

Columbia University
Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation
Fall, 2017
PLAN A6014 Tuesday, 11am- 1pm, 300 Avery
Ethel Sheffer, FAICP, insightsheffer@mindspring.com

PUBLIC SPACE AND THE PRIVATE REALM

Course Description: The planning and shaping of the public realm has always been important in the evolution and growth of cities. Successful cities are often judged on the quality of their public space and dense cities are thought to work well if they can accommodate a variety of urban experiences from leisurely pursuits and functional activities to political expression.

Usually included in public spaces are streets, sidewalks, parks, public squares and plazas. Recently, new definitions of public space have become part of the private and public realm, including waterfronts, indoor spaces, below ground spaces, and former railroad viaducts and elevated structures which have been re-purposed into new uses and activities. Temporary spaces have been created in communities for a publicly agreed purpose and limited time frame. Another important hybrid category is the privately owned public space, which has been created at the intersection of private zoning incentives and public benefit. Increasingly, privately managed public parks with new financing and design practices have been established with the support of government. These last two examples illustrate changing definitions and examples of public/private spaces.

This course will focus on multiple types of physical spaces and will deal with issues of design, uses, management and financing. Key questions will include how planning theory can inform good practices; how competing claims might be reconciled about contested space; how the success of a public space can be measured; how the balance between private sector involvement and “publicness” can be determined, and how accessible public spaces can encourage democratic societies.

During the semester, students will have the opportunity to study specific examples of public spaces through individual and group field observations and analysis. The class will also be introduced to the literature on public spaces through a combination of lectures and student discussion. There will be some direct interaction with planning and government officials, designers, and community and civic advocates

READINGS

Many of the required and recommended readings are noted under each topic and are available on line and on Courseworks.

There is one book of readings from which we will select several essays in the course of the semester. It is Anthony M. Oram and Zachary P. Neal, (eds.) *Common Ground: Readings and Reflections on Public Space*. Routledge, Taylor and Francis, New York, 2010. It is available at Book Culture Book Store for purchase and some of the essays may also be available on Courseworks..

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

In general, the classes will be conducted as a mixture of lectures, student participation and group discussion.

Below are the written assignments.

1, A short paper of 5-6 pages plus 2 pages of photographs. Students will choose a public space in New York City, e.g. a privately owned public space (or POPS), a plaza, an indoor space, a small park and will write a description and assessment of its features, functioning and “success”. **This paper is due on October 17th**. The readings in the first six weeks can provide the background for your field observations and for the paper, and the instructor will provide assistance in your choice of a space to study and in the approach to your personal observations.

2. Final Project- A 15- page research paper related to the subject of the course. The paper topic and approach will be developed in consultation with the instructor.

Paper topic and outline (2 pages) due on October 24th

Class presentations of draft written paper presented on November 28 and December 5

Final written paper due on December 11

3. Visitors and Speakers

We expect to benefit from the work of some experts and advocates in the field, as noted below. The schedules of those visits may be subject to change.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

September 5: Introduction:

(No assignment)

September 12: Definitions and Varieties of Public Space

Readings:

1. In Oram and Neal: "Locating Public Space" by Zachary Neal, pp.1-12,
2. In Oram and Neal: "Introduction to Public Space as Civil Order" by Anthony Oram, pp.13-17
3. Michael Kimmelman, "The Craving for Public Squares", New York Review of Books, April 16, 2016 <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/04/07/craving-for-public-squares/>

In addition to completing the above readings, it is recommended that students in small groups or individually take a walk in the city near where they live or work or play and then create a short description of the experience as it connects with the important definitions and models contained in these essays. We will share these personal experiences in class.

September 19: Urban Images, Mental images, Social Interaction

Readings:

1. In Oram and Neal: Jane Jacobs, excerpts from *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, pp.18-31;
2. H. Lefebvre, "Social Space" Courseworks
4. Kevin Lynch, "The City Image and its Elements", excerpts from the *Image of the City* (Courseworks)

Recommended

1. Amanda Burden, Former Chair of New York City Planning Commission, A TED Talk "How Public Space Makes Cities Work" (Courseworks)

September 26 Urban Design and Public Space

Readings:

1. In Oram and Neal, William H. Whyte, "The Social Life of Small Social Spaces", pp.32-39
2. William H. Whyte, "The Design of Spaces", excerpts (Courseworks)
3. William Whyte's film <https://archive.org/details/SmallUrbanSpaces>

