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AN EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR
EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN PLANNING

by

Jacob R. Schlange

A THESIS

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AN EDUCATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR
EQUITY AND INCLUSION IN PLANNING

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University of Nebraska, 2022

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As societal discourse about equity has increased, so has the need for planning practitioners to be educated about equity-related issues. This study examines the planning curricula of the 22 land-grant institutions accredited by the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) to assess whether these programs align with the new emphasis on equity in the most recent PAB accreditation standards. Finding a notable lack of required courses explicitly addressing the topic among most of the programs surveyed, this thesis goes on to propose a framework for developing a course on equity in planning, using existing literature on planning education and guidance from the American Planning Association (APA) and PAB. The resulting framework builds on existing equity-centric courses that have traditionally been focused on race or class, exploring the inclusion in urban spaces (or lack thereof) of other identities – immigrant/refugee status, disability, gender, and age among them.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For the United States, 2020 was a year of reckoning. Amidst a global pandemic, the country faced an inflection point in the consideration of racial and gendered inequities across all aspects of American society. The murder of George Floyd at the hands of a Minneapolis Police Department officer in May 2020 sparked protests in the Twin Cities that rapidly spread throughout the country and around the world. These protests have raised awareness about the many ways that the systems we encounter every day in America can perpetuate inequality and reinforce disparities of experience and opportunity. Importantly, these protests have also been the impetus for many Americans to begin grappling with the reality of these disparities – often for the first time – and have initiated important conversations across nearly every sector of American life about how to take a more equitable path forward.

While community and regional planning practitioners have long recognized the importance of equity, planning professionals and educators are increasingly taking part in the broader societal discourse about equity and inclusion within the field, acknowledging that while planning can be critical to creating livable, equitable cities, it has also at times fueled inequality and injustice. Planners, elected and appointed city officials, and other urban leaders make decisions every day that affect who gets included in urban spaces and who does not. Sometimes purposefully and sometimes inadvertently, the design and policy choices made in cities have too often led to inequitable outcomes for people of various identities, including but not limited to: race and ethnicity, national origin or immigration status, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and age.

While prioritizing inclusion in planning is admirable, significant progress can only truly occur when an emphasis on equity is paired with education. Future planners must be made aware of the diverse interests and identities who will be affected by their planning work. They must confront the complicated history of how planning has at times worked at odds with achieving equitable outcomes. Crucially, they must also learn about the tools and solutions that planning offers for crafting a more equitable future. Writing in 2015, Willow Lung-Amam, et al., acknowledged that young planners are “far more educated about and aware of the importance of equity and advocacy planning than fifty years ago,” but asserted that there were “serious gaps in students’ and educators’ knowledge about how to put these principles in action in diverse communities”.¹ Certainly, the events of 2020 have done much to raise awareness – but have we come far enough in bridging these gaps?

This thesis project poses an important question: Is planning education and curriculum keeping pace with the current societal discourse around equity and inclusion? If (as this author will suggest) the answer to this question is that planning education is *not* adequately addressing equity, the logical follow-up question becomes: What framework might be used for providing students with a much-needed and long-overdue primer on equity problems and solutions in planning? This thesis proposes a framework that might be employed for educating students about how various identities are included (or excluded) as a result of planning and will make recommendations about suggested core readings (see Appendix B) and signature assessments (see Appendices C and D) that could be used in developing a course with such an aim.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

ASSESSING CURRENT PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

To pursue this line of research, it is first essential to define what is meant by the term “equity” in planning. The American Planning Association (APA), in its *Planning for Equity Policy Guide*, defined equity as “just and fair inclusion into a society in which all can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Unlocking the promise of the nation by unleashing the promise in us all.”² The APA goes on to say that equity should be considered and applied “in all facets of planning, all levels of planning, all means of planning, and in all planning policies.”³ With these words, not only does the APA assert unequivocal support for the consideration and prioritization of equity in planning, but also makes a clear statement about who should be included in an equitable society: namely, everyone.

With such an unambiguous emphasis on equity from the nation’s preeminent professional organization for planners, it seems reasonable to expect that a significant focus be placed on equity in planning education – but has that proven true? To answer this question requires an examination of the educational standards of the Planning Accreditation Board (PAB). The PAB is the body that accredits university programs throughout North America for bachelor’s and master’s degrees in planning. The PAB makes its assessments based on standards developed in consultation with the APA and other sponsoring organizations.⁴

The 78 accredited master’s programs in planning across Canada and the United States are currently evaluated using accreditation standards and criteria adopted by the PAB in March 2017.⁵ In addition to outlining some specific required components of a

planning curriculum, including particular planning knowledge and skills that all graduates of a program should demonstrate, the 2017 PAB accreditation standards also required that accredited programs incorporate several values and ethics into their curriculum. Among these values, “Equity, Diversity and Social Justice” is listed – emphasizing that planners have a role in “expanding choice and opportunity for all persons, [to] plan for the needs of the disadvantaged, [to] reduce inequities through critical examination of past and current systems and disparities, and [to] promote racial and economic integration”.⁶ Certainly, encouraging such a value is a positive start – notwithstanding the vagueness of what it really means to ‘incorporate’ a value – but it is telling that in this 13 page document outlining the expectations for a planning curriculum in 2017, this was the only instance of the word “equity.”

In practice, this has left it up to the individual institutions that are bestowing planning degrees to determine the extent to which they will incorporate the value of equity into their curriculum – at best, a recipe for inconsistency. With no direct guidance from the PAB, how are accredited planning institutions choosing to incorporate this value and ensure that their graduates are completing their degrees with a more informed concept of equity in planning?

While there are nearly 80 PAB-accredited master’s programs in North America, this paper focuses specifically on surveying the 22 planning programs located at public, land-grant institutions.⁷ Historically, the purpose of land-grant institutions, which were established by the Morrill Act of 1862, was to expand access to higher education beyond the country’s elite to include the American working class.⁸ Over time, the role of land-grant universities has evolved from its original emphasis on concepts like agriculture and

mechanics. Today, that mission incorporates widespread access to higher education and “engagement with community leaders to solve local problems.”⁹ This focus on educating the citizenry of a state and solving community problems means that planning programs at land-grant institutions have even more justification for ensuring that equity is included in the education of their students – not only for planning students pursuing master’s degrees, but also for undergraduate students pursuing planning minors and undergraduate students in all other disciplines, as well.

To evaluate the curricula of the 22 land-grant planning programs, three primary questions were considered, which offer some insight about the extent to which these programs have emphasized equity in their planning curriculum:

1. *Does the program require students to take a course that explicitly addresses topics pertaining to equity in planning?*
2. *Does the program offer students options to take courses focused on equity by selecting a relevant concentration?*
3. *Does the program offer students the opportunity to select any elective courses with a focus on equity?*

CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

EMPHASIS ON EQUITY IN EXISTING PLANNING CURRICULA

For each of the universities considered, a review was conducted of the planning curriculum as outlined on their respective program website. Of the 22 programs surveyed, only two institutions required students to take a course that is specifically and explicitly dedicated to issues of equity as part of their master's degree curriculum (see Table 1 for full analysis). Those two institutions were the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Minnesota requires one course with an obvious equity element: *PA 5206: The City of White Supremacy*.¹⁰ As indicated by the title, this course scrutinizes “how systems of white supremacy have shaped the American city and how the American city functions in ways that reproduce and reinforce white supremacy.”¹¹ From its course description, it is clear that this class is demonstrably about equity, but there is no evidence that this course explores dimensions of equity or dimensions of identity outside of a racial context – meaning that while this course is certainly a valuable educational opportunity for planning students, it is still omitting an examination of other overlapping identities, including gender, disability, and more.

