JPG 1510 Recent Debates in Urban Form  
Department of Geography and Programme in Planning,  

Instructor: André Sorensen  sorensen@utsc.utoronto.ca  
Fall Term 2012  
SS 5017b  
Wednesday 4-6 pm  

Course Description  
During the last 60 years in cities in North America a radically new pattern of urban form was created, based on segregated land uses, lower densities, and automobility. One important consequence has been a series of major debates about urban form, its significance and impacts, and proposals to prevent bad urban form, often described as ‘urban sprawl’. Urban form has in this way become the topic of major urban public policy debates during the last 20 years, with pitched campaigns denouncing urban sprawl and automobile dependence, and best-selling books discussing the depravity of contemporary city-building processes and patterns. These campaigns were so convincing that Toronto has a new million-hectare greenbelt, provincial policies promote massive intensification, and the provincial government produced a plan to spend $50bn on public transit in the GTHA over the next 25 years (in its original version…).

This reading seminar critically examines concepts of urban form, major arguments against sprawl and for alternative approaches to city building, techniques for measuring urban form, and theories about the influence of urban form on human behaviour.

Major questions:
What are the major proposals for ‘good urban forms’?  
Can good urban form be achieved through planning?  
What are the primary normative values and assumptions that might inform such a project?  
How can they be analyzed and discussed?  
What do we know about urban form, really?  
How do we know it?  
What don’t we know about urban form?  
How can urban forms be measured and compared?  
Why is urban form such a politically contested issue?

Course Requirements  
The course will be taught as a seminar with ten weeks dealing with substantive issues, and two final weeks when students will present draft outlines of their research papers for general discussion and feedback. The final grade will be based on participation (20%), a short (6 page) literature-review style paper to be handed in during the week you lead the seminar (30%), and a longer (20 page) research paper (50%) to be handed in during the exam period.

Readings in this syllabus are arranged in two categories. “Required” and “Further” readings. Required Readings must be read by all participants before the seminars, so that you will be familiar with the themes to be discussed each week. These readings are all available on the course Blackboard site, or as e-journal papers through the library. Further Readings do not have to be read before the seminars, but constitute a useful list of key related books and articles for the bibliographic or research papers. Seminar leaders should be familiar with and draw on these further readings.
Seminar participation: Participants are expected to do the required readings before each class and actively participate in class discussions.

Seminar presentation: Each participant in this class must introduce one weekly seminar. This will involve a 15 minute presentation on that week’s required and further readings, and the posing of some key questions for the class to discuss. Depending on the # of participants, some presentations may be by a team of two.

Literature review essay: Participants will submit a short literature-review style essay (6 pages) on the required and further readings for a particular week. This should be submitted on the same week as your seminar presentation. The papers must be submitted as a PDF by email to all class participants no later than 4:00 p.m. on the day before the seminar in which the readings are discussed.

Term Paper: The major essay is an opportunity for you to examine, in detail, a topic of your choice that is related to urban form issues and literatures examined in this class. Due during the week after the last class.

Course Evaluation
*The final grade will be comprised of the following elements:*

- Seminar participation: 15%
- Seminar presentation: 10%
- Literature Review (6 pages): 25%
- Term Paper (20 pages) including presentation in last 2 weeks: 50%

SEMINAR SCHEDULE & READINGS

**Week 1: Introduction to the content and approach of the course**

- **September 12**

**Week 2: What is good urban form? Normative Approaches**

- **Sept. 19**

**Required Readings:**


**Further Reading:**


**Week 3: The Great Sprawl Debates**

- **September 26**
Required Readings:
Gillham, Oliver (2002). The limitless city: a primer on the urban sprawl debate: Island Press. Chapter 4 pp. 69-81

Further Reading:

Week 4: Compact Cities Oct. 3
Required Readings:

Further Reading:

Week 5: The Costs & Benefits of Alternative Urban Forms Oct. 10
Required Readings:
Further Reading:

Chapter 1 pp. 1-13

Further Reading:

Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 pp. 75-158


http://www.neptis.org/library/show.cfm?id=61&cat_id=23

Strong Towns.org (no date) “Curbside Chat Companion Booklet”

http://www.strongtowns.org/storage/reports/Curbside%20Chat%20Booklet-LO.pdf

Week 6: Growth Management, Smart Growth & Urban Form Oct. 17

Required Readings:


Further Reading:


http://www.vtpi.org/sgcritics.pdf


ftp://ftp.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/chic-ccd/Research_Reports-
Rapports_de_recherche/eng_unilingual/smart%20growth_(w)_jan6.pdf


Week 7: New Urbanism as Urban Form Critique & Solution Oct. 24

Required Readings:


Further Reading:

Week 8: October 31
No class, this date conflicts with a paper session I organized at ACSP in Cincinnati. I can’t change the time, and can’t get out of it, Sorry!

Week 9: November 7
Sustainable cities and urban form
Required Readings:

Further Reading:

Week 10: November 14
Measuring Urban Form
Required Readings:


**Further Reading:**


*Transportation Research Record 1674*: 9-19.


*Neptis Studies on the Toronto Metropolitan Region. T. Coombes. Toronto, Neptis Foundation.*

http://www.neptis.org/library/show.cfm?id=86&cat_id=11

**Week 11: Urban Form and Crime Prevention**  **November 21**

**Required Readings:**


**Further Reading:**


The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety


**Week 12:**  **November 28**

**Presentations of Research Projects**

**Week 13:**  **December 5**

**Presentations of Research Projects**