develop an understanding of what are the driving forces behind infrastructure planning and delivery, and what are the causes for their uneven distribution
3. To examine the place of infrastructure in city building
4. To be able to speak informatively of why infrastructure matters for healthy cities
5. To be able to explain What roles have urban planners and other stakeholders played in choosing between different approaches to addressing infrastructure needs of urban residents?
6. to gain an understanding of the connection between infrastructure and social justice and the sustainable city.

**Course Expectations:** The class will be conducted in a seminar format, and students will also engage in in-class debates on controversial issues, including the balance between centralized and decentralized approaches to infrastructure delivery, the privatization of basic social services, and the role of local and community-based approaches to infrastructure delivery. Each student will give an individual presentation to the entire class at the end of the term.