

Spring 2025
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

UP526 Ideals and Action in City Design and Development

Time: 12:30 – 1:50 PM
Location: 227 Temple Buell Hall
Instructor: Colleen Chiu-Shee, ccs32@illinois.edu

INTRODUCTION

UP526 is intended for graduate students in various planning and related fields who are seeking an introduction to the theory and praxis in the field of city design and development. This course involves knowledge and learning activities that lie at the intersection of design and social studies. It centers on a series of questions critical to understanding city design and development: What is city design? What is the relationship of city design to society? How have cities developed and how are cities being (re)designed and (re)developed locally and around the world? How to understand urban fabric and its transformation? What is the future of city design in this tumultuous era? How has technological advancement influenced urban life and how should design and policy practices respond? How to design and develop cities based on principles of equity, resilience, and sustainability? The course involves learning activities such as lectures, reading discussions, and case studies to explore thematic concepts and practices. In turn, the course serves as the starting point to explore diverse issues that matter to design and development, how they evolved across scales and over time, and how they are manifested in diverse contexts within and beyond the U.S.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course seeks to enable students to interrogate and reimagine city design-related ideas and practices. The class assignments emphasize skills of writing, oral presentation, critical thinking, storytelling, visual representation, and creative problem-solving. The student-led activities aim to enable students to utilize their oral, written, and visual communication skills to synthesize collected data, present analyses of urban and environmental conditions, and construct compelling visions for future changes as well as principles for design and development practices. The goals of this course are trifold:

1. Introduction to the Field
2. Connecting Forms and Norms in Design Thinking and Analytical Skills
3. Nurturing Globally Informed and Locally Rooted Reflective Practitioners and Forward-Looking Imagineers

On successful completion of this course, a student will:

1. have gained fundamental knowledge of the field of city design and development, including spatial and morphological understandings, ideals and practices in modern history, the interactions between city design and society in modern and contemporary cities, and the connections between city design and other fields;
2. be able to think outside the box and critically operationalize morphological understandings, city design ideas, and normative principles to improve urban practice in relation to various social, cultural, and political contexts across the world;
3. be inspired to re-envision urban futures based on critical reflections on the past and the present, including ideas for and practices of city design and development;
4. have developed a sense of responsibility to improve human life, the physical environment, and their relations by integrating social and political considerations into spatial and morphological interventions;
5. have strengthened skills in diagramming, morphological analysis, presentation, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and imagination; and
6. be equipped with cross-border and cross-cultural understandings to be poised to work both locally and internationally.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to attend class sessions and complete course readings and assignments. Prior to the beginning of each class session, please read the assigned pieces given for that session. All required course readings are available on Canvas. In addition, course assignments include the following two parts:

Each student will facilitate two Student-Led Reading Discussions (in groups of 2-3 students) to enable in-class collective exploration and reflection.

Each student will carry out an In-depth, Analytical Case Study (an individual project).

Attendance: As stipulated in [the Student Code](#), all students should maintain regular class attendance. In case of potential absence, please promptly notify the instructors and your groupmates. While poor attendance will not automatically result in a failing grade, it will be reflected in the participation component of your final grade. Please see page 6 for the policy on irregular attendance.

Participation: Students' active participation significantly contributes to the success of this course. Well-prepared discussions and desk crits will yield productive conversations and constructive feedback and ensure effective utilization of precious class time.

Group work: Collaboration and negotiation skills are valuable in many professional settings. Due to the complex nature of city design issues, group work brings its advantages by enabling collective brainstorming, cross-pollination, and productivity sharing. Group interactions also foreground interpersonal communications and relational learning. The instructor will pay close attention to the uniqueness of each student's skills and interests and the nature of each project to assess individuals' contributions to group work. Students are welcome to have confidential conversations with the instructor should concerns about team dynamics arise. After Phase I, the instructor will consider

whether students need to fill out a peer assessment form to provide additional references for assessment.

Software: This course focuses on design thinking as opposed to technical skill development, though the instructor will suggest tools to use and answer relevant questions. Students are strongly encouraged to be proactive and resourceful in developing software skills that align with their aspirations. Please consider utilizing the great number of tutorials and troubleshooting posts on the internet.

Syllabus, Announcements, and Canvas: The course syllabus, supplemental handouts, and announcements are great references for students to get organized, make plans, and address general questions about the schedule, assignment structure, grading rubric, submission instructions, and other logistics. If a student misses any information during class time, all documents and announcements are available on Canvas. Students are welcome to email the instructors to ask clarifying questions and make suggestions. However, repeated inquiries about already stated logistics could reflect a lack of accountability.