The other institution which requires courses centered on equity as part of its curriculum is UCLA, which provides a list on its website of more than 25 courses that it has self-identified as including some element of equity.¹² This list includes at least two courses that are required of all students, as well as other courses that are required for specific program concentrations.¹³ Across all universities examined in this survey, UCLA easily has the most courses identified as covering equity topics, and was also the program that most prominently highlighted equity as an institutional value: indeed, the first item to

appear on the webpage for the UCLA Master of Urban and Regional Planning program was an action plan to address anti-Blackness and racism.¹⁴ More than any other institution considered in this study, the UCLA Department of Urban Planning demonstrated a broad commitment to equity on the homepage of its website, also including a *Commitment to Social Justice* which acknowledged extant “racism, poverty, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, religious persecution, ableism, and other forms of oppression” in planning.¹⁵

Table 1: Analysis of PAB-Accredited Land-Grant Institution’s Planning Curricula

| University | Equity Course Req? | Equity Concentration Offered? | Equity Elective Offered? |
|---|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Alabama A&M University ¹⁶ | - | | - |
| Auburn University ¹⁷ | - | | - |
| University of California, Berkeley ¹⁸ | - | Housing, Community, & Econ. Development | Yes (2) |
| University of California, Irvine ¹⁹ | - | | Yes (7) |
| University of California, Los Angeles ²⁰ | Yes | | Yes (9) |
| University of Florida ²¹ | - | | - |
| University of Georgia ²² | - | | - |
| University of Hawaii ²³ | - | | Yes (2) |
| University of Illinois ²⁴ | - | Community Development for Social Justice | Yes (1) |
| Iowa State University ²⁵ | - | | Yes (1) |
| Kansas State University ²⁶ | - | | Yes (1) |
| University of Maryland ²⁷ | - | | Yes (1) |
| University of Massachusetts ²⁸ | - | Community and Equity Planning | Yes (1) |
| Michigan State University ²⁹ | - | | Yes (1) |
| University of Minnesota ³⁰ | Yes | Housing & Community Development | Yes (3) |
| University of Nebraska-Lincoln ³¹ | - | | - |
| Rutgers University ³² | - | Community Development and Housing | Yes (6) |
| Ohio State University ³³ | - | Community Development and Housing | Yes (2) |
| University of Puerto Rico ³⁴ | - | Community Planning & Econ. Development | Yes (3) |
| Clemson University ³⁵ | - | | |
| Texas A&M University ³⁶ | - | Housing, Community, & Econ. Development | |
| University of Wisconsin-Madison ³⁷ | - | | Yes (1) |

Apart from UCLA and Minnesota, no other accredited planning programs at public, land-grant universities required all students to take one or more courses specifically aimed at equity in planning. However, it should be noted that all accredited planning programs require a significant portion of graduate coursework to be completed with elective credits – an indicator of the interdisciplinary nature of planning as a profession. These elective credits provide students with an opportunity to pursue topics of particular interest to them, and with enough coursework in a particular subject, can often be combined into either formal or informal concentrations.

Eight of the 22 programs evaluated do require that students complete a concentration of themed courses and include an equity-themed concentration among their options. Among these eight programs, six offered concentrations that were titled with some variation on the theme *Community Development and Housing*, with a particular emphasis on the historical and modern equity issues in housing policy. These six institutions were: University of California, Berkeley; University of Minnesota; Rutgers University; Ohio State University; University of Puerto Rico; and Texas A&M University. Certainly, many social issues in American planning have included a housing dimension – notably topics such as redlining, segregation, slum development, and urban renewal. However, emphasizing housing issues too heavily may risk neglecting conversations about other aspects of equity in planning, such as environmental justice, public health disparities, or accessibility.

Two other universities offered concentrations that were more explicitly focused on equity. The first of these, University of Illinois, offers a concentration in *Community Development for Social Justice*, which aims to prepare planning students to “empower

people, build capacity, and generate community-based wealth and asset control.”³⁸ The other, University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts, offers a concentration in *Community and Equity Planning* – although it is worth noting that the majority of the recommended courses in this concentration appear to be courses hosted out of other departments at the university, rather than out of the Regional Planning Department.³⁹ The choose-a-concentration curriculum structure offered by the eight universities mentioned above means that while not all students participating in these programs will necessarily experience courses about equity, students may still opt to emphasize the topic as a key component of their master’s program.

Barring a required course focused on equity, or the existence of a related concentration, the other avenue through which planning programs can allow students to experience equity in their degrees is via elective courses. Most of the public land-grant institutions surveyed do offer some form of equity-centered elective, but about one quarter of programs evaluated still did not have any clearly designated courses about equity in planning. Furthermore, about half of the 22 institutions offered at most one or two clearly-delineated equity electives – essentially guaranteeing that students only had the opportunity to touch on a few of the diverse identities that can be affected by the field of planning. Most commonly, these courses focused on race or ethnicity, although in rare instances they might touch on other forms of identity. One such example included Kansas State University’s *CDPLN 711: Immigrants in Communities* course.⁴⁰ Another, more provocative example is Ohio State University’s *CRPLAN 3610: Sex and the City*.⁴¹ While offering elective courses on equity is helpful, it does not necessarily fill the existing gap: in 20 of the 22 planning programs surveyed, students could conceivably complete a

master's degree program without ever taking a course that centered on equity as an integral part of the discourse.

As previously stated, the PAB directs planning programs to incorporate specific values, including “equity, diversity, and social justice,” into curricula.⁴² Certainly, it is possible – and indeed, likely – that some of these institutions have infused discussions of equity into various courses in their mandatory curriculum, including in planning theory or planning history courses. Why, then, is it worthwhile for programs to develop and offer a discreet course that is specifically focused on equity? In part, because the courses a planning program offers are one of the best indicators of what the program values. Whether intentionally or not, by omitting any direct mention of equity in course titles or descriptions in their required curriculum, these universities have deemphasized the importance of the topic for their students and in the eyes of the public.

Equity is only one of several values that the PAB has charged planning programs with incorporating into required courses: values listed include professional ethics; sustainability and environmental quality; and health and built environment, among others.⁴³ While all of these values are no doubt infused throughout most planning curricula, nearly every program surveyed also offered courses explicitly focused on topics like sustainability and public health; as already demonstrated, the value of equity did not get that same treatment at most of the institutions surveyed. To truly demonstrate a commitment to equity, programs can and should do more than simply infusing conversations about the topic into several required courses. Offering, at a minimum, an elective course focused on equity is a good first step.

Furthermore, because the courses in a program's curriculum are generally taught by multiple different faculty members with differing priorities and varying levels of personal awareness about equity issues, programs without at least one dedicated and clearly articulated equity course lack a clear way of evaluating whether students are actually learning about the topic – and ultimately putting what they have learned into practice after graduation.

A NEW EMPHASIS ON EQUITY

It must be acknowledged that on February 3, 2022, the PAB approved new Accreditation Standards, which demonstrate a dramatic shift in the way the organization considers equity. These new standards require that in each program's strategic plan, the program must provide a definition of “diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice, and goals and measurable objectives aimed at achieving them.”⁴⁴ The Accreditation Standards go on to clearly state the priority that should be placed on pursuing equity within the planning profession: “Among the foremost responsibilities of the Program are to reject discrimination – within the Program itself – and to advance diversity and a culture of inclusion and equity among the students, particularly with regard to racial and ethnic groups historically underrepresented in the profession.”⁴⁵

The new standards go on to state that minimum program curriculum criteria should help planners infuse their knowledge and skills with the values of equity and sustainability, and also aid planners in attending “to the diversity of individual and community values.”⁴⁶ All told, the newly adopted standards feature the concept of equity prominently in five different sections of the document – a significant increase from the lone mention it received in the 2017 accreditation standards.

The PAB's new emphasis on equity comes not a moment too soon, as planners continue to reckon with the role their profession has played in reinforcing systems of inequality. Now that the PAB has taken this important step, if planning programs are going to continue to align with the new accreditation standards then the need to incorporate equity into curricula is clear. As the above survey of land-grant institutions demonstrates, a notable gap exists between what the PAB expects from programs going forward and what is currently being practiced at the institutional level by universities. How can planning programs introduce coursework that will help students explore issues of equity more directly, without the addition of extra demands to an already extensive curriculum? How might such a course avoid the trap – all too common in the institutions surveyed – of teaching about equity only in terms of racial or ethnic identity? How might programs instead ensure that students have the opportunity to learn about the ways planning interacts with multiple diverse identities? The remainder of this thesis will attempt to answer these questions, and more, by outlining a suggested framework for an equity-focused course that could be introduced in either an undergraduate or graduate level planning program, and which could also be used for educating students from outside of the discipline about planning.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY PLANNING EDUCATION

A core feature of planning education is the need for interdisciplinary approaches, and curricula intended to equip students with skills that enable them to engage with other fields are commonplace in virtually every planning program. Planners must understand and engage with topics as varied as politics and law, environmental sustainability, public health, infrastructure and architecture, historic preservation, and of course, social

considerations such as equity and inclusion. A new course on equity in planning can build on lessons from other planning courses that address these intersections between disciplines.

