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

Syllabus

Course Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am to 11:00 am, 9-451.

Faculty: Prof. Justin Steil
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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00pm to 5:20pm
Please sign up on electronically: http://dusp.mit.edu/oh.
Please do not email me to set up a time unless you have a permanent conflict with Tuesdays and Thursdays between 4:00pm and 5:20pm.

Course Description:
This course provides a critical introduction to the shape and determinants of political, social, and economic inequality in urban America, and the history, development, and current prospects of the fields of housing and local economic development.

The course begins with an exploration of the way cities are used to imagine and advance utopian visions. What is justice and what does it mean in the specifically urban context? It then explores ways in which housing and community economic development policy relate to current discussions of economic and racial inequality and neighborhood change. The second section of the course situates housing and community development policy within their historical, political, and institutional contexts. What is the relationship between federal policy and private, non-profit or social movement activism? What are the implications of the historical trajectory of federal, state, and local urban policies for poverty, economic inequality, and racial disparities in access to opportunity? The third section of the course provides an introduction to housing policy in the United States, particularly policies designed to produce affordable housing. It explores federal policy related to private, market-rate owner and renter occupied housing; private subsidized housing; and public housing. It also presents state, local, and non-profit led strategies to create and preserve affordable housing, such as fair share requirements and builder’s remedies, inclusionary zoning, and community land trusts.

The fourth section of the course provides an introduction to community economic development policy in the United States, particularly policies focusing on small business development, low-wage workers, and economic democracy. It begins by examining theories of economic development and drivers of economic inequality. It then explores local business development,
job upgrading, and economic equity policies, as well as movements for more cooperative and 
democratic economic structures. The fifth section of the course uses an analysis of scale to 
situate housing and economic development policies in the context of federalism. Why focus on 
local governments and local policy? What is the balance between particularism and 
universalism? What role does local government law and municipal fragmentation play in 
perpetuating inequality in access to opportunity? The final section of the course explores the 
role of the state in social welfare and the role of collective action in advancing access to 
opportunity.

Throughout the semester, optional, recommended readings provide examples of how 
these issues are being addressed in Boston, in other cities in the United States, and 
internationally.

Class Participation:

This is a discussion-based, rather than lecture-based, course. Students should be well 
prepared to participate actively in class discussions, with well-supported arguments based on 
the readings (not just opinions), and should make an effort to build on and react to the 
arguments of classmates and faculty. The quality of your participation will make up 15% of 
your final course grade.

Assignments:

Requirements and grading are as follows:

• In-class participation (15%). Be prepared, ask questions, make arguments supported by the 
readings, listen to each other.

• A brief weekly response paper of roughly 500 words each (25%). These should present a 
critical assessment of the assigned material and not a mere restatement of content. The 
responses give you an opportunity to analyze key ideas that cut across readings, identify 
questions the readings prompt you to ask, suggest critiques of the data, methodology, or 
conclusions, or raise concepts you want to clarify. You will be expected to submit one 
response per week via the Forum section of Stellar, either on Monday at 3:00 pm, discussing 
the Tuesday readings, or Wednesday at 3:00 pm, discussing the Thursday readings. No 
response paper is expected in the first or last weeks, therefore a total of 11 responses should be 
submitted. The responses will be graded on a √+, √, √- scale. A “√+” will count for 5 out of 5 
points, a “√” 4 out of 5 points, and a “√-” 3 out of 5 points.

• Current event presentation (10%). Pick two weeks to present, in pairs. Briefly present a 
current event relevant to that week’s readings and facilitate a 15 minute discussion exploring 
how the readings shed light on that event.

