

Sustainable Cities in a Comparative Perspective

New York University
Wagner Graduate School of Public Service
URPL-GL 2613
Fall 2011
Wednesday, 8:35-10:15 PM

Instructor

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Course Description

According to estimates by the United Nations, between 2000 and 2030 the share of the world's population living in urban areas will increase from 47% to 60%, with the fastest growing cities located in developing countries. This course examines the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainability in cities. Policies and programs that try to address the challenges of sustainability from both developed and developing countries are studied and compared. Opportunities for avoiding unsustainable practices in developing countries through the use of modern technologies are also analyzed. Some of the major themes explored in the context of the sustainability of cities are indicators of sustainability, demographic trends, urban poverty and slums, green building, urban sprawl, global climate change, and sustainable energy and transportation policies.

Course Readings

Three books are required for the course. They are available at the NYU Bookstore (located at 726 Broadway, New York, NY 10003). The books are:

- *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*, 2nd Edition, edited by Stephen M. Wheeler and Timothy Beatley. Routledge. 2008.
- *Taking Sustainable Cities Seriously* by Kent E. Portney. The MIT Press. 2003.
- *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* by Edward Glaeser. The Penguin Press. 2011.

These books will also be available in the Course Reserves Desk, on Lower Level 2 of Bobst Library.

An additional set of required and suggested readings from academic journals, the Internet and various media sources will be listed on blackboard.

Class Assignments and Grading

1. In class Mid-Term Exam (30%) - October 19
2. Final Assignment and presentation (40%) - due December 7

The final assignment will consist of a critique of a sustainable city plan. This assignment will be 30% of the grade. In addition, students will make a presentation to the class based on the final assignment (10% of the grade). Class presentations will take place on November 30, December 7 and if necessary (depending on the number of students), either December 14 or 21.

3. Short assignments, class attendance and class participation (30%)

Schedule of Lectures

1. September 7. Introduction to sustainable urban development and the sustainability framework
2. September 14. Trends in urban population growth and urbanization
3. September 21. Urban areas and global climate change
4. September 28. Measuring sustainability and indicators of sustainable urban development
5. October 5. Environmental justice, social equity and social dimensions of sustainability
6. October 12. Urban sprawl and smart growth
7. October 19. In-class midterm exam
8. October 26. Green buildings, green roofs and vertical farming
9. November 2. Urban poverty, infrastructure and slums
10. November 9. Sustainable transportation
11. November 16. Sustainable energy use
12. November 23. Sustainable urban planning and sustainable cities
13. November 30, December 7 and 21. Student presentations