

Course Syllabus

Urban Design (UDES) 505 (3 credits)

Urban Design as Public Policy: Policymaking for a sustainable region

Class Meetings

Friday 9:30 to 12:30

MacMillan 260

Instructor:

Don Luymes, Adjunct Professor

Phone: 604-591-4606 (office)

Email: dluymes@sala.ubc.ca

Office hours are by appointment.

Course Introduction

Urban design is characterized by the interplay between site-specific design interventions and policy frameworks that facilitate, limit, and guide those interventions. Policy frameworks in contemporary cities in many parts of the world are typically very complex, comprised of a web of legal restrictions, plans, zoning and building codes, design guidelines, informal practices and permit requirements. In other cities, particularly in emerging economies, urban design policy frameworks are almost non-existent, or inconsistently applied. Urban designers should understand the policy frameworks within which they practice, and should also understand how these policies may be mobilized or amended in order to create livable, sustainable, equitable and beautiful places.

This course will:

- introduce students to the history and theory of urban design & development policy, with a particularly emphasis on the evolution of zoning regulation in North American cities;
- outline and critically discuss contemporary “best practice” and emerging trends in urban design policy; and
- discuss and critically assess comparative policy approaches and case studies drawn from different parts of the world.

The goals of the course are to:

- increase students’ appreciation and understanding of the policy contexts within which urban design practice occurs; and
- increase students’ abilities to utilize and influence policy towards creating more sustainable and livable urban places.

Course Outline

Session 1: Course Introduction (Jan. 5)

Lecture & discussion: Theory on the regulation of land use, urban form and building design through policy. The interplay and distinction between policy and design in the context of city-making.

Readings: Talen (2012) Foreword (by Andres Duany) and Chapter 1

Session 2: History 1 – Pre-modern urban design policy (Jan. 12)

Lecture and case studies: Early and pre-modern examples of regulations intended to shape all or parts of cities, in different parts of the world and in different political, economic and cultural settings. Case studies including Paris, Barcelona, Washington DC, Beijing, Isfahan (Iran).

Response #1 due

Discussion on readings, lecture and case studies: common themes, relevancy and limitations.

Readings: Ben-Joseph, E. 2005. *The Code of the City: Standards and the Hidden Language of Place Making*. Cambridge: MIT Press – Chapter 1

Session 3: History 2 – Modernism and early zoning (Jan. 19)

Lecture and case studies: Modernist urban reform including land use and building regulation to address issues of livability, health and sanitation and segregation/stratification in society. Emphasis on early zoning codes, engineering standards and building codes, particularly the 1916 New York City Zoning Code.

Response #2 due

Discussion on readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Talen (2012) Chapter 2

Session 4: History 3 – Post-modern critiques and “new urbanism” (Jan. 26)

Lecture and case studies: Reactions and critiques of the modernist regulation regime, including seminal critiques by Jacobs (1961), Cullen (1971), Alexander (1973) and Duany (1980s) emphasizing mixed-use, flexibility, form-based codes and organic responses to site and situation and "place-making".

Response #3 due

Discussion on the readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Selections from Duany & Plater-Zyberk and Congress of New Urbanism (2004)

Case Study Assignment introduced.

Session 5: Contemporary practice 1 – “Plans within plans” (Feb. 2)

Lecture and case studies: The contemporary policy framework in BC (with reference to North America and Europe) for regulating urban development through legislated authority to enact policy-oriented and physical plans at nested scales -- the regional growth strategy and regional transportation plan, the official community plan, secondary and neighbourhood plans (and official development plans in Vancouver).

Response #4 due

Discussion on the readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Talen (2012) Chapter 3

Case Study selections submitted for approval.

NO CLASS ON FEB. 9 AND FEB. 16 (MUMBAI TRIP) AND FEB. 23 (READING BREAK)

Session 6: Contemporary practice 2 – Conventional zoning (Mar. 2)

Lecture and case studies: An exegesis of conventional zoning regulations with examples drawn from Surrey, Vancouver and Portland: regulation of use, density (unit density, lot size and FAR), building envelope (setbacks, height, site coverage), parking (minimum and maximums), site conditions and landscape. Discussion on the rationale, pros and cons of conventional zoning regulations in relation to urban design principles.

Response #5 due

Discussion on the readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Talen (2012) Chapters 4 and 5

Case Study selections confirmed.

Session 7: Contemporary practice 3 – Custom and specialized zoning (Mar. 9)

Lecture and case studies: Common variations on conventional zoning, including variances (DVP), comprehensive development (CD) zones, overlay zones and plan districts (Portland), incentive-based (density bonus) zoning and community amenity contributions linked to rezoning, heritage agreements and housing agreements. Discussion on pros and cons of CD zoning, density bonusing and CACs with reference to examples in Metro Vancouver and other jurisdictions, including Portland.

Response #6 due

Discussion on the readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Condon (2015) "Spot Zoning" and Price (2015) Response

Session 8: Contemporary practice 4 – Form-based Codes & Performance Zoning (Mar. 16)

Lecture and case studies: Alternative approaches to conventional zoning, including form-based codes and performance-based zoning. Examination of several jurisdictions where these alternatives approaches have been implemented, and a discussion of the relative merits and drawbacks of these approaches.

Response #7 due

Discussion on the readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Talen (2012) Chapter 6

Session 9: Contemporary practice 5 – Design controls and guidelines (Mar. 23)

Lecture and case studies: Site and building design controls in the context of BC legislation (Vancouver Charter and the LGA), including building schemes, restrictive covenants, development permits and design guidelines, with most emphasis on development permits (form and character). The role of advisory design panels and other design review processes. Comparison with other jurisdictions in North America (Ontario, Washington) with more limited means of regulating site and building design, discussion on pros and cons of BC's system.

Response #8 due

Discussion on the readings, lecture and case studies.

Readings: Punter (2003) Chapter 9 "Discretionary Control and Design Quality"

NO CLASS MARCH 30 (Good Friday Holiday)

Session 10: Contemporary practice 6 – Streets and Engineering standards (Apr. 6)

Lecture and panel discussion (With Philip Bellefontaine, Transportation Engineer): Engineering standards relevant to urban design, particularly street standards and sections (transit, automobile, cycle and pedestrian infrastructure), road classifications including specialized sections. Review of the history, theory and practice of parking and loading standards, and the rationale and conditions for variation of standards.

Response #9 due

Discussion on the pros and cons of street and parking standards in various urban contexts, particularly in relation to travel demand management (TDM) and livability.

Readings: Selections from Jacobs, A. 1993. *Great Streets*. Cambridge: MIT Press

Case study presentations scheduled during Exam period (April 9-13 – Date TBC)

Case study reports due 5:00 pm Friday Apr. 13 by email or Dropbox.

Readings

The core text for this course is **Talen, Emily. 2012. *City Rules: How Regulations Affect Urban Form*. Washington: Island Press**. This book is available as an e-book through the UBC Library, call number HT 167.T34 2012. Required weekly readings will be assigned from this book and from supplementary sources in each class session for discussion in the following class. Students will be required to submit a short (200 word) written reflection on the weekly readings and case studies, in response to a question posed along with the readings in the prior class session.

Evaluation

Participation in weekly class discussions and seminars	15%
Written responses to the weekly readings (8x5%)	40%
Case Study Report	25%
Case Study Presentation	20%