• OPTIONAL assignment - Tremont/Washington Street walk (Extra credit - 5%). In 
groups of 2 or 3, walk from the Chinatown T station to Dudley Station (about 2 miles). 
Observe and document some of the physical, economic, cultural, organizational, and social 
assets you observe, both visually and in any interactions or conversations you have with 
merchants, passersby, or people waiting for transit (please don’t conduct interviews, but 
striking up a casual conversation is encouraged). Pick one of the neighborhoods that you have
walked through – Chinatown, the South End, or Lower Roxbury. How would you characterize that neighborhood’s primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats? What external threats and opportunities facing the area as a whole may play out in that neighborhood? Write 500-700 words briefly summarizing your analysis, with 1-3 tables of relevant data from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey that reinforce your points. **Due on Stellar Sunday, September 10 at 5:00 pm.**

- **Midterm Exam** (20%). A take-home midterm exam will comprise 25% of your grade. Midterms will be graded anonymously. Please do not put your name on your midterm. **Due on Stellar Friday, October 6 at 5:00 pm.**

- **Research Paper or Project of Change Proposal** (25%). Beginning in week four, students should form groups of not more than four students to work collaboratively on either 1) a final research paper or 2) a proposal for a project that responds to a contemporary issue in housing or community economic development. The research paper or the project of change may be designed in collaboration with a local community-based organization, public agency, or by the team without outside consultation. A preliminary outline or description for the paper or project is due on **Friday, September 29, at 5:00 pm**. The preliminary outline should be 500-800 words and should describe (1) the question or problem that is the subject of the proposed research paper or project of change, (2) the theoretical concepts from the course relevant to answering the question or making the change, (3) the data (qualitative, quantitative, or archival) relevant to answering that question or designing the project, and (4) the methods of analysis or intervention that will be used. The final research paper or project of change proposal is due on **Friday, December 1 at 5:00 pm** and should not exceed 2,500 words.

- **Final Presentation** (5%). Over the last 3 days of class, each group will present their research to their classmates in a prepared presentation not to exceed 12 minutes. Presentations will be evaluated on their content, organization, delivery, and ability to end on time.

**Grading Rubric**
The following grading rubric will be applied to evaluate written submissions:

I) **Does it answer the question? (30%)**
   i. Does it have a clear thesis that is responsive to the question?
   ii. Does it support this thesis with appropriate evidence?

II) **Does it incorporate concepts and methodologies from the assigned readings? (40%)**
   i. Does it interpret and apply those readings correctly?
   ii. Does it add original critiques and analyses of those readings?

III) **Does it present an original argument? (20%)**
    i. Does it display critical thinking?
    ii. Does it offer innovative insights?

IV) **Does it present a compelling, well-structured argument? (10%)**
   i. Does it have a logical structure that supports the development of the thesis?
   ii. Does it engage with counter-arguments and acknowledge weaknesses?
**Grading Scale**

Grades are assigned using the following scale:

- **A+** 97-100
- **A** 94-96
- **A-** 90-93
- **B+** 87-89
- **B** 83-86
- **B-** 80-82
- **C+** 77-79
- **C** 73-76
- **C-** 70-72

**Late submissions**

All submissions should be submitted via Stellar.

In the event that medical or other personal circumstances arise that interfere with your ability to complete assignments on time, extension requests can be made to the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education (http://odge.mit.edu). If the ODGE decides that an extension is warranted, they will send a generic note that your assignment deadline should be extended without penalty. This policy is intended to preserve your privacy.

Any assignment submitted after the deadline, without a request for an extension that was approved by ODGE, will be marked down 5 points out of 100. Any assignment more than 3 hours late will be marked down a further 10 points. A further 10 points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late.

**Writing help**

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, and spouses. 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/](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/](http://cmsw.mit.edu/writing-and-communication-center/). Check the online scheduler for up-to-date hours and available appointments.

**Academic integrity**

Fundamental to the academic work you do at MIT is an expectation that you will make choices that reflect integrity and responsible behavior. Honesty is the foundation of good academic work. Do trust the value of your own intellect and credit others for their work. Do not copy ideas or phrases without citing them appropriately. Do not submit projects or papers that have been written for a previous class. See [https://integrity.mit.edu/](https://integrity.mit.edu/).
Safe and Equitable Learning Environment:
MIT is dedicated to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the Institute. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Title IX Office. This is important for the safety of the whole MIT community. Violence Prevention & Response’s hotline, 617-253-2300, provides 24/7 confidential support. Please visit https://titleix.mit.edu/ for more information on reporting options and other resources.

