

URP 500: PLANNING THEORY AND HISTORY

Fall 2023

Instructor: Professor Kimberley Kinder (kkinder@umich.edu)

This survey course provides an overview of the theoretical and historical foundations of planning. The course will stress basic tools that will help students understand what city planning strategies people have used in the past, as well as how to invent new solutions to emerging challenges. We will use case studies of urban regions around the world for class discussion both to bring theory to life and to allow us to test established planning theory against real urban planning challenges. We will cover the historical foundations and classical theoretical paradigms of planning. We will examine the major roles played by planning practitioners, the application of planning theory in practice, and the effectiveness of planning paradigms in addressing environmental consciousness, economic globalization, and social disparity.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the semester, students will be able to critically evaluate and propose key factors to consider when addressing a contemporary planning case in light of historical precedent and theory knowledge. This includes getting experience analyzing the key historical trends and theory debates shaping the field and practice of city planning. It also includes learning to differentiate among a variety of possible city planning strategies, as well as explain their strengths and weaknesses depending on the planning context.

By the end of the semester, students will also be able to analyze arguments related to contemporary planning issues and recognize both the underlying value systems they promote and the specific factual claims they rely on. This includes getting experience assessing the effectiveness of planning paradigms in addressing issues related to economic development, environmental sustainability, social justice, and quality of life.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to review all readings and assignments for the day prior to attending/viewing the lectures and activities for the day. Grades are assigned based on a combination of class participation, quizzes, and writing assignments. For the writing assignments, students will complete the assignments with assistance from a dedicated writing instructor.