4. Jan Gehl, "Three Types of Outdoor Activities and "Life Between Buildings" (Courseworks)

Recommended

Matthew Carmona, "The Place-Shaping Continuum: A Theory of Urban Design Process" Journal of Urban Design, 2014 (Courseworks)

October 3 Public and Private Space: Inclusion, Exclusion

Readings:

1. In Oram and Neal: Sharon Zukin, "Whose Culture? Whose City?" pp.110-117
2. Jeremy Nemeth "Controlling the Commons: How Public is Public Space" Urban Affairs Review, 2012 Courseworks
3. Ali Madanipour, "Social Exclusion and Space" (Courseworks)
4. In Oram and Neal, Mike Davis, "Fortress L.A." pp.100-109

Recommended

In Oram and Neal: M.P. Baumgartner, "The Moral Order of Strangers," pp.49-55

October 10 Planning, Zoning and Public Space

Readings:

1. In Oram and Neal, Gregory Smithson, "Bonus Plazas and the Creation of Public Space", pp.118-128
2. Kayden, et al. "Privately Owned Public Space: The New York City Experience" (History, Law, Design, Operation and Enforcement).pp.5-41 (Courseworks)
3. NYC.gov: Department of City Planning, "Zoning" definitions; sections on Public Plazas and Privately Owned Public Space (**these zoning sections and regulations are cited for background and reference**)

October 17 New York City and Privately Owned Public Space (POPS)

Guest, Douglas Woodward , urban planner, formerly of the NYC Department of City Planning, expert on POPS

Readings :

1. Continued reading and discussion of NYC POPS regulations as listed in readings for October 10th
2. POPS PowerPoint presentation, NYC Department of City Planning, (Courseworks)

3. 2017 New York City Council new regulations on POPS (Courseworks)
4. Controversy over required amenities in Trump Tower (newspaper articles, and links will be posted on Courseworks)
5. East Midtown Development and New Public Space – Approved in August, 2017 (Selected on-line summaries of this major development and provision of public space)

October 24 Communities and Placemaking

1. Class visit with Fred Kent, President, Project for Public Space (a nonprofit organization that helps communities create public spaces) www.pps.org

2. A different community example from the Lower East Side, Mapping Tool Aims to Keep Public Spaces Public <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/new-platform-maps-nycommons-parks>

October 31 New Paradigms of Public Space: Reclaiming Spaces

Visitor: Susan Chin, Executive Director of The Design Trust for Public Space, (to be confirmed)

Readings:

1. On web site of Design Trust for Public Space, designtrust.org, *Under the Elevated, Phase I and Phase 2*
2. “High time for the Low Line, Architects Newspaper, September 13, 2012 , (Courseworks)
3. “The lowline is not a park” Curbed, August 8, 2016, Courseworks
4. (a brief essay about reclaimed space in Delhi) This Design Rethinks the Space Beneath Train Tracks <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/urban-design-space-under-train-tracks-in-cities>

Recommended:

1. The High Line web page
2. Laura Bliss, <https://www.citylab.com/solutions/2017/02/the-high-lines-next-balancing-act-fair-and-affordable-development/515391/>

November 7 Election Day, No class

November 14 Sidewalks, Streets, Security, Conflicts

Readings:

1. Michael Sorkin ,”The Sidewalks of New York City” (Courseworks)

2. Jeremy Nemeth, "Conflict, Exclusion, Relocation: Skateboarding and Public Space", *Journal of Urban Design*, 2006 (Courseworks)
3. NYC Department of City Planning "Active Design, The Sidewalk Experience, Tools and Resources", www.nyc.gov
4. NYC Department of City Planning, "Security for Pedestrians" (Courseworks)
5. Lisa Benton-Short, "Bollards, bunkers, and barriers: Securing the National Mall in Washington, DC," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (2007), pp. 424-446

November 21 Speech, Protest, Expression

1. In Oram and Neal: Don Mitchell, "The End of Public Space: Definitions of the Public, and Democracy" pp.83-99
2. Michael Kimmelman, Foreword to *Beyond Zucotti Park; Freedom of Assembly and the Occupation of Public Space* 2012 (Courseworks)
3. Peter Marcuse, "Occupy and the Provision of Public Space: The City's Responsibilities" (Courseworks) and Peter Marcuse Blog on Public Space (on line)
4. Signe Nielsen, "Designed to be Occupied" (Courseworks)
5. In Oram and Neal, Caroline Levine: "The Paradox of Public Art: Democratic Space, the Avant-Garde, and Richard Serra's "Tilted Arc", pp.164-172

November 28 Student Presentations

December 5 Student Presentations(continued) and wrap –up