The course framework proposed here draws inspiration from a model for one such course focused on planning's connection to public health, presented by Botchwey, et al., in the 2009 paper "A Model Curriculum for a Course on the Built Environment and Public Health".⁴⁷ This research, which surveyed six courses that all focused on "the intersection of the built environment and public health," identified several common elements of cross-disciplinary planning courses – similarities that could be readily applied to a course on the topic of equity.⁴⁸ These include:

1. **Interdisciplinary Curriculum.** Specifically, a curriculum that instructors can adapt and "customize to fit their students' backgrounds, strengths, and weaknesses," and which requires students to think outside of their own disciplines.⁴⁹
2. **Seminar Format.** A course structured with a mix of components, including "academic and topical readings, lectures, discussions, oral presentations, classroom exercises, guest speakers, and off-campus exercises."⁵⁰
3. **Learning Objectives.** All courses surveyed by Botchwey, et al., shared an objective to "equip students with the ability to identify a problem," assess the impact of the built environment on the topic at hand, and "develop design and policy solutions" to address relevant issues.⁵¹
4. **Course Structure.** Typically, a course would begin with an exploration of historical foundations for the topic to provide a baseline knowledge for

students, followed by deeper investigation of specific issues. Most of the courses surveyed then examined “potential solutions for challenges” and “a broad collection of tools” for addressing the issues discussed.⁵²

Based on this research, other best practices for a course on the intersection between planning and public health – which, again, provide a framework that could be replicated with a focus on equity instead – included readings that spanned a variety of topics, assignments that required students to think critically and apply principles, and the practice of establishing a common context and vocabulary early in the semester.⁵³

CHAPTER 4: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR A COURSE ON PLANNING EQUITY

The proposed course framework explained in this paper synthesizes recommendations from several sources, including the accreditation standards of the PAB, guidance on equity released by the APA, and the research already outlined above, shaping them into a 16-week (semester-long) course. This course is designed to address a variety of obstacles to equity that exist within cities for multiple identity groups, and to help students question their existing assumptions about the cities they inhabit. Students will be challenged to wrestle with tough questions about the urban environments they encounter: Who gets included in urban spaces, and who does not? Who gets to make the planning decisions in a city, and what implications does that have for equity? What are the effects of urban inequality on other facets of city life (e.g. housing, education, public health, the environment, and the economy)? Most importantly: How can planning and more inclusive urban policies provide solutions to some of the myriad challenges exposed in this course?

At most institutions, many planning courses are open to students whose primary degree plan may not be community and regional planning. For that reason, the proposed course framework is designed to be accessible to students who may have limited background in planning. Furthermore, most planning programs offer coursework at both the undergraduate and graduate level. As a result, this framework is deliberately intended to be applicable at both levels; the course can be customized to suit either an undergraduate audience, a graduate audience, or both, depending on the needs of the institution. This customization can be done by selecting alternative readings (see Appendix B for a list of recommended readings and resources) or using different

assessment strategies, depending on the needs of the student population, without requiring large-scale adjustments to the proposed framework and overall course structure.

Any project focused on equity issues in cities could easily be overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information and abundance of examples from which to draw course content. Because this course framework draws on recommendations from the PAB and the APA, both entities focused on North American planning and based in the United States, the content of the proposed course is focused specifically on American cities. This decision limits the scope of course content and makes the implementation of the course more manageable by providing boundaries for the selection of examples for course materials, readings, and lecture content. This is not to say there are not valuable lessons to be learned by studying urban equity in other parts of the world; indeed, it is precisely because there is so much to be shared on the topic of global (and specifically, non-Western) cities, that such a topic merits its own course. This is perhaps material for an entirely separate planning course. Thus, this framework is built around American cities.

Structurally, the course framework is organized into four units:

- ***UNIT I: Who Belongs?***, which focuses on the various identities that have at times been marginalized by planning practice, municipal policy, or urban design;
- ***UNIT II: Where/When Do We Belong?***, which focuses on the places, spaces, and times that groups may be excluded from urban life;
- ***UNIT III: Why Does It Matter?***, which focuses on various consequences of inequity and injustice in cities; and

- **UNIT IV: *What Comes Next?***, which focuses on identifying solutions and tools for addressing the issues that were explored in the first two-thirds of the semester.

These four units provide an organizing structure for student learning goals, daily class discussion topics, assignments, readings, and other course materials. Critically, this format provides flexibility for adapting the course to fit the specific needs, interests, or strengths of the faculty and students at a given institution.

According to Nisha Botchwey and Karen Umemoto, students “gain a deeper understanding of theories and concepts as they apply them to real-world problems”.⁵⁴ As a result, the proposed framework will also require students to repeatedly seek out local examples of the concepts being discussed in class. Furthermore, students will be asked to apply the theories, tools, and solutions they learn about to their own community through a culminating project, the Community Policy Proposal (explained in more detail below).

PROPOSED LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In addition to learning and understanding course content about specific equity challenges and solutions, the course is structured to help students achieve the following skill-based learning objectives, which would be of value within the field of planning, but would also be transferable to other professional contexts. In this course, students will:

1. Exhibit knowledge and understanding of the intersections of **human diversity** and various identities, including but not limited to: race, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, age, and disability

2. Practice identifying, analyzing, and proposing solutions to complex problems while **working in small problem-solving teams** on the Community Policy Proposal final project
3. Develop **communication skills** through class discussions, interaction with guest speakers, written reflections, policy memos, and final presentations
4. Practice **transfer of knowledge** by applying principles, theories, and concepts learned in one urban context to the built environment observed in their own community

PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE

As with other elements of this proposed course, specific sections of the course schedule and content could be lengthened, shortened, or swapped out entirely depending on the needs of the planning department in question. This allows departments to account for content that may be particularly relevant to a specific region of the country, or to omit sections which may already be covered by other courses in the existing curriculum. There are also spaces left intentionally open in the course framework to allow for the instructor to incorporate other elements, such as guest speakers, in-class debates, or class field trips, when relevant. Shown below is a more detailed course schedule for a 16-week course, demonstrating what the four-part framework proposed here might look like in practice, including titles of sample lessons that could be offered:

PRE-UNIT: INTRODUCTIONS

Week I: Introduction

- Syllabus and Introductions
- What is Planning?
- What Street Addresses and Place Names Reveal About Society

UNIT 1: WHO BELONGS?

Week 2: Race and the American City

- Setting the Stage
- Redlining and Racial Covenants
- “White Roads Through Black Bedrooms”

Week 3: Race and the American City, Cont.

- Redlining in Your Region
- The Modern Legacy of Redlining

Week 4: Immigrants and Refugees

- American Immigration History & Ethnic Enclaves
- The Modern Immigrant Experience
- Immigrants in Your City

Week 5: Gender and the City

- A History of Women in Public Spaces
- Women in Planning, and the Fallacy of the “Default Male”

Week 6: Disability in Urban Spaces

- The Disability Rights Movement
- The Curb-Cut Effect

Week 7: The Urban Unhoused / Youth Belonging

- A History of American Homelessness Policy
- A Hostile Design Primer
- “Keep Out, Meddling Kids”: Youth and the City

UNIT 2: WHERE/WHEN DO WE BELONG?

Week 8: Affordable Housing / Parks and Public Spaces / Third Places

- Affordable Housing and Exclusionary Zoning
- A Place to Belong: Parks, Public Spaces, and Third Places
- Where to Go?: Public Restrooms, and Who Can Use Them

Week 9: Equitable Transportation / Night Planning

- From Traffic to Transit: Equitable Transportation
- The Graveyard Shift: Planning for the Night-time

UNIT 3: WHY DOES IT MATTER?**Week 10: Gentrification / Education**

- “There Goes the Neighborhood”: The Trouble with Gentrification
- Educational Disparities

Week 11: Public Health / Environmental Justice

- Urban Food Deserts
- Environmental Justice

UNIT 4: WHAT COMES NEXT? IN SEARCH OF SOLUTIONS**Week 12: Solutions, Part I**

- The Comprehensive Plan and Community Engagement
- In Pursuit of Racial Equity
- Better Integrating Immigrants

Week 13: Solutions, Part II

- The Non-Sexist City
- Accessibility in Action: The Value of Universal Design
- Improving Public Health Outcomes

Week 14: Group Work on Final Project**Week 15: Solutions, Part III**

- Housing & Anti-Displacement
- Municipal Land Banks

Week 16: Final Presentations

CHAPTER 5: WHO BELONGS? ADDRESSING MORE DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY (UNIT I)

Despite the gaps that exist in planning curricula nationwide, there is some existing scholarship on teaching equity in planning. Willow Lung-Amam, et al., in an article titled “Teaching Equity and Advocacy Planning in a Multicultural ‘Post-racial’ World”, reflect on some of the challenges of teaching about race and ethnicity in equity planning, and offer some pedagogical guidance.⁵⁵ The recommendations of these authors were invaluable in crafting the framework outlined here, but it should be noted that their work with equity focused primarily on race and ethnicity (and to a lesser extent, socio-economic status); as with other curricula surveyed for this paper, there is little to no exploration of what a planning course focused on equity across the intersecting dimensions of race, gender, disability, and other identities might look like.

