PLA1517H: Urban Design and Social Movements in the City

University of Toronto
Department of Geography and Programme in Planning,

Seminar Time/ Location: SSH 5017B on Fridays at 10 am -12 pm

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1 COURSE DESCRIPTION

The basic aim of the seminar is to illuminate acts and structures of Urban Design in critical perspective on diverse manifestations of (urban) social movements in the city. Case studies from different geographical and historical backgrounds will provide the research material for a closer examination of local conditions, debates and underlying discourses on the threat of social movements to hegemonic normative paradigms in urban planning and urban design. So, first thing at the very beginning: to discuss what is Urban Design and what are the practices of UD, that is to question: who is doing it, where and when? The how? and why? will be the following step. The same questions of the who?, where? and how? has to be raised about Social Movements as well. But, what about the differences between political Social Movements in the city (working class, Anti-Capitalist, Civil Rights, Feminism, LGBT*, anti-racism, anti-nuclear movement, anti-imperialism etc.) and Urban Social Movements against gentrification and mega projects (e.g. Olympia, Stuttgart 21, urban renewal) and/or for cheaper and better housing conditions (like squatters movement, tenements initiatives), urban common goods and environmental sustainability (e.g. peoples parks, green spaces, community gardens and biking lanes)?

The ultimate objective is to give students some critical perspective on urban design approaches in relation to social and/or urban movements and vice versa of the various ways in which people can engage in urban design, to address social political questions urban social movements try to deal with.

Key questions
- What is Urban Design and what are the practices of UD? (who is doing it, where and when? The how? and why? will be the following step)
- The same questions of the *who, where and how?* has to be raised about Social Movements? Are the topics of the movements formative for contesting urban design practices only if they are aware and against it or is the relationship between counter-hegemonic discourses and political practices more deeply rooted?
- Approaches of Participatory Design and to use the idea of the (local) community by self-control and DIY.

2 COURSE ORGANIZATION
The course meets once per week in seminar format. Students in the class are asked to make short presentations on the readings in the seminar, participate in class discussion, prepare a term-paper proposal (of approximately 4 pages), and write a full length term paper (of approximately 20-25 pages) on a topic of their choosing.

Text
There is no specific text for this course. Readings are listed below, and will be placed in the geography/planning head office for sign out. Most of the readings are also accessible online. But you are invited to suggest interesting articles and books, especially in the fields of your research group(s).

3 COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS
In this course you will be expected to do the following:
1. Attend class regularly.
2. Read all assigned texts, be part of a research group and actively participate in class discussions.
3. Complete all assignments by the posted due dates.

3.1 Research Groups
Each participant of the seminar has to be an active member of a research group. Depending on the total number of participants and up to nine case studies this will be nine individuals or groups dealing with the local historical contexts, political and social circumstances by researching into archives, articles, films, music and academic studies/texts. The foci of the case studies are not compulsive but can be changed according to local knowledge and interests.

3.2 Group presentation
Once during the semester you (and/or your research group) will make a 20-25 minute presentation to the class. You should select a case study of the course schedule. Be creative and design your presentation to trigger a lively debate and discussion questions. Do not lecture.
Make your own position and standpoint epistemology clear to the others, but present more than one perspective on the topic (e.g. consider race/ethnicity, sex/gender, class, age, etc.)

You should make connections to the material used in class as well as conduct research in archives, the internet etc. on your topic, including research from at least two different journals.

Each group must meet with me at least once before your presentation. It is your responsibility to schedule a meeting with me. By meeting with me, you have the opportunity to ask questions, clarify any issues, and receive guidance. Please come prepared to answer the following questions or brainstorm possibilities. (see: Office Hours)

The presentation will be evaluated on (a) quality of preparation (e.g. level of organization and thoughtfulness), (b) the content of the presentation (e.g. have you interpreted and presented the issues correctly? Have you provided a reflexive standpoint, but as well more than one view? Have you given attention to how these issues operate for people from diverse groups? How well have you done outside research on the topic?) and (c) the extent to which you engage the class in a meaningful discussion of your topic.