Optional Field Trips:
There will be several optional field trips associated with the course tentatively scheduled for the following dates:

- Cambridge Housing Authority (Tuesday, 9/26, 3-5pm)
- Quincy Heights and CommonWealth Kitchen (Thursday, 9/28, 3-5pm)
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (Thursday, 10/19, 3-5pm)
- City Life / Vida Urbana (Tuesday, 11/28 from 6-8pm)

Optional Movies:
We will screen several optional movies with themes related to the course tentatively scheduled for the following dates:

- Eyes on the Prize: The Keys to the Kingdom (1974-1980) (Tuesday 9/12 at 7:45 pm)
- Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street (Tuesday 9/19 at 7:45 pm)
- The Bus Riders Union (Tuesday 11/14 at 7:45 pm)
- Palante Siempre Palante (Tuesday 12/5 at 7:45 pm)

Optional Community meetings you could attend:
To provide context for the materials discussed in class, you may be interested in attending some community meetings. Below are several that could be particularly interesting, but any meetings would be worthwhile.

- Boston City Council – Wednesdays at 12:00 pm
- Cambridge City Council – Mondays at 5:30 pm
- Somerville Board of Alderman – 2nd and 4th Thursdays at 7:00 pm
- Boston Planning and Development Agency– select Thursdays at 3:30 pm
- City Life/Vida Urbana – Tuesdays at 6:15 pm at 284 Amory Street, Jamaica Plain
**Part I: Introduction**

1. **Visions of the City** (Thursday, September 7)
   Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney. 2013. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. Wivenhoe: Undercommons. Read Chapter 5: Planning and Policy, pp. 73-82. (9 pages)
   Solnit, Rebecca. 2016. *Hope is an Embrace of the Unknown*. The Guardian, July 15, 2016. (9 pages)

   **Recommended:**
   **Boston**
   **Other U.S.**
   **International**

   **Sunday, September 10 at 5pm – OPTIONAL Tremont/Washington Street Walk**
   **assignment due**

2. **Justice and the City** (Tuesday, September 12)

   **Recommended:**
   **Boston**
   **Other U.S.**
International

3. Urban Inequality of Wealth and Income (Thursday, September 14)

Recommended:
Boston

Other U.S.

International

4. Urban Inequality of Neighborhood and Opportunity (Tuesday, September 19)

**Recommended:**

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**


**International**


**Part II: The Context of Housing and Community Development Policy**

5. **Historical Context** (Thursday, September 21) (MCP2s on Project of Change)


**Recommended:**

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**

6. Institutional Context (Tuesday, September 26)

Recommended:

Boston

Other U.S.

International

7. Political Context (Thursday, September 28)

Jacobs, Lawrence and Theda Skocpol, eds. 2007. *Inequality and American Democracy: What We Know and What We Need to Learn*. New York: Russell Sage. Read Chapter 1, pp. 1-18. (18 pages)

**Recommended:**

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**


**International**


**PROJECT OF CHANGE:** The preliminary outline of your project of change is due Friday, September 29, at 5:00 pm.

**Part III: Housing Policy**

8. **Introduction to Housing Markets and Policy** (Tuesday, October 3)


Recommended:

**Boston**
City of Boston. 2014. *Housing A Changing City: Boston 2030*. Available at:  

Other U.S.

International

Reports
Joint Center for Housing Studies. 2017. *The State of the Nation’s Housing*. Executive Summary, pp. 1-6. Available at: [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state_nations_housing](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/research/state_nations_housing)

**MIDTERM:** Midterm assignment will be handed out in class on Tuesday, October 3 and will be due on Stellar at 5:00 pm on Friday, October 6.

9. **Private subsidized housing** (Thursday, October 5) (Amy Schectman?)
O’Regan, Katherine and Keren M. Horn. 2012. “What Can We Learn about the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program by Looking at the Tenants?” Furman Center Housing Policy Brief. (8 pages)
Recommended:

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**


**International**


**MIDTERM: Midterm assignment due on Stellar at 5:00 pm on Friday, October 6.**

10. **Private market-rate owned and rented housing** (Thursday, October 12) (Laura Delgado)


Recommended:

**Boston**


Other U.S.