The trend of focusing exclusively on race in conversations around equity is not new in planning, nor in planning education: as Julian Agyeman and Jennifer Sien Erickson argue, many previous equity-based planning approaches, “while often successful at redistributive justice,” have actually contributed in some ways to cultural *injustice* “by not recognizing forms of difference other than racial or socioeconomic inequalities”.⁵⁶ While Agyeman and Erickson insist that race and class must remain a focus as part of the ethical obligations of planners, they advocate for an emphasis on “the concept of difference and a broader concept of *culture* in planning, with a concomitant focus on cultural competency”.⁵⁷ A focus on cultivating cultural competency in planning students, they argue, will make planners “more effective at addressing *all* forms of inequality based on difference”, not just race or class-based inequality.⁵⁸

The PAB, in its February 2021 position statement on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, defines diversity even more broadly, noting that it “encompasses, but is not limited to, race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexuality, ability, educational attainment, first-generation status, spiritual beliefs, creed, culture, tribal affiliation, nationality, immigration status, political beliefs, and veteran status”.⁵⁹ The PAB calls for its accredited planning programs to “promote an ethos of equity” by helping students to develop cultural competency “and a greater understanding of the systems, practices and policies that perpetuate racism and discrimination”.⁶⁰ While it is perhaps not possible to craft a single, one-term course that can thoughtfully and adequately address all aspects of diversity cited by the PAB, it is certainly possible – and important – to address more than merely race and class.

To that end, this course framework has been developed with multiple different dimensions of difference in mind, in an effort to help students understand and acknowledge “that population groups, differentiated by criteria of age, gender, class, disability, ethnicity, sexual preference, culture and religion, have different claims on the city for a full life and, in particular, on the built environment”.⁶¹ Provided below is a list of some of the identities recommended for inclusion in this course framework and explored in more depth during Unit I (“Who Belongs?”) of the course. This list may be expanded to meet the needs of the institution, based on their existing curriculum, but should include the following identities:

Race/Ethnicity:

Race is perhaps the most obvious dimension of diversity that should be included in a course focused on equity in planning, because as previously

mentioned, race is generally the first (and often the only) identity to be discussed in planning programs that address the topic of equity. While the history of racial discrimination in the U.S. is long and fraught throughout the last 400 years, a course on planning in modern American cities must begin no later than the late 19th century, during the reconstruction period, and should include discussions on such topics as: the Great Migration; early racial zoning ordinances of the early 1910s; the practice of redlining and its ongoing effects in modern America; segregationist policies in the era of Jim Crow; and the modern disparities that exist along racial lines in American cities.⁶² Furthermore, a consideration of racial equity in planning should strive to consider more than the oft-mentioned disparities between White and Black Americans. To truly acknowledge the more nuanced dynamics of race in America will require incorporating discussion about the urban experiences of Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and more into this course.

National Origin/Immigration Status

The experience of immigrants and refugees in American cities is one that often intersects with issues of racial or ethnic equity, but also presents its own unique obstacles and opportunities. While there are many points in American history from which one could begin an examination of the immigrant experience in American cities, this framework begins with the experience of Chinese immigrants after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The law prevented the entry into the United States

of laborers of Chinese descent, and denied all Chinese immigrants the opportunity to become American citizens; as the first law passed by the federal government to restrict immigration explicitly on the basis of race and class, the Chinese Exclusion Act introduced the concept of illegal immigration, and established a need for government enforcement and policing of immigration policies.⁶³ The course will then explore the way that immigrant communities in ethnic enclaves during the 20th Century (such as in San Francisco's Chinatown) have shaped the urban fabric of cities. Students will also examine the effects of shifting demographics on cities and the experience of immigrants from Latin America, as well as the experience of immigrants and refugees in the 21st century.

Gender/Sex

American cities have historically been planned and developed by and for men. Part of the challenge of achieving gender equity in planning is simply to reach a point where the demographics of planners reflect the population of the country at large. While the percentage of women in the planning profession has risen dramatically over the last 50 years, women are still underrepresented in the field, comprising just over 35% of APA planners, according to an equity policy guide published by the APA in 2019.⁶⁴ This course framework proposes an examination of the way that American urban design has historically reflected the notion of two separate spheres, with the public being the domain of men, and the home the domain of women. Students will consider the effect of suburbanization in the middle of the 20th

Century on women, and investigate the ways that urban spaces are too often designed with men in mind as the “default” citizen.

Ability/Disability

For the majority of American history, cities have been designed without any consideration for the needs of disabled individuals. This course framework addresses disability by charting a path from the Disability Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, to the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990.⁶⁵ This course will encourage students to thoughtfully examine the ways that the built environment accommodates (or does not) the needs of individuals with disabilities. Specifically, this course will emphasize the benefits of the “Curb-Cut Effect,” premised on the idea that design and policy intended to benefit vulnerable groups (such as a curb-cut in a street corner sidewalk) often end up benefiting all of society.⁶⁶

Age/Youth

The Curb-Cut Effect provides a jumping off point for considering age, as much of the infrastructure that is designed to benefit individuals with disabilities also ends up increasing accessibility and serving the needs of older citizens. The course will examine this domain of identity from both ends of the spectrum, though, considering how younger residents of a city may also be marginalized, and how youth may struggle to find spaces that are able to adequately serve their needs – and how some of these spaces may occasionally be actively hostile towards youth.

The Unhoused

Homelessness is a problem in nearly every major American city, but students are not often asked to consider the experiences of unhoused individuals. This course framework proposes that students spend time discussing the ways that the built environment and urban policies can shape the experience of this vulnerable population, from hostile design to shelters and other municipal programs.

Notably absent from the above list of identities is class or socioeconomic status. The omission of wealth-based or income-based identities is not meant to indicate that this topic is unimportant for planning students to consider. On the contrary, because of the intersectionality between socioeconomic status and so many of the identities outlined above, it is something that this course framework touches on repeatedly. Nearly every one of the topics considered in Unit II and Unit III of the framework is inextricably tethered to income inequality. Conversations about housing and gentrification, mobility and transportation, education, public health equity, and environmental justice simply cannot occur without considering the myriad ways that socioeconomic status is linked to disparities in these areas. Identities tied to class and income inequality are not emphasized specifically in Unit I precisely because they feature so heavily in lessons from Units II and III.

Discussion of the Curb-Cut Effect and the benefits of Universal Design will be especially critical to the content of this class. These concepts provide a conceptual framework by which the accessibility and equity solutions intended for

one vulnerable segment of the population can benefit other groups. The list above is not exhaustive and omits some identities which may, in the right instructor's hands, make good additions to the course framework: religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation, to name just a few. However, while this course will inevitably have to focus on the equity needs of a finite number of identities, applying these concepts allows instructors, course designers, or students to consider the equity needs of other populations not explicitly outlined above.

CHAPTER 6: WHERE DO WE BELONG? WHY DOES IT MATTER? (UNITS II & III)

The topics recommended for inclusion in Unit II and Unit III were chosen because of their importance in the APA's *Planning for Equity Policy Guide*, which includes discussion of several "Cross-Cutting Equity Issues" and specific policy recommendations for beginning to address these issues. For the purposes of the framework proposed here, the cross-cutting equity issues outlined by the APA have been loosely grouped into two different categories: (1) types of space and place, which provides the basis for Unit II of the course, "Where Do We Belong?"; and (2) systemic issues and outcomes, which provides the basis for Unit III, "Why Does It Matter?". Those topics are briefly outlined below. As with other aspects of the proposed framework, this list can be expanded or reduced as needed:

WHERE DO WE BELONG?

Housing

Access to affordable and suitable housing has been a challenge for low-income American families since the founding of the country and has disproportionately affected multiple of the identities highlighted in this course. Despite the goal set by the National Housing Act of 1949 to provide "a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family," little progress has been made in the last 70 years.⁶⁷ This class will explore the policies and practices that have prevented American cities from making progress toward the goal of decent housing for all.

Public Spaces and Places

The *Planning for Equity Policy Guide* refers to public spaces as “the connective tissue that binds people together and anchors neighborhoods”.⁶⁸

However, as the APA points out, due to inequities in the planning and development process, public space may not always live up to its potential as true shared space: “Public spaces often exclude certain demographic groups either explicitly or implicitly through their design, lack of public input, and historical or current discrimination in operational practices”.⁶⁹

This course will explore some of the design and programming features that have occasionally acted as barriers – either real or perceived – to inclusion and equity in public spaces.

Mobility and Transportation

Mobility is a central aspect of equity in cities because the ability to move about the city is essential to access opportunity. Every one of the identities explored in this course is disproportionately challenged by mobility needs of some sort. According to Thomas W. Sanchez, discrimination in America has often taken the form of limited transportation access and mobility, which “helped create ghettos, de facto segregated schools and housing, and social and community isolation”.⁷⁰ This course will examine the connection between mobility and equity, and the ways in which transportation has, or has not, served all residents of American cities.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Gentrification

The term gentrification, first coined in 1964 by Ruth Glass, is widely discussed in the field of planning, and generally associated with negative social impacts.⁷¹ Gentrification is defined by the Regional Plan Association as “the form of neighborhood change characterized by the arrival of higher-income and often-time higher-educated residents, along with increasing rents, property values and cost-of-living, and decreasing non-white populations”.⁷² The APA distinguishes between the *process* of gentrification and the *actions* of development and revitalization, noting that revitalization is often needed in low-income neighborhoods in order to improve resident quality of life.⁷³ However, the APA goes on to explain that “revitalization in the absence of an equity in all policies approach, or an equity lens, can result in the negative impacts of gentrification and is a contributing factor to the rising inequality in the nation’s metropolitan areas”.⁷⁴ This course will explore those negative impacts of gentrification, and how they disproportionately affect more vulnerable segments of the population.

Education

Planning and the built environment have an undeniable effect on public school systems, and planning decisions – both historic and contemporary – often contribute directly to disparities in educational outcomes. Decades after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, many school districts in

America remain hyper-segregated, even as the population of school-age children in the United States becomes more diverse. According to the APA, since 1988, the percentage of “intensely segregated schools... have increased from 5.7 percent to 18.6 percent of all public schools”.⁷⁵ This course will explore some of the factors that have led to this de facto segregation, including white flight to suburbs, and will unpack some of the effects of school segregation.

Health Equity

The impact of planning and the built environment on public health have long been clear to planners, and the concept of “health in all policies” is a strategy employed to address the myriad complex factors that influence public health. Inequities in health can occur as the result of barriers such as: poor access to health care, lack of access to healthy foods, access to parks and open space, and exposure to environmental contaminants, among other things.⁷⁶ This course will examine how some of these barriers to health disproportionately impact vulnerable identities, leading to inequitable public health outcomes in American cities.

Environmental Justice

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies”.⁷⁷ According to the APA, many environmental justice issues in the

U.S. are the result of “a failure to plan or a failure to enforce proper zoning”.⁷⁸ This course will examine the ways in which vulnerable populations, such as communities of color, disproportionately bear the burden of pollution and other environmental hazards, and are often excluded from relevant environmental decision making.

CHAPTER 7: WHAT COMES NEXT? A FOCUS ON SOLUTIONS (UNIT IV)

An equity course that was focused only on identifying and raising awareness about instances of inequity would run the risk of quickly veering into cynical, or even hopeless, territory. Furthermore, while it is important to acknowledge the longstanding role that planning has sometimes played in perpetuating inequity, doing so is only worthwhile if planners are also willing to work toward meaningful long-term solutions to these problems. Fortunately, planning professionals are well positioned to begin tackling historic inequities. As the APA states in its *Planning for Equity Policy Guide*, “If planner’s toolboxes can be used to exclude, limit, and segregate, then the same tools and regulatory frameworks can be used to implement policies that result in fair, equitable communities”.⁷⁹

This course framework calls for approximately the final third of the semester to be focused on educating students about the solutions to urban equity issues that can be achieved through planning, policy, and design. Through a mix of case studies examining success stories in American cities, APA policy recommendations and guides, and other resources like the All-In Cities Policy Toolkit (endorsed by the APA), and National Equity Atlas, students will learn about strategies, methods, and policies that can work (and have worked) for addressing some of these daunting disparities and inequities.

As a suggested final project, students will be asked to complete the Community Policy Proposal assignment (outlined in more detail in the *Pedagogical Strategies and Assessment* section), which will allow them to synthesize what they have learned throughout the semester and apply it to their own community. As they examine their own city, they will be asked to identify the equity issues that exist, consider possible planning

solutions and tools that might address the relevant concerns, and make recommendations for improving the state of equity in the city. It is recommended that students draw on the policy guides and resources mentioned above for inspiration when suggesting policy solutions, and use their own critical thinking to assess the appropriateness of specific policies for their own communities.

CHAPTER 8: PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES AND ASSESSMENT

The course framework proposed here calls for students to spend meaningful time on individualized reflective writing, as well as working in small groups, and occasionally presenting their thoughts in front of the larger audience of the full class. These varied approaches are essential, as students “often find their voice in private and semiprivate spaces, but should also be taught to speak to larger audiences about issues of urban inequality to be effective advocates for communities”.⁸⁰ For that reason, throughout the semester students should be asked to participate in oral presentations and debates to develop communication skills that will benefit them in their future professional careers.

Students’ learning will be facilitated and assessed by means of several signature assignments that are recommended because of their capacity to aid in student reflection and the application of concepts in new and different contexts. These assignments are outlined below:

Identity Autobiography

One strategy for helping students grapple with and reflect on their own identities, and “how they have been formulated and are reinforced in urban space,” is to ask students to “write their own autobiographies to interrogate the ways in which race, and their own racial and ethnic identities, have impacted their relationship to urban space”.⁸¹ According to Lung-Amam, et al., this activity can spur meaningful discussions in the class, and help students to “see their own diversity, the complexity of racial identification, and even recognize their own stereotypes and prejudices”.⁸² This

assignment has been incorporated into the proposed framework, but with modifications to allow for students to reflect on all of their many intersecting identities, rather than focusing specifically on race.

Urban Field Journal

The Urban Field Journal assignment provides students the opportunity to venture out into their city to document examples in the “field” of topics and concepts they have learned about throughout the semester. For each entry, students will be asked to document with photos one or more examples of the assigned concept, as well as to identify its location. Then, they will address a series of guided reflection questions in their field notes about what they have found and photographed. For example, for a field journal entry about *hostile design* (i.e. designs made specifically to exclude, harm, or otherwise hinder the freedom of a human being) a student might be asked to address the following questions:

- *Why does the example you chose to document constitute hostile design?*
- *What group or groups are affected by this hostile design?
Which identities are directly targeted by this design?*
- *Are there groups, other than the targeted group, that may be negatively affected by this design? If so, provide examples.*
- *Is this design use justified? Why or why not? Could another design meet the same needs?*

- *Does this design enhance or detract from the urban environment? Explain your reasoning.*

Throughout the semester, students should be asked to submit these field journal entries to a shared discussion board, where their peers can comment and add to the discourse about the examples that have been documented. About two-thirds of the way through the semester, as the course shifts from the problem-centered to solution-centered portion of the course, students will eventually be asked to submit a final version of their Urban Field Journal, in which their earlier entries may be revised and enhanced with the additional knowledge they have gained since their initial submissions. As part of the final Urban Field Journal submission, students will also be asked to share a critical reflection responding to prompts that challenge them to analyze the built environment through the lens of multiple identities, worldviews, cultures, and power structures, while also beginning to shift their thinking to a solutions-focused mindset. For more information about the Urban Field Journal, view Appendix C.

Community Policy Proposal

During roughly the final third of the semester, there will be a shift in course content from focusing on the *problems* in equity and inclusion that arise because of urban planning and policy, to exploring the potential *solutions* that the field of planning offers through design and policy tools. In the Community Policy Proposal project, students will work together in small groups of three to four peers to develop a proposal for improving equity in

their city – a proposal which identifies equity issues in the city for various populations, and applies the lessons learned in this course to suggest a set of solutions aimed at addressing these issues. Each policy proposal will take the form of a short, written memorandum, addressed to the local Planning Commission. Students will also be asked to give a group presentation where they will advocate for and justify their proposals; if they choose to do so, faculty can raise the stakes even further by inviting local planning professionals from the city government to attend class for the final presentations to hear student proposals and to provide constructive feedback on them. Doing so would recreate a “real-world” professional experience for students, while allowing students to learn from someone with tangible experience working on these complex issues.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

There is, of course, no single best way to teach a course on equity. The framework proposed here provides merely one possible format among many. However, it is designed to be broadly applicable and flexible enough to be modified to suit the needs of a variety of planning programs. Through a synthesis of PAB recommendations, APA guidance and policy proposals, and existing literature about planning education generally and equity planning specifically, this framework provides a means for planning programs to address a critical curricular need.

Both the APA and PAB emphasize the importance of equity in planning, and the PAB's most recent accreditation standards call for the inclusion of equity in planning curricula. Currently, though, many institutions still lack substantive required coursework dedicated to the topic. Until planning curricula can catch up to the recent recommendations of the APA and PAB, a gap will continue to exist in education about equity in planning. This course framework would allow programs across the country to begin the process of filling that gap.

The course proposed here could be taught to either graduate or undergraduate planning students and is also intended to be relevant and beneficial for non-planning students, as it prepares them to be more just and inclusive citizens with a better understanding of societal systems. Through this framework, students will have the opportunity to practice important transferrable skills, such as communication, problem solving, and transfer of knowledge. Most importantly, this course has been crafted in a way that will: challenge students to see their city – and the rest of the world around them – in new and different ways; to thoughtfully consider the way that individuals are

included or excluded from urban spaces; and ultimately, to come away armed with an awareness of the injustices around them and the tools to address those injustices. If all students could achieve these learning outcomes, perhaps the notion of truly inclusive and just American cities would be a little closer to reality.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE SYLLABUS

UHON 189H THE GREAT AMERICAN CITY: FROM INJUSTICE TO INCLUSION

3 Credits • Fall 2022 • Knoll TBD • MWF, Time TBD

Instructor:

Jacob Schlange (He/Him/His)
Master of Community and Regional Planning
Assistant Director of Global Initiatives and Experiential Learning
University Honors Program

Instructor Contact Information:

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Zoom: <https://go.unl.edu/zoomjacob>
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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00-4:00 PM, or by appointment

Course Description:

Throughout history, cities have been the primary incubators of human innovation, industry, intellectualism, and artistry. However, cities - and the planning that goes into creating them - have also fueled inequality and injustice at times. In this course, we will grapple with important questions about inclusion and belonging in American cities, from the fraught history of redlining and discriminatory covenants to the ongoing, modern-day phenomena of gentrification and hostile design. Who gets to make city planning decisions? Who gets included in urban spaces, and who does not? What inequities arise as a result? Most importantly, we will begin to explore how planning and inclusive urban policies can offer a better way forward for cities of the future.

ACE (General Education) Program Requirements:

By passing this course, you will fulfill the requirements for **ACE Learning Outcome 9**:

"Exhibit global awareness or knowledge of human diversity through analysis of an issue."

In this course we will explore the impact that cities, both through design of urban spaces and public policy, impact various identities of human diversity – including, but not limited to: race, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability. You will have the opportunity to learn and practice the ACE 9 outcomes through class discussions and assigned texts, as well as by engaging in critical analysis through individual **Urban Field Journal** entries throughout the term. You will demonstrate your mastery of the outcome through your submission of your completed, final **Urban Field Journal** (explained in more detail below) and accompanying **critical reflection**, which together will serve as your ACE 9 signature assignment.

Course Learning Objectives:

In addition to developing learning outcomes central to ACE 9, you will also have the chance to develop and demonstrate the following University Honors Program core learning outcomes:

1. Exhibit knowledge and understanding of the intersections of **human diversity** and various identities, including but not limited to: race, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability
2. Practice identifying, analyzing, and proposing solutions to complex problems while **working in small problem-solving teams**
3. Develop **communication skills** through class discussions, written reflections, and the final *Lincoln Policy Proposal* presentations
4. Practice **transfer of knowledge** by applying principles, theories, and concepts learned in one urban context to the built environment observed in your own community (i.e. Lincoln, Omaha, and/or Nebraska)

Course Required Materials

All course readings and materials will be provided in Canvas. See below for more details.

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation:

Attendance is expected, and you have a responsibility to attend class meetings and be an active, engaged participant. If you must miss class, for any reason, you are responsible for the content of that class period, as well as any assignments given for the next class. ***If you become ill to the point that participating in class is not reasonable, please let me know right away so we can keep you on track.***

Weather Contingencies:

In the event of inclement weather, the University will announce one of three directives:

1. All courses and events cancelled and offices closed. In this case, we will not have class. Watch your email and Canvas announcements for information about any necessary schedule adjustments.
2. In person classes and campus events cancelled; courses follow instructional continuity plans. **In this case, our class will meet on Zoom, using the Zoom link provided via Canvas.** This is the most likely outcome for a day with bad weather.
3. Classes and events continue as usual; offices open. In this case, we continue with in-person class as normal. If you live off campus and feel unsafe driving, you may join via Zoom, but you must notify the instructor of your intention before class.

Late/Short Work:

Any work submitted late or that fails to meet minimum length requirements will be penalized in proportion to the degree of the offense. Generally, a minimum penalty will be one letter grade reduction on the assignment. If the work is egregiously late or short, the penalty may be more severe and/or the work may not be accepted.

Video or Audiotaping Class Sessions:

Due to the sensitive and controversial nature of some of the topics that will be discussed over the duration of the semester, all classes are closed to the Press/Media. No video or audio taping of class sessions is allowed unless you obtain my permission to do so, and we will not record the class discussions due to the potentially sensitive subject matter. This is so that all class members may feel safe asking questions or expressing opinions as a means toward authentic learning.

UNL Course Policies and Resources

Students are responsible for knowing the university policies and resources found on this page (<https://go.unl.edu/coursepolicies>):

- University-wide Attendance Policy
- Academic Honesty Policy
- Services for Students with Disabilities
- Mental Health & Well-Being Resources
- Final Exam Schedule
- Fifteenth Week Policy
- Emergency Procedures
- Diversity & Inclusiveness
- Title IX Policy
- Other University-Wide Policies

Course Assignments & Grading

Urban Field Journal

As we learn about topics throughout the semester, you will venture out into the city of Lincoln to seek out and document examples “in the field.” For each entry, you will document with photos one example of the assigned concept, as well as identify its location. Then, you will address a series of questions in your field notes about what you have found. For example, your field journal entry about *Hostile Design* (*i.e. Designs made specifically to exclude, harm, or otherwise hinder the freedom of a human being*) will address the following questions:

- Why does this example constitute hostile design?
- What group or groups are affected by this hostile design? Which identities are directly targeted by this design?
- Are there groups, other than the targeted group, that may be negatively affected by this design? Provide examples.

- In your opinion, does this design enhance or detract from the city's built environment?

Throughout the semester, you'll be asked to submit these field journal entries to a shared discussion board, where your peers can comment and add to the discourse about the examples you have documented. About two-thirds of the way through the semester, as we shift from the problem-centered to solution-centered portion of our course, you will be asked to submit a final version of your Urban Field Journal, in which your initial entries may be revised and enhanced with the additional knowledge gained since your initial submission. As part of your final Urban Field Journal, you will also submit a critical reflection responding to prompts that challenge you to analyze the built environment through the lens of multiple identities, worldviews, cultures, and power structures, while also begin shifting your thinking to a solutions-focused mindset.

Lincoln Policy Proposal

In the final third of the semester, the course will shift from focusing on the *problems* in equity and inclusion that arise as a result of urban planning and policy, to exploring the potential *solutions* that the field of planning offers us through design and policy tools. In this project, you will work together with small groups of 3-4 other students to develop a proposal for the city of Lincoln – a proposal which identifies equity issues in the city for various populations, and applies the lessons learned in this course to propose a set of solutions aimed at addressing these issues. Your policy proposal will take the form of a short, written memorandum, addressed to the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission, as well as a group presentation where you will have the opportunity to advocate for and justify your proposal; we will invite actual staff members of the Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department to attend class for the final presentations to hear your proposals and to provide feedback on them. At the conclusion of the course, each student will submit a written reflection about their group work process, in which they will be asked to evaluate their own contributions as a member of a problem-solving team, and assess the dynamics of the team.

Reading Quizzes

Each week, you will be responsible for preparing for class by reviewing materials identified by your instructor relevant to the topic being discussed in class. This may include reading articles and/or book chapters, listening to podcast episodes, or watching videos/documentaries. Before class, you will be responsible for taking a short reading quiz about some of the key elements of the assigned materials. You will be allowed multiple attempts to complete these quizzes.

Attendance and Active Participation

You are expected to attend all class meetings and show up ready to engage with the day's topics, speakers, and/or activities. During class, you are expected to engage both as an active, polite listener and through your contributions to class discussion, asking questions/engaging in conversation with guests, and participating in class activities. You will be evaluated with the Active Learning Participation rubric weekly, but graded on participation twice in the semester.

Grading:

As with all Honors courses, you must earn a grade of B- or higher for this to count for Honors credit and to fulfill the Honors Program requirement for successful completion of a 189H seminar. If you think you may receive a grade of B- or lower, please speak with your instructor and/or an Honors advisor as soon as possible. You may request a meeting with an Honors advisor in MyPLAN.

Grade Distribution for

20% - Participation (Graded twice)

15% - Urban Field Journal (Individual Entries)

15% - Urban Field Journal (Final Product)

15% - Lincoln Policy Proposal (Memo)

15% - Lincoln Policy Proposal (Presentation)

20% - Reading Quizzes

100% Total

APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDED READINGS AND RESOURCES

This course has been proposed in a seminar format, in line with the recommendations of Botchwey, et al., for cross-disciplinary planning courses. This seminar format means that while there will be some content delivered during in-class lectures, most of students' time in the classroom will center on guided discussions facilitated by the instructor. One result of this discussion-based format is that the assigned readings and other materials must do the heavy lifting of delivering foundational knowledge and class content. With this in mind, the recommended reading list outlined below was compiled with the goal of providing meaningful background and context for students. To accommodate a variety of learning preferences, this list includes a variety of different formats, including academic journal articles, but also investigative journalism from newspapers and magazines, podcast episodes, videos, and multimedia resources.

On Race:

- [Housing Segregation and Redlining in America: A Short History](#)⁸³ (NPR): This video provides a brief introduction to redlining, and its long term effects on housing, wealth, education, and policing. This will serve as a primer for students, so that they have some conception of redlining before we explore its effects more extensively in class.
- [Mapping Inequality](#)⁸⁴ (Univ. of Richmond's Digital Scholarship Lab): This interactive map resource, and the article about redlining on its introduction page, will provide students with an opportunity to explore the concept of redlining more deeply, by looking at historic Home Owners' Loan Corporation maps that have been digitized and layered over modern maps of more than 200 U.S. cities.
- [How Decades of Racist Housing Policy Left Neighborhoods Sweltering](#)⁸⁵ (New York Times): This article provides a nuanced look at the effects of redlining on modern Richmond, Virginia. Specifically, it examines the detrimental effects of redlining on tree cover and urban heat in formerly redlined neighborhoods and outlines the resulting long term public health effects. This article will help students better understand the interconnected, long-term effects of redlining.
- [Roads to Nowhere: How Infrastructure Built on American Inequality](#)⁸⁶ (The Guardian): This article introduces the concept of "white roads through black bedrooms," the process of routing roads and other infrastructure through black communities, especially during the interstate boom of the 1950-60s.

On Immigration:

- [Pagodas and Dragon Gates](#)⁸⁷ (99% Invisible): This podcast episode examines the experience of Chinese immigrants in San Francisco and the evolution of a distinctive architectural vernacular that is now found in

Chinatowns around the world. Students will gain insight on the way that one immigrant group has made their mark on American cities and learn about the policies that can sustain ethnic enclaves like Chinatown as an accessible entry point to American life for new immigrants.

- [American Panorama – Foreign-Born Population](#)⁸⁸ (**Digital Scholarship Lab**): This data-rich interactive map gives students the opportunity to investigate the foreign-born population of any county in the United States, decade by decade from 1850 to 2010. Students can look at their own communities and learn what percentage of their county was foreign-born in each decade, and which countries they came from – an invaluable tool for understanding immigration in one’s own community.

On Gender:

- [A Woman’s Place Is in the City](#)⁸⁹ (**Next City**): This article examines the way that women may experience urban space differently than men, from differing travel habits to a greater need for safety, and more. This article will also help students begin to consider women’s representation in planning and design fields, and the impact that has on gender equity in cities.
- [Mind the Gender Gap](#)⁹⁰ (**APA – Planning Magazine**): With a deeper dive into gender equity in transit, this article introduces the ways that public transportation has historically underserved women, even though women account for more than half of all transit ridership in American cities.

On Disability:

- [A Brief History of the Disability Rights Movement](#)⁹¹ (**Anti-Defamation League**): This article provides a succinct overview of disability rights in America, including major pieces of legislation, and a helpful glossary of terms to introduce students to an often-overlooked aspect of U.S. History.
- [Curb Cuts](#)⁹² (**99% Invisible**): This podcast episode provides a more personal perspective on the Disability Rights Movement, chronicling the advocacy of Ed Roberts, and challenging students to think about something they probably use every day without realizing it, but which was critical to making cities more accessible for individuals with disabilities: the simple curb cut.

On Homelessness:

- [‘Hostile Architecture’: How Public Spaces Keep the Public Out](#)⁹³ (**New York Times**): This article introduces students to the concept of *Hostile Architecture* or *Hostile Design*, a concept that students will be asked to return to several times during the course, applying the concept to various segments of the population. It is especially relevant to the issue of homelessness, and thus this is an appropriate time to introduce the topic.

On Housing and Exclusionary Zoning:

- [Understanding Exclusionary Zoning and Its Impact on Concentrated Poverty](#)⁹⁴ (**The Century Foundation**): This article, recently referenced by the White House in the context of Build Back Better explanations, provides a brief but thorough introduction to the concept of exclusionary zoning, and the way that it has been wielded as a tool to keep lower-income people out of historically wealthy and middle-class areas. The Century Foundation is an independent think tank focused on economic, racial, and gender equity.

On Parks, Public Spaces, and Third Places:

- [A Complex Landscape of Inequity in Access to Urban Parks: A Literature Review](#)⁹⁵ (**Landscape and Urban Planning**): This academic journal article provides a useful literature review that examines studies about multiple parameters of park access (proximity, acreage, and quality) to identify inequities that exist in relation to park access.
- [Third Places and the Social Life of Streets](#)⁹⁶ (**Environment and Behavior**): This academic article, while not focused specifically on equity, introduces the idea of a third place (first introduced by sociologist Ray Oldenburg), a “place of refuge other than home or workplace where people can regularly visit and commune with friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers”.⁹⁷ This concept is important for students to understand when considering public space, and should be assessed by students with a critical eye to equity.
- [Beneath the Skyway](#)⁹⁸ (**99% Invisible**): Skyways are just one of many public spaces or privately-owned public spaces that are seldom considered but have fascinating stories and important equity issues. This podcast episode does a great job of exploring the whimsical side of skywalks, but also exposes the more alarming prejudices stoked by this distinctive infrastructure.

On Transportation:

- [How Segregation Caused Your Traffic Jam](#)⁹⁹ (**New York Times Magazine**): This article addresses transportation in terms of both road infrastructure and public transit and exposes some of the racially-motivated decision making that has historically occurred in transportation planning.

On Gentrification:

- [Gentrification: A Timeline](#)¹⁰⁰ (**Next City**): This interactive webpage provides a simple, informative history of gentrification from the 1960s until today. The scrollable timeline provides helpful context for the issue, without going into too much depth. It can serve as an introduction to the concept for students.

- [Authenticity and “Post-Chocolate” Cool in a Rapidly Gentrifying Washington, D.C.](#)¹⁰¹ (**Next City**): This story from Next City is an excerpt from the book “Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City,” by Brandi Thompson Summers. It provides an informative case study of gentrification by examining the changes in Washington, D.C. – the American city with the largest percentage of gentrifying neighborhoods of any city in the United States.

On Education:

- [Fractured: The Accelerating Breakdown of America’s School Districts](#)¹⁰² (**EdBuild**): This is one of many valuable resources provided on the website of EdBuild, an organization that was founded to catalyze education reform to increase equity. This webpage provides numerous maps and resources where students can learn about the equity issues with America’s current education system and discover ways to address the problems. This webpage includes interactive maps on which students can examine data from their own school districts or communities.

On Public Health and Environmental Justice:

- [Food Access Research Atlas](#) (**USDA Economic Research Service**): This interactive mapping resource allows students to identify food deserts and other areas near their community with low access to healthy food.
- [The Built Environment and Mental Health](#)¹⁰³ (**Journal of Urban Health**): Beyond physical health and wellbeing, there are both direct and indirect effects on mental health that derive from the built environment. This academic article examines the effects of the built environment on mental health, and considers equity by necessity, “because exposure to poor environmental conditions is not randomly distributed and tends to concentrate among the poor and ethnic minorities”.¹⁰⁴
- [The Mountains of Houston: Environmental Justice and the Politics of Garbage](#)¹⁰⁵ (**Cite 93**): This brief academic article introduces Houston as a case study for the environmental justice issue of waste management, while demonstrating a disproportionate burden on communities of color.
- [The Most Detailed Map of Cancer-Causing Industrial Air Pollution in the U.S.](#)¹⁰⁶ (**ProPublica**): This investigative report, and its accompanying interactive map, provide a data-rich resource for students to explore the link between cancer-causing air pollutants and the built environment. Because the interactive map covers the entire United States, students can explore regions near them to and consider the equity implications for their own region or state.

On Solutions:

- [Planning for Equity Policy Guide](#)¹⁰⁷ (**APA**): This policy guide, which was part of the basis for Units II and III of this course framework, provides

specific, tangible policy recommendations for communities to address issues related to housing, health equity, environmental justice, community engagement and empowerment, gentrification, and more. All of the policy guides provided by the APA are valuable resources for students to learn about the solutions offered by planning, but this guide in particular is especially relevant to the proposed course framework..

- [All-In Cities Policy Toolkit](#)¹⁰⁸ (**PolicyLink**): This policy toolkit resource, endorsed by the American Planning Association, provides recommendations for policies across six different categories (jobs, economic security, homegrown talent, healthy neighborhoods, housing/anti-displacement, democracy and justice) that could be applied to begin addressing some of the issues outlined in this course.¹⁰⁹ This resource provides meaningful solutions and best practices and can be used by students when developing their Community Policy Proposals for their final project, as well.
- [National Equity Atlas](#)¹¹⁰ (**PolicyLink and USC Equity Research Institute**): The National Equity Atlas is a data and policy tool aimed at developing economies that are “equitable, resilient, and prosperous,” and is considered a “report card on racial and economic equity”.¹¹¹ The National Equity Atlas provides data on key indicators, often helpfully disaggregated by race and other demographics, to inform policy makers. For each indicator, key strategies and policies for addressing relevant issues are outlined. Again, this can be a valuable tool for students during their final project policy proposals.
- [4 Steps to Creating Inclusive, Anti-Racist Third Spaces](#)¹¹² (**APA - Planning Magazine**): With an eye toward designing more inclusive spaces, this article makes several tangible suggestions for anti-racist public places, and it could be used by students in evaluating the urban spaces around them.
- [The Curb Cut Effect](#)¹¹³ (**Stanford Social Innovation Review**): This article helps students apply the concept of universal design by examining the way that curb cuts make cities more accessible not only for individuals with disabilities, but for nearly everyone. This provides an entry point for a discussion about the ways that other policies aimed at equity might ultimately be crafted to benefit all groups of society, not merely the targeted group.

APPENDIX C: URBAN FIELD JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT

Overview

As we learn about topics throughout the semester, you will be asked to venture out into the city of Lincoln to identify and document examples “in the field.” To create your Urban Field Journal, you will seek out examples in Lincoln that apply or demonstrate the concepts covered in class. For each entry, you will document with photos at least one example of the assigned concept, as well as identify its location. Then, you will address a series of questions in your field notes about what you have found. You will be expected to reflect on and respond to the prompts as you analyze the built environment through the lens of multiple identities, worldviews, cultures, and power structures.

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to submit these field journal entries to a shared discussion board, where your peers can comment and add to the discourse about the examples you have documented. Multiple options for field journal entries will be provided, with due dates aligned with the week of the lesson we are discussing. However, each student is only required to complete a **minimum of five** field journal entries.

About two-thirds of the way through the semester, as we shift from the problem-centered to solution-centered portion of our course, you will be asked to submit a final version of your Urban Field Journal, in which your initial entries may be revised and enhanced with any additional knowledge gained since your initial submissions.

Journal Entry: Immigrants & Refugees

For this Urban Field Journal entry, identify and photograph something in Lincoln that demonstrates the influence of immigrants. It could be an immigrant-run restaurant or market, a cultural center, a place of worship, or something else from the built environment that reflects a contribution immigrants or refugees have made to the community. Then, answer the following questions in your field notes:

1. What does your photo depict? Why did you choose it?
2. Which immigrant community is represented?
3. What does the American Panorama resource ([linked here](#)), reveal about this particular immigrant population in Lancaster County, either historically or today?

Journal Entry: Accessibility & the Curb Cut Effect

Find and photograph at least one example of infrastructure or design that makes Lincoln more accessible, and one example of an accessibility obstacle that could be remedied through design. Then, address the following questions in your field notes:

1. What examples did you choose to document, and why?
2. Do these examples demonstrate the *Curb Cut Effect*? Why or why not?
3. What populations are served and/or disadvantaged by the examples you chose?
4. Other than the groups it was designed to serve, can you think of other groups who might benefit or be negatively affected by the examples you chose to document?

Journal Entry: Hostile Design

Find and document an example of *Hostile Design* in Lincoln, either downtown, on campus, or elsewhere in the city. Include a photo of the design. Address the following questions in your field notes:

1. Why does this example constitute hostile design?
2. What group or groups is this design hostile towards? Which identities are directly targeted by this design?
3. Can you think of any groups, other than the targeted group, that may be negatively affected by this design? If so, provide examples.
4. In your opinion, is this design use justified? Why or why not? Could another design have met the same needs?
5. Does this design enhance or detract from the city's built environment? Explain your reasoning.

Journal Entry: Public Spaces

Choose a public space (outdoor or indoor), and document it with photographs. Spend some time observing the space – paying close attention to who is using the space and how they are using it. Then, reflect on the following questions in your field notes:

1. What public space did you choose to document? Why did you choose it?
2. From your observations, who is primarily using this space?
3. How are they using it? Is the space well-designed for the ways it is being used?
4. Do you consider this to be an inclusive public space? Why or why not?

Journal Entry: Lincoln Skywalks

For this field journal entry, you will be getting off street level and exploring Lincoln's skywalks – an interesting piece of downtown infrastructure that is privately owned but publicly accessible. Explore the skywalks (during operational hours – they are closed in the evenings) and reflect on the following questions in your field notes:

1. Where did you access the skywalks? Which one(s) did you explore? (Over which street segments?)
2. What are your overall impressions of the skywalk? What about this space interested you or surprised you?
3. Did you encounter other people using the skywalk space? If so, how were they using it?
4. From your perspective, do you think the Lincoln skywalks create a more inclusive and equitable downtown atmosphere? Why or why not?
5. What should Lincoln do with the skywalks going forward? Explain your reasoning.

Journal Entry: Third Spaces

Identify and photograph somewhere on campus or in downtown Lincoln that represents a *Third Place* – preferably one that you yourself personally frequent. Then, reflect in your field notes on the following questions about the place you chose to photograph:

1. What did you choose to photograph?
2. Why does this qualify as a third place?
3. Why do you consider this one of your third places?
4. Is this place welcoming of all identities? Why or why not?

Journal Entry: Public Restrooms

Identify and evaluate a publicly accessible restroom in downtown Lincoln (not on campus) that does not require a purchase for use. Consider the following questions in your field notes:

1. Where is the restroom that you chose? Was it difficult to find one off campus that fit the criteria?
2. Is the restroom you identified publicly or privately funded? Who do you think is responsible for the maintenance of this restroom?
3. What are the hours that this bathroom would be accessible to public? Is it available every day of the week?
4. Is the restroom gender free, or are facilities separated by gender?
5. Is this restroom accessible? Is there enough space in this restroom to accommodate mobility devices or caregivers? Large stalls? Grab bars?
6. Does it seem to you that this restroom is freely available for anyone to use, no strings attached, or is there an implied expectation of users (e.g. purchase something; use a service, etc.)?
7. Does the restroom appear orderly and clean? Would *you* use it?

Journal Entry: Night-Time Planning

For this urban expedition, you are encouraged to go out in pairs, as you'll be exploring after dark. In the area downtown or on/near campus, identify and photograph spaces that you feel have been planned to accommodate nighttime uses. Consider and respond to the following questions in your field notes:

1. Which location did you visit, and why did you select it?
2. What makes this space accommodating of nighttime uses?
3. Evaluate the space in terms of lighting, foot traffic, security features, and nighttime design elements. How do these factors contribute to a feeling of safety?
4. Besides you, who else is using this space at night? How is it being used?
5. Is this space inclusive of all nighttime users? Which identities might be excluded or limited?

APPENDIX D: COMMUNITY POLICY PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENT

Overview: The Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Commission has just hired you to serve as a consultant to identify key areas where Lincoln can enhance equity for all residents of the city. You and a small group of your peers (approximately 4 per group) have been tasked with identifying and explaining what you consider to be the most pressing equity concerns for the city, and which segments of the population are most affected by these issues. Then, using what you have learned in this course, they would like you to propose policy and/or design solutions for the issues you have identified.

Timeline: The Planning Commission will be voting on these policy proposals at their meeting in approximately five weeks and have asked you to brief them before then. You will be presenting your final evaluation and recommendations during the week of December **TBD**.

Available Resources: The city was prepared to pay you the going rate for planning consultants, but you declined compensation out of an altruistic desire to serve your community, so you'll be working for free, without a research budget. You do have access to any open-source data or publicly available existing plans, though, and may want to consider using some of the following as resources:

- [Lincoln-Lancaster County 2050 Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [2020 Lincoln Community Indicators Report](#)
- [Other Planning Department Plans](#)
- [EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#)
- [USDA Food Access Research Atlas](#)
- [New Americans Task Force Immigrant and Refugee Survey Report](#)
- Any observations recorded in your group's Urban Field Journals

Deliverables: You will be responsible for providing:

1. **A memo outlining your policy proposals.** The planning commission are busy people, so brevity is key – no more than one page (single-spaced) for your evaluation of current equity conditions in Lincoln, and no more than two pages (single-spaced) for your specific policy recommendations. You may want to allocate each person in the group a specific topic to address.
2. **A presentation providing an overview of your policy proposals.** To convince city officials that your policy proposals are worthwhile, you will need to make a compelling case during your presentation that will convince decisionmakers of the value of your recommendations. You will have ten minutes as a group to make your case, and five minutes to answer questions. You will need to think critically about what the most important aspects of your proposal are and be concise in your arguments.

APPENDIX E: FRAMEWORK SUMMARY INFOGRAPHIC



ENDNOTES

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