

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA - SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

**DESIGN OF CITIES**

**Michael Bednar**

**SPRING 2007**

**PLAN 563/ARCH 563**

**Thursday 3:30 – 6:00**

**Campbell 304**

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Cities are places formed by cultural forces which enable people to dwell. Design is one of those cultural forces which give shape to settlement on the land. When design operates in conjunction with social, political and economic forces, it gives rise to coherent settlement forms which are both memorable and supportive of human enterprise.

This is a course in urban design which adopts a humanistic view of the city. The artifact of the city, both historic and contemporary, is studied from the viewpoint of the people and groups who dwell there. What psychological and social mechanisms do they utilize to perceive, use, navigate, remember and experience the city? The premise is that through understanding these mechanisms, planners and designers can develop more humanistically meaningful urban realms.

The course begins by analyzing the city as a physical artifact. The role of natural forces is studied; topography, water, climate and vegetation. This is followed by a study of open spaces and buildings as typological elements which give spatial form to urban places. Design is the artful composition of these elements to create meaningful visual and spatial order through the use of form, hierarchy and geometry.

Cities are built environments experienced and used by individuals and groups of people. Individuals experience the city through sensory perception, motion and memory. Groups use cities as functional entities for living, working, learning, recreating and socializing. The urban realm provides activity settings and social settings beyond the scale of individual buildings, collective settings for the conduct of life. All of this occurs through the dynamics of time; past, present and future.

Successful city design occurs when physical forms and humanistic needs coalesce, when the physical artifact creates positive human responses, when the setting enables life to prosper. This has occurred in some superb European cities such as Rome, Paris, Berlin, London, and Copenhagen and some notable American cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, San Francisco and Savannah.

This course will be conducted as a combination lecture/seminar with extensive slide shows and weekly discussions. Student work will include a book review, an urban analysis project, and a design sketch problem.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- I.** To gain an understanding of the formative elements which constitute the physical urban realm.
- II.** To gain an understanding of the means by which individuals (including yourself) experience and comprehend the urban physical world.
- III.** To understand how people dwell in the urban world and use urban public space.
- IV.** To learn about the mechanisms available to shape and control urban design and development.
- V.** To explore the historic and contemporary role of the center city within the burgeoning urban region.
- VI.** To gain exposure to the prevalent theories of urban design by reading the classic texts in urban design literature.
- VII.** To gain an appreciation of the way that social, political and economic forces influence the form of the urban realm.
- VIII.** To provide a multitude of successful examples of urban design so as to develop a repertoire of knowledge.

The basic intent of this course is to give students the knowledge, values and means for understanding the physical urban realm, its constituent elements and design composition.

**KNOWLEDGE:** case studies, slide shows, videos

**VALUES:** book reviews, discussions, debates

**MEANS:** urban place analysis and design sketch problem

**COURSE SYLABUS**

**Viewing of videos is required. They are on reserve at Clemons Library. At least one reading should be done for each class session. The books are on reserve in the Fine Arts Library.**

<b>Jan. 18</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	Course concept, content and requirements
	<b>URBAN FORM</b>	Formal models and characteristics Philadelphia case study
	<b>Readings:</b>	Lynch, <u>Good City Form</u> (Appendix D, 373-389) (Chap. 16 277-291) Kostof, <u>The City Shaped</u> (Chap. 2, The Grid) Hall, <u>Planning Europe's Capital Cities</u> (Chap. 2) Bacon, <u>Design of Cities</u> , (Ed. 1 – pp.242-269 Ed. 2 - pp. 264-307)
	<b>Video:</b>	<i>Understanding Cities (Rome and Paris)</i>
<b>Jan. 25</b>	<b>NATURE</b>	Organic models; natural forces
	<b>ECOLOGY</b>	City as ecosystem; sustainable urban design
	<b>Readings:</b>	Lynch, <u>Good City Form</u> (Chap. 4, 73-98) Kostof, <u>The City Shaped</u> (Chap. 1, Organic Patterns) McHarg, <u>Design with Nature</u> (67-78, 175-186)
	<b>Discussion:</b>	<i>Future of sustainable urban design</i>
<b>Feb. 1</b>	<b>URBAN SPACES</b>	Typology and evolution; squares and parks
	<b>URBAN STREETS</b>	Typology and parameters
	<b>Readings:</b>	Koetter & Rowe, <u>Collage City</u> (50-85) Kostof, <u>The City Assembled</u> (Ch. 3, Public Places) (Ch. 4, The Street) Jacobs, <u>Great Streets</u> (Part 4 269-316)
	<b>Debate:</b>	<i>Urban Design and Terrorism</i>

- Feb. 8**      **URBAN BUILDINGS**      Figure and ground; object and infill
- ENSEMBLES**      Exemplary case studies
- Readings:**      Rasmussen, Towns and Buildings (117-132, 39-54)  
 Sitte, Art of Building Cities (skim entire book)  
 Bednar, The New Atrium (Chap. 1, 3-32)  
 Goldberger, Skyscraper (Chap. 2 and 8)  
 Hegemann & Peets, Civic Art (peruse entire book)
- Discussion:**      *Strategies for Downtown (Carl Abbott)*  
*Why Paris Works*
- Feb. 15**      **MOVEMENT**      Sequences, orientation, mental maps
- TRANSIT**      Trains, subways and cars
- Readings:**      Sennett, Flesh and Stone (Chap. 10)  
 Cullen, Townscape (17-96)  
 Stea and Downs, Image of Environment  
 (8-26, 63-78)  
 Kay, Asphalt Nation, Part I
- Video:**      *Divided Highways*
- Discussion:**      *Mental maps*  
*Future of the car culture – Tysons Subway*
- BOOK REVIEWS ARE DUE AT THIS CLASS**
- Feb. 22**      **IMAGEABILITY**      Path, edge, node, district, landmark
- NEIGHBORHOODS**      Theory, form, social order
- Readings:**      Lynch, Image of the City (46-91)  
 Lynch, Good City Form (Ch. 13, 239-250)  
 Banerjee & Baer, Beyond the Neighborhood Unit,  
 Ch. 1, 2, 7
- Discussion:**      *Personal and future neighborhoods*
- March 1**      **URBAN HOUSING**      Household types, lifestyles, housing design

**NEW URBANISM** Traditional neighborhood design

**Readings:** Lynch, Good City Form (409-417)  
Jacobs, Death and Life of Great American Cities,  
Part I  
Calthorpe, The Next American Metropolis (13-38)  
Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Speck, Suburban Nation  
(183-214)

**Debate:** *Future urban living*

**March 5-9** **SPRING BREAK**

**March 15** **URBAN TIME** History, growth, change, cycles

**PRESERVATION** City as repository of cultural history

**Readings:** Lynch, What Time is this Place? (29-64)  
Koetter & Rowe, Collage City (118-149)  
Huxtable, The Unreal America (12-36, 30-71)  
Bacon, Design of Cities (Ed. 1 – 202-207  
Ed. 2 – 201-227)

**Debate:** *What should we save?*

**March 22** **PEDESTRIANIZATION** Public behavior and socialization

**PUBLIC SPACE** Exterior versus interior

**Readings:** Mitchell, e-topia (Chap. 5 and 6)  
Bednar, Interior Pedestrian Places (Chap. 1)  
Gehl, Life Between Buildings (Chap. 4)  
Whyte, City (103-141)

**Video:** *Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*

**Discussion:** *Public activity in the digital age*

**March 29** **STUDENT PRESENTATIONS** - Urