MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
Course 11.401  
Introduction to Housing, Community, and Economic Development

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Class meetings: Tuesday/Thursday, 9:30-11AM, Room 9-450A

Course objectives. This course provides students a critical introduction to: social and economic inequality in America; equitable development as a response framework for planners; social capital and community building as planning concepts; and the history, development, and current prospects of the fields of housing (with an emphasis on affordability and inclusion) and local economic development. We consider multiple scales but primarily the neighborhood, city/town, and metro region. We will explore contextual factors that continue to define these fields: the often limited scale and scope of intervention relative to the challenges (including: persistent unemployment of less skilled workers, discrimination based on race and other factors, mass incarceration, increasing income and wealth disparities, climate change, and more); frequent lack of agreement on specific goals and operating models; political isolation of the poor and lack of steady financial support; and uneven operating capacity, hard-to-measure impacts, and other persistent barriers to effective implementation of policies and programs. Throughout the course we will highlight the importance of creativity, innovation and strategic leverage, both political and programmatic, in light of the factors mentioned above. Finally, the course helps students formulate a professional development agenda for themselves, for use at DUSP and beyond.

Class Participation and Assignments. This is a largely discussion-based, rather than lecture-based, course. We expect students to be well prepared and to participate actively in class discussions, with well-supported arguments (not just opinions) and effort to build on and react to the arguments of classmates and faculty. The quality of your participation will make up 25% of your final course grade. There are two major assignments: a midterm exam (30%) and team project briefing (35%), detailed in “Homework” on Stellar. Students will also submit short weekly posts to the Forum section of our course website (10%).

Forum Posts. The purposes of this weekly writing requirement are to encourage continuous, critical engagement with the material and to provide more space for exchange. Your posts will generally be succinct (200-300 word) reactions, in the form of a clear and supported argument. Your posts can be made at any time during the week but no later than Sunday at noon.
**Required Texts**


**Other Readings** (selected)


COURSE SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

NOTE: This sequence is subject to change. When preparing for class, consult Stellar for detailed schedule, reading assignments, and more.

Part I: Foundations. Key demographic, economic, and political trends affecting urban areas; major controversies tied to equity and equitable development.

1. (September 5) Introductory Class: The “just city” in context: trends, dilemmas, scales (neighborhood, city/town, region).

2. (September 10) The Just City: equitable development concepts and cross-national comparisons

3. (September 12) Population shifts and segregation: race/ethnicity, migration, aging, the workforce

4. (September 17) Labor and income inequality: institutional vs. other factors

5. (September 19) Wealth and the political economy of inequality

6. (September 24) Civic context: engagement and political representation

7. (September 26) The nature of community in 21st century America: networks, places, social capital.

Part II: Community-based organizing and development: Contrasting approaches to community development: social movement building and program and policy development, debates and complementarities.

8. (October 1) History and development: politics and program

9. (October 3) Institutional context: CDCs and other CBOs, intermediaries, government, foundations/donors, labor unions and other, private partners

Midterm exam due October 6th at noon

10. (October 8) Governance at multiple scales (neighborhood, city, region): issues of representation, accountability, co-production, coalitions, power

Part III: Affordable and inclusionary housing and homeownership

11. (October 10) Housing markets and policy (A): supply and demand fundamentals, shifting preferences, efficiency and affordability outcomes.
October 14-15th – No class, Columbus Day Holiday

12. (October 17) Housing markets and policy (B)
13. (October 22) Rental housing: supply and demand-side logics, ideology

Detailed team problem statement due October 23rd at 9AM

14. (October 24) From income concentration to mixed-income housing. Guest: Larry Vale.
15. (October 29) Demand side: Assisted housing mobility, vouchers
16. (October 31) Supply side: fair and inclusionary housing and smart growth
17. (November 5) Housing finance system and affordable homeownership
18. (November 7) Alternative housing models: land trusts and more

Part IV: Local economic development

19. (November 12) Introduction to LED
20. (November 14) Workforce development and cooperative enterprise
22. (November 21) Job quality and upgrading. Guest: Paul Osterman
23. (November 26) Toward the healthy city

November 28th – No class, Thanksgiving Vacation

24. (December 3) Fostering and upgrading manufacturing
25. (December 5) Regional competitiveness, clusters and neighborhood linkages

Part V: Wrapping up

26. (December 9) Final class: Course review

Evening sessions: Final team briefings, December 10-11