GRADING RUBRIC

Grade determination is based on the following breakdown: class attendance (10%), in-class participation and desk crits (10%), student-led reading discussions (15% x 2), case study (50%, including visuals 25% and writing 25%).

Grade	Criteria
A+ A A-	The student consistently attends the classes and actively engages in in-class discussions and desk crits. The student demonstrates a good understanding of the lectures and readings as well as original and critical design thinking in their group and individual work. They are resourceful in researching their chosen topics/cases and can integrate spatial and social considerations in their analyses, visual representations, presentations, and writing. They can generate critical insights and logical analyses and articulate their ideas through strong writing and creative drawings. Their final report presents thorough research, good graphic design, and original, coherent, and compelling storytelling. In general, the student is a curious learner and a good communicator. They respond to feedback and can utilize it to enhance their thinking and assignments.
B+ B B-	The student shows sufficient effort to attend classes, engage in discussions, and improve their work. They have carried out solid research, engaged in group work, completed all assignments, responded to feedback, and presented satisfying results. However, the work demonstrates less evidence of in-depth research, critical thinking, originality, and/or creative solutions.
C+ C C-	The student participates in classes and group work. However, their understanding of the selected topics is limited, and their research lacks depth and originality. Their graphic work demonstrates limited improvement over time despite receiving feedback from the instructors.
D+ D D-	The student does not consistently attend the class, lacks input in class attendance and group work, and produces significantly less and/or lower-quality work than their peers. Their communication with the instructors is limited.

Fail F	The student shows little effort to keep up with the course, does not communicate their issues with the instructors, and does not finish the assignments.
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GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS
A+	98 to 100	B	84 to 87.9	C-	71 to 73.9	F	<60
A	94 to 97.9	B-	81 to 83.9	D+	68 to 70.9		
A-	91 to 93.9	C+	78 to 80.9	D	64 to 67.9		
B+	88 to 90.9	C	74 to 77.9	D-	60 to 63.9		

TOOLS AND SOFTWARE

Students may find the following tools useful for desk crits: computer, pencil, ink pens, tracing paper, drafting tape, sketchbook, colored pencils, colored sketch markers, engineering scale, and architectural scale. Students can purchase tools online or in a physical store like Blackline Supply (809 S Fifth St Champaign, IL 61820).

Students are encouraged to use software for their projects, including ArcGIS Pro, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, SketchUp, Rhinoceros, and AutoCAD. Though these computer programs are available for free on the lab computers in TBH, it can be helpful to install them on a personal computer. ArcGIS Pro and Adobe Creative Suite are available at the University of Illinois Webstore. SketchUp is available via a web version or can be downloaded by a student user at a significantly discounted price.

Students can also check out available software on [DURP Remote server](#) and [AnyWare](#). The latter is a virtual desktop environment allowing students to access licensed software whether remote, on campus, or in class. [FAA's IT services](#) may provide technical support.

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Tuesdays	Thursdays	Learning Activities		
PHASE I. THEMATIC EXPLORATION	Jan 21	Course Introduction	Jan 23	What is Urban/City Design?	Week 1. Logistics Each student will sign up for reading discussions, pick 2 topics, and join 2 groups
	Jan 28	The Modern City and Urban Design Thinkers	Jan 30	Student-Led Reading Discussions	Week 2-8. Each student will: 1) Lead two reading discussions with the respective groups (group work) 2) Identify a project for in-depth case study (individual task) 3) Draft a preliminary report explaining the selected project (text only, individual task) 4) Submit the draft report via Canvas by 11:59 PM on March 21 st
	Feb 4	State and Market Forces Shaping Urban Form	Feb 6	Student-Led Reading Discussions	
	Feb 11	Housing, Neighbourhoods, and Communities	Feb 13	Student-Led Reading Discussions	
	Feb 18	Placemaking and City-making	Feb 20	Student-Led Reading Discussions	
	Feb 25	Green, Healthy, and Resilient Cities	Feb 27	Student-Led Reading Discussions	
	Mar 4	Connectivity, Security, and Smart Urbanisms	Mar 6	Student-Led Reading Discussions	
	Mar 11	Mobility, Infrastructure, and Public Health	Mar 13	Student-Led Reading Discussions	
PHASE II. IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES	Mar 18	No Class	Mar 20	No Class	
	Mar 25	Presentations + Q&A 20 min + 6 min	Mar 27	Presentations + Q&A 20 min + 6 min	Week 10-11. Each student will present their case study to the class. Each presentation should be 20 minutes long, followed by 6 minutes of Q&A
	Apr 1	Presentations + Q&A 20 min + 6 min	Apr 3	Presentations + Q&A 20 min + 6 min	
	Apr 8	Desk Crits: Feedback for Case Studies, Diagramming, etc.	Apr 10	Desk Crits: Feedback for Case Studies, Diagramming, etc.	Week 12. Each student will meet with the instructor to discuss their research and decide what diagrams to draw
	Apr 15	No Class (UAA Conference)	Apr 17	No Class (UAA Conference)	Week 13. Production Week: Each student will prepare a draft InDesign report, due at 11:59 PM on April 18 th
	Apr 22	Desk Crits: Feedback for Draft Reports	Apr 24	Desk Crits: Feedback for Draft Reports	Week 14. Each student will meet with the instructor to discuss their draft report and receive feedback on writing, visual representation, graphic design, etc.
	Apr 29	Final Presentations 15 min + 5 min	May 1	Final Presentations 15 min + 5 min	Week 15-16. Each student will present their final report to the class.