International

11. Gentrification (Tuesday, October 17) (Lisa Owens)
Albee, Allison, Rebecca Johnson, and Jeffrey Lubell. 2015. “Preserving, Protecting, and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health.” ChangeLab Solutions. Read pp. 18-55. (47 pages)

Recommended:
Boston

Other U.S.

International

12. Public housing (Thursday, October 19) (Larry Vale)
Vale, Lawrence J. (video lecture) “Public Housing in the United States: Public Housing, Neighborhood Renewal and the Poor (or, Some Things to Think About Before Thinking About ‘Mixed-Income’ Housing).”
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Choice Neighborhoods program webpage (see link on Stellar)

Recommended:
Boston

Other U.S.

International
13. State, Local, and Private Affordability Mechanism (Tuesday, October 24)

Fair Share

Inclusionary zoning

Community Land Trusts

Social Housing

Recommended:
Boston

Other U.S.

International

Part IV: Community Economic Development

14. Job Quality and Upgrading (Thursday, October 26) (Paul Osterman)
Osterman, Paul. 2011. Good Jobs America: Making Work Better for Everyone. New York: Russell Sage. Read selections from Chapter 1, Chapter 4, selections from Chapter 5,
selections from Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8, pp.1-8, 15-17, 48-69, 81-88, 101-133. (74 pages)

**Recommended:**

**Boston**

**Other U.S.**

**15. Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development** (Tuesday, October 31) (Karl Seidman)
Explore (see guidance below) the nation’s major small business portal operated by the Small Business Administration: [www.smallbusiness.gov](http://www.smallbusiness.gov)

**Recommended:**

**Boston**

**Other U.S.**

**International**

**16. Economic Equity and Inclusion** (Thursday, November 2) (Karilyn Crockett?)


**Recommended:**

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**


17. **Solidarity Economies** (Tuesday, November 7) (Aaron Tanaka and Nia Evans)


**Recommended:**

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**


18. Drivers of Economic Inequality (Thursday, November 9)


Recommended:

**Boston**


**Other U.S.**


**International**


**Part V: Local Governments, Housing, Neighborhoods**

19. **Scale** (Tuesday, November 14)

**Recommended:**
Boston
Massachusetts Home Rule Amendment, Article LXXXIX. Available at: [https://www.mma.org/sites/default/files/resources/article89_0.pdf](https://www.mma.org/sites/default/files/resources/article89_0.pdf)

**Other U.S.**

**International**

20. **Neighborhood Effects, Municipal Fragmentation, and Local Government Law**  
(Thursday, November 16)

**Recommended:**
Boston
Boston City Charter. Read pages 4-12; skim 19-28 and 32-37.
Other U.S.

21. Segregation, Exclusionary Zoning, and Fair Housing (Tuesday, November 21)

Recommended:
Boston
Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. 2009. Affirmative Fair Housing and Civil Rights Policy. Available at: www.mass.gov/hed/docs/dhcd/hd/fair/affirmativefairhousingp.pdf
Metropolitan Area Planning Council. 2014. Fair Housing and Equity Assessment for Metropolitan Boston.

Other U.S.
Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, 80 Federal Register 42272 (July 16, 2015). Skim pages 42, 348-42, 371 only. (23 pages)
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs v. The Inclusive Communities Project, 13-1371.
**Part VI: Conclusion**

**22. Bringing the State Back In** (Tuesday, November 28)

**Recommended:**

**23. Collective Action** (Thursday, November 30)

**Recommended:**
**Other U.S.**
Dean, Amy B. 2013. “How Domestic Workers Won Their Rights: Five Big Lessons.” *Yes!,* October 9, 2013

**International**
PROJECT OF CHANGE: The final research paper or project of change proposal is due Friday, December 1, at 5:00 pm.

24. Student presentations (Tuesday, December 5)

25. Student presentations (Thursday, December 7)

26. Student presentations (Tuesday, December 12)