3.3 Written Work

Weekly reflections

You will submit 6 reflections (300-500 words) which will focus on the key themes, positions and weaknesses of the assigned readings. They are designed to help promote critical reading and to facilitate class discussion. They should be submitted to the course by 6 pm Wednesday the night before the seminar. Please read each others’ responses before coming to class. Do not write more than 500 words.

Summary

Every person/research group must hand in a summary of the presentation (4-5 pages, double-spaced, typed, in Times New Roman font, 12 point, with 1,5” margins) on the due date. It should include the main issue of your presentation, a discussion of how urban design and (urban) social movements in your research findings apply to your issue, and a list of outside references. Do not go over or under the page limit.

You or your group must prepare a handout for the class of the key points and arguments to give to your classmates on the day of your presentation. In your handout, you should cite the sources of your information and of your references.

Final paper of your research group (to April 15 by 12 noon).

You will be required to write a research paper (20-25 pages) on the topic of your research as a part of
the research group or related issues. I encourage you to select your topic in consultation with me, and you will be required to submit a short (approx. \(\frac{1}{2}\)-page) description of your proposed research paper (or equivalent). You must draw on some aspect of the course material to analyze your topic, but you need not choose a topic explicitly covered in the course. The paper must be thoroughly researched, which will require library research and, if relevant, research off campus. If a term paper does not suit your particular needs, please discuss with me the possibility of an alternative project. Keep in mind the following due dates:

**GRADING**

Class participation 20%
Reading Reflections: (x6) 20%
Seminar Presentation Summary 10%
Term Paper (part of research group) 50%

**4 LECTURE TOPICS AND READINGS**

**SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1: Introduction to the course: Questioning Urban Design: The Who/How/Why/What in UD**
- *Who is doing Urban Design? Institutions, Persons, Discourses*
- *How is UD done? Plans, Materials, Dispositives*
- *Why and by what purposes? Interests, Functions, Groups*

**Common Reading:**

**Week 2: Social Movements vs. Urban Movements vs. Urban Social Movements. (Part I)**

*The City and the Grassroots*

**Primary Reading:**

**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 3: Social Movements vs. Urban Movements vs. Urban Social Movements (Part II)**

**Grievances, and who is moving anyway?**

- Mobilizations: political contexts, places, members and identity creations / politics
- Organize!?: Form and content of organized movements
- Institutions: When the movement is over.

**Primary Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 4 Case study I: Paris**

- *From the French Revolution 1789 - to the revolts in Paris 1835/1848*
- *Baron Haussmann and the Paris Commune 1871*

**Primary Reading:**

- **Benjamin, Walter (selections from the Arcades Project) tba**

Recommended Reading:


Week 5 Case study II: Modernism in Moscow, Weimar and Berlin

- From the Russian Revolution and revolutionary movements BAUHAUS – Concepts and city planning in the Soviet Union and the Weimar Republic/Germany in the 1920s

Primary Reading:


Recommended Reading:


Week 6: Case study III: Berlin

Germany 1933-1945: Berlin (Reichshauptstadt Germania), West and East German Urban development since 1948, post reunification urban renewal

Primary Reading:


Recommended Reading:


**Week 7: Case study IV: New York**

*From Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs, ARCH and advocacy design to participatory approaches*

**Primary Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

**Week 8: Case study V: Post-colonial metropolises Brasilia, Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro**

**Primary Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

- tba

**Week 9: Case study VI: Apartheid and after in Capetown/South Africa and Lagos**

Rem Kolhaas, Mathew Gandy

**Primary Reading:** tba

**Recommended Reading:** tba

**Week 10: Case study VII: Israel/Palestine**

*Urban Conflicts between war and war and war*

**Primary Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**

tba
Week 11: Case study VIII: Istanbul/Turkey Urban Megalomania vs. Resistanbul

Primary Reading/Viewing:
Film: Ecümenopolis
Source: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maEcPKBXV0M#t=6

Recommended Reading: tba

Week 12: (Final Session) Case Study IX: Toronto/Canada

Primary Reading:
Studies in Political Economy. 83, pp. 111-139


Recommended Reading: tba