COURSE DESCRIPTION

This class will explore issues of housing policy and planning issues at the national, state, and local level in the United States and draw comparisons with housing policies in other countries. Topics will be considered from multiple perspectives, including housing design and finance, community planning, economic and social inequity, operation and management, and environmental sustainability. This course is oriented towards the issues faced by local housing practitioners and policy analysts in the struggle to insure a decent, affordable home for all.

The course is divided into several parts. The first part explores the larger economic and political context of housing today including demographic and market issues. The second part of the course is a systematic review of major federal housing programs for homeownership and rental housing production. Next we turn to state and local policies and programs with an emphasis on the land use and regulatory powers of municipal and state governments in high growth areas and distressed inner city neighborhoods. Fourth is a section focusing on public housing and rental vouchers, followed by a look at various public and private approaches to improving America’s housing stock and meeting the shelter needs of all Americans. The final section offers a more in-depth exploration of how American housing policy differs from that of other countries.

OBJECTIVES

- To learn the basic tools of planning policy for housing in the U.S. with a comparative view of international housing policies
- To gain a sense of perspective in the history of efforts to provide safe, decent, and affordable housing to all Americans
- To apply the lessons learned to today’s housing needs by identifying key housing issues and formulating potential policy responses at local, state, and federal levels of government and in the private sector
- To develop skills in preparing and presenting policy matters to a public audience
There are two types of readings: the main selections listed first in each section, and the individual assignments which follow. Everyone will read the main selections and individual participants will be asked to read one of the additional readings each week and post a brief written précis of the article on the course website.

There are two textbooks for this class:

- Schwartz, Alex. 2014. *Housing Policy in the United States*. (Routledge, 3rd ed.)

**POSTINGS**

Because housing markets and policies are so much in the news, each week course participants are asked to locate and post an article or other contemporary news item (design image, website, etc.) on the course website and discuss it in class. Ideas for articles may come from local newspapers, the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, business and planning journals, architecture magazines, literary magazines (*New Yorker, Atlantic, Harpers*), etc. These items will be used to build the final policy statements.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

1. **Policy Memo**
   In this short exercise, students will have an opportunity to outline a policy issue assigned by the instructor and argue how this situation should be resolved in a manner that will maximize the benefit for all interested parties. (Maximum 750 words)

   **The Policy Memo is due on Friday, October 2, 2015.**

2. **Policy Statement (Term Paper)**
   Housing policy is at the forefront of current issues, with the recent turmoil in housing markets, the response of the Obama administration to develop policies to address this crisis, and the lack of resources available to cash-strapped state and local planning agencies. For this course, each student will prepare a policy statement on a particular issue of his or her own choosing. The policy statement is a 10-15 page paper that identifies important aspects of a policy issue and outlines specific policy goals and proposes a set of programs and/or policies that will address the problem(s) identified. Issues can be local, statewide, and national in scope and can examine any of the kinds of topics discussed in this course. Students are required to provide both a topic proposal early in the semester for instructor approval and a midpoint update to keep the research on track.

   **The term paper is due on Friday, December 12, 2015**
GRADING

1. Attendance and participation in discussion: 25%
2. Short Assignments: 25%
3. Term Project (Policy Paper): 50%
TOPICS LIST

Part I: Housing Markets, Problems, and Government Responses

Thur 9/10:  Introduction: Housing, Affordability, and Current Trends
Tues 9/15:  Housing Markets and Institutions I
Thur 9/17:  Housing Markets and Institutions II
Tues 9/22:  Housing Policy Paradigms and Analysis

Part II: Federal Policies and Programs

Thur 9/24:  A Brief History of Federal Housing Programs I
Assignment Due: Initial Policy Proposal
Tues 9/29:  A Brief History of Federal Housing Programs II
Thur 10/1:  The Culture of Homeownership: Dream and Nightmare I
Tues 10/6:  The Culture of Homeownership: Dream and Nightmare II
Thur 10/8:  Rental Housing
Assignment Due: Policy Memo
Tues 10/13: NO CLASS (Native American People’s Day)

Part III: On the Ground – State, Regional, and Local Policies and Programs

Thur 10/15:  State and Regional Programs for Housing Dev. and Preservation I
Tues 10/20:  State and Regional Programs for Housing Dev. and Preservation II
Assignment: Midpoint Policy Proposal
Thur 10/22:  Local Land Use Controls and Housing
Tues 10/27:  Community Development Corporations and CRA
Thur 10/29:  Public Housing
Tues 11/3:  Rental Vouchers
Thur 11/5:  NO CLASS (SACRPH)
Part IV: Planning Strategies for Providing Affordable Housing

Tues 11/10:  Housing Design and Strategies for Promoting Green Housing
Thur 11/12:  Residential Neighborhood Dynamics and Gentrification I
Tues 11/17:  Residential Neighborhood Dynamics and Gentrification II
Thur 11/19:  Fair Housing
Tues 11/24:  Homelessness and Special Needs Households
Thur 11/26:  NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)
Tues 12/1:  Comparative Policy: Latin America (Mexico)
Thur 12/3:  Comparative Policy: Asia (China)

Part V: Comparative Policy

Tues 12/8:  Presentations
Weds 12/10: Presentations

** Friday 12/12 - Assignment Due: Final Policy Proposal **