May 6	Final Presentations (15 min + 5 min, Last Class)	All final reports are due at 11:59 PM on May 13 th
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COURSE POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Deadlines: Please note the deadlines for all submissions. Students can add these to their calendar and proactively communicate with the instructors when encountering difficulty. Late submissions may be excused in exceptional situations, including sudden illness, bereavement, or family crisis. Unexcused late submissions will incur a penalty.

Emotional Support: The [Counseling Center](#) is committed to providing a range of services—including individual, couples, and group counseling—intended to help students develop improved coping skills to address emotional, interpersonal, and academic concerns. All these services are paid for through the health services fee. The Counseling Center offers primarily short-term counseling, but they also provide referrals to the community when students could benefit from longer-term services.

Disability Services: This course will accommodate students with documented disabilities. Please refer to the [Disability Resource and Education Services](#) website for more information and inform the instructor of any requests at the beginning of the semester.

Diversity: The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) is committed to creating an environment of inclusion and opportunity that is rooted in the very goals and responsibilities of practicing planners. Conduct that interferes with the rights of another or creates an atmosphere of intimidation or disrespect is inconsistent with the environment of learning and cooperation that the program requires. By enrolling in a course at DURP, students agree to be responsible for maintaining a respectful environment in all activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. Every student should follow the [University Student Code](#). Please see the [Student Code Article 1—Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) for further details.

Academic Integrity: Please be aware of the university guidelines regarding academic integrity, which can be found under Article 1, Part 4 of the student code. Academic dishonesty includes behaviors such as cheating, inappropriate use of university equipment/material, fabrication of information, plagiarism (presenting someone else’s work from any source as your own such as copying someone else’s post), and so on. All forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the student’s home department and the College of Fine and Applied Arts.

Irregular Attendance: Class attendance is expected of all students at the University of Illinois, however instructors must reasonably accommodate a student’s religious beliefs, observances, and practices in regard to class attendance and work requirements if the student informs his or her instructor of the conflict within one week after being informed of the attendance or work requirements. It is the instructor’s decision as to when a student’s absences become excessive and should be reported. If in the opinion of an instructor the attendance of a student becomes so irregular that their academic study is likely to be impaired, the instructor may submit an [irregular attendance form](#) to the Associate Dean of the student’s college. A copy is forwarded to the student, who should contact the instructor immediately to work out a solution. If irregular attendance continues without excuse, the instructor may request the student be withdrawn from the course. This request for withdrawal would result in a grade of E for the course. Extenuating circumstances will always be considered when supporting evidence is presented. See [Rule 1-501](#) and [Rule 1-502](#) in the Student Code for more information.

Emergencies (Run > Hide > Fight): Emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time, so we must take a minute to prepare for a situation in which our safety could depend on our ability to react quickly. Take a moment to learn the different ways to leave the building in case of fire. In case of severe weather, move away from windows and go to a lower level in the middle of the building. If someone ever tries to hurt us, the best option is to run out of the building. If we cannot do that safely, hide somewhere, lock or barricade the door if possible, and be as quiet as we can. Do not leave that safe area until we get an Illini-Alert confirming that it is safe to do so. If we cannot run or hide, fight back with whatever we can get our hands on. If you want to better prepare yourself for any of these situations, visit police.illinois.edu/safe. You can sign up for emergency text messages at emergency.illinois.edu.

COVID-19 Information: Keeping everyone safe and healthy remains our top priority. As the federal government's COVID-19 national emergency declaration has ended, students who test positive for COVID-19 can follow [the CDC guidelines](#) and the University's [updates](#).