

Spring 2018
School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

11.302J/4.253J: Urban Design Politics

Units: 3-0-9 (H)

Prof. Lawrence Vale, Office: 10-497M, x3-0561, ljvale@mit.edu

Time: Mondays 3-6 p.m. in 10-401

Enrollment limited to 15 students, by permission of instructor

Office Hours: by appointment (via email)

This is a seminar about the ways that urban design contributes to the distribution of political power and resources in cities.

“Design,” in this view, is not some value-neutral aesthetic applied to efforts at urban development but is, instead, an integral part of the motives driving that development. Though many urban designers and architects often seem to regard “good design” as somehow independent from social and political factors affecting its production and use, design efforts are influenced by politics in at least two important ways. First, urban design proposals may be subject to challenge by a variety of groups during the planning process. Second, political values, whether tacit or explicit, are encoded in the resultant designs.

The class investigates the nature of the relations between built form and political purposes through close examination of a wide variety of situations where public and private sector design commissions and planning processes have been clearly motivated by political pressures, as well as situations where the political assumptions have remained more tacit. We will explore cases from both developed and developing countries.

Applying insights from architects, planners, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, and philosophers, we will analyze urban design from a variety of perspectives, including gender-based and class-based critiques. Cases discussed will include extreme examples of politically charged environments: Hitler’s megalomaniacal plan for Berlin and designs for new capital cities around the world (Washington, D.C., New Delhi, Canberra, Brasília, etc.). We will then explore less extreme settings for urban design-politics closer to home, by focusing on the origins and redevelopment of American public housing. Finally, the class will conclude with sessions exploring the design-politics of urban security and “urban resilience”—the attempt to rebuild (socially, politically, urbanistically) following sudden disasters.

The format of the class will be part slide lecture, part discussion. Participants will be responsible for four things: 1) Completion of readings in advance of each class; 2) Involvement in seminar discussions, including at least one short presentation; 3) A short paper that uses selected readings to extract the “design-politics” of a place or project; 4) A term paper on a topic analyzing both the design and political history of an urban design intervention, to be presented during the final sessions of the class. All final papers will be due on the date of the last class, though earlier submissions are welcome.

February 12

Introduction: Urban “Design-Politics”: From MIT to “The Capital of the World”

February 20 (Monday Classes Meet on Tuesday)

Three Perspectives on the Politics of Design

1. Political Science: How is political power constructed through space?

Murray Edelman, “Architecture, Spaces, and Social Order,” in Edelman, *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 73-90.

2. History: How is the past manipulated to serve the present?

Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” from Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 1-14.

3. Philosophy: How is meaning conveyed?

Nelson Goodman, “How Buildings Mean,” in Goodman and Catherine Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), pp. 31-48.

Optional: William Whyte, “How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture,” *History and Theory* 45, 2 (2006), 153-177.

4. Science and Technology Studies: Do Artifacts have politics?

Langdon Winner, “Do Artifacts Have Politics?” *Daedalus* 109,1 (Winter 1980):121-136.

Bernward Joerges, “Do Politics Have Artefacts,” *Social Studies of Science* 29 (3): 411-431 (1999).

February 26

Four More Perspectives on the Politics of Design

1. Gender Studies: How does gender affect design?

Daphne Spain, “Space and Status,” in *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill, NC: U. of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 1-29.

Susan Fainstein and Lisa J. Servon, "Introduction: The Intersection Between Planning and Gender," in Fainstein and Servon, eds., *Gender and Planning: A Reader* (Rutgers University Press, 2005), pp. 1-12.

Optional:

Helen Jarvis (with Paula Kantor and Jonathan Cloke) "Homes, Jobs, Communities and Networks" in *Cities and Gender* (Routledge, 2009), pp. 186-215).

2. Political Economy: Who benefits from urban development?

John R. Logan, and Harvey L. Molotch, "The Social Construction of Cities," in *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1987), pp. 1-12.

Optional:

Sharon Zukin, "Market, Place and Landscape," in *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 3-23.

3. Anthropology: Whose perspective matters?

Lisa Peattie, "Representation" in *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guayana* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), pp. 111-152.

4. Geography: How does urban space affect justice?

Edward W. Soja, "On the Production of Unjust Geographies," and "Building a Spatial Theory of Justice," in *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), pp. 31-66 and pp. 67-110.

First Paper Assigned: Due in Class March 12, but presented to the class on March 19.

March 5

The Political Extremes of Urban Design 1-- Berlin, From Pre-War to Post-Wall

Stephen Helmer, *Hitler's Berlin: The Speer Plans for Reshaping the Central City* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), pp. 27-48.

Albert Speer, "Responsibility and Response," *Journal of Architectural Education*, 32, 2 (1978), p. 18.

Martin Kitchen, "Germania," in *Speer: Hitler's Architect* (Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 57-100.

Brian Ladd, "Nazi Berlin," "Divided Berlin," and "Capital of the New Germany," in *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 127-235.

Michael Z. Wise, "Master Plan for a Government District," "Choosing a Chancellery," and "Norman Foster's Reichstag: Illuminating Shadows of the Past," in Wise, *Capital Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy* (Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), pp. 57-80, 121-134.

Karen Till, "Memory in the New Berlin," in *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place* (University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 193-228.

Jennifer Jordan, "Blank Slates and Authentic Traces: Memorial Culture in Berlin after 1945," in *Structures of Memory: Understanding Urban Change in Berlin and Beyond* (Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 23-58.

Optional:

Leon Krier, "Forward Comrades, We Must Go Back," *Oppositions* 24 (September 1981), pp. 26-37.

Joan Ockman, "The Most Interesting Form of Lie," *Oppositions* 24 (September 1981), pp. 38-47 (Response to Krier).

March 12

The Political Extremes of Urban Design 2--Capital Cities

Required reading:

Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008, 2nd edition), Chapters 3-5.

Göran Therborn, "Cities, Power and Modernity," in *Cities of Power: The Urban, The National, The Popular, the Global* (Verso, 2017), 7-32.

Carl Nightingale, "The Outer Limits of Colonial Urbanism," in *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (University of Chicago Press, 2012), 193-226.

Lawrence J. Vale, "Mediated Monuments and National Identity," *Journal of Architecture* (Winter 1999), pp. 391-408.

For further Reading:
Göran Therborn, *Cities of Power* (read all of it)

Michael Minkenberg, ed., *Power and Architecture: The Construction of Capitals and the Politics of Space* (Berghahn: 2014).

Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

Charles T. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority Through Architecture* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

March 19: **Discussion of Exercise 1**

March 26: **No Class: Spring Break**

April 2: **The Design-Politics of Developing Public Housing**

Lawrence J. Vale, "Standardizing Public Housing," in Eran Ben-Joseph and Terry Szold, eds. *Regulating Place: Standards and the Shaping of Urban America* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

Walter Gropius, "Sociological Premises for the Minimum Dwelling of Urban Industrial Populations," and "Houses, Walk-ups or Highrise Apartment Blocks?" from *The Scope of Total Architecture* (1955), pp. 104-35.

Lawrence J. Vale, "Building Selective Collectives," in *From the Puritans to the Projects: Public Housing and Public Neighbors* (Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 162-266

April 9: **The Design-Politics of Redeveloping Public Housing**

Karen A. Franck and Michael Mostoller, "From Courts to Open Space to Streets: Changes in the Site Design of U.S. Public Housing," *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 12,3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 186-220.

Peter Calthorpe, "HOPE VI and New Urbanism," in Henry Cisneros and Lora Engdahl, eds., *From Despair to Hope: HOPE VI and the New Promise of Public Housing in America's Cities* (Urban Institute Press, 2009), pp. 49-64.

Oscar Newman, "Housing Design and the Control of Behavior" and "Site-Planning Guidelines for Housing," from *Community of Interest* (1980), pp. 48-77 and 193-213.

April 16: **The Design-Politics of Urban Security**

Setha Low, “Unlocking the Gated Community,” in *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America* (Routledge, 2004), pp. 7-26.

Zaire Zenit Dinzey-Flores, “Fortress Gates of the Rich and Poor: Past and Present” and “Precaution: Security Knives in the Gates,” in *Locked In, Locked Out: Gated Communities in a Puerto Rican City* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 9-27 and 53-72.

Robert H. Nelson, “Introduction: A Constitutional Revolution,” in *Private Neighborhoods and the Transformation of Local Government* (Urban Institute Press, 2005), pp. 1-18.

Federal Emergency Management Agency, *Site and Urban Design for Security: Guidance Against Potential Terrorist Attacks, FEMA 430* (Washington, D.C.: FEMA, December 2007). *Skim chapters 1 and 4, downloadable from <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=3135>.*

Jon Coaffee, David Murakami Wood, and Peter Rogers, “Controlling the Risky City” and “The Intensification of Control: Towards Urban Resilience,” in *The Everyday Resilience of the City: How Cities Respond to Terrorism and Disaster* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. 67-109.

April 23: No Class—Patriots’ Day

April 30:

The Design-Politics of Urban Resilience

Lawrence J. Vale and Thomas J. Campanella, “Introduction: The Cities Rise Again,” and “Conclusion: Axioms of Resilience,” from *The Resilient City: How Modern Cities Recover from Disaster* (Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 3-23 and 335-355.

Jon Coaffee, David Murakami Wood, and Peter Rogers, “States of Protection and Emergency: The Rise of Resilience,” in *The Everyday Resilience of the City: How Cities Respond to Terrorism and Disaster* (Palgrave Macmillan 2008), pp. 110-132.

Ashley Dawson, “The Jargon of Resilience,” in *Extreme Cities: The Peril and Promise of Urban Life in the Age of Climate Change* (Verso, 2017), 152-187.

Jeff Goodell, "Climate Apartheid," in *The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities, and the Remaking of the Civilized World* (Little Brown, 2017), pp. 213-232.

Naomi Klein, "Blanking the Beach: The Second Tsunami" and "Disaster Apartheid: A World of Green Zones and Red Zones," in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Metropolitan Books, 2007), pp. 385-422.

Lawrence J. Vale, "The Politics of Resilient Cities: Whose Resilience and Whose City?" *Building Research and Information* (February 2014), 1-11.

May 7

Student Presentations 1

May 14

Student Presentations 2

Assistance with Writing

The **WCC at MIT** (Writing and Communication Center) offers **free** one-on-one **professional** advice from **communication** experts. The WCC is staffed completely by MIT lecturers. All have advanced degrees. All are experienced college classroom teachers of communication. All are all are published scholars and writers. Not counting the WCC's director's years (he started the WCC in 1982), the WCC lecturers have a combined 133 years' worth of teaching here at MIT (ranging from 4 to 24 years). The WCC works with **undergraduate, graduate students, post-docs, faculty, staff, alums, spouses and partners**. The WCC helps you strategize about all types of academic and professional writing as well as about all aspects of oral presentations (including practicing classroom presentations & conference talks as well as designing slides). **No matter what department or discipline you are in**, the WCC helps you think your way more deeply into your topic, helps you see new implications in your data, research, and ideas. The WCC also helps with all **English as Second Language** issues, from writing and grammar to pronunciation and conversation practice. The WCC is located in **E18-233**, 50 Ames Street). To guarantee yourself a time, make an appointment. To register with our online scheduler and to make appointments, go to <https://mit.mywconline.com/>. To access the WCC's many pages of advice about writing and oral presentations, go to <http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/>. Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.

Departmental Note on Disabilities and Academic Misconduct:

Disabilities

If you have a documented disability, or any other problem you think may affect your ability to perform in class, please see me early in the semester so that arrangements may be made to accommodate you.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you

did not write yourself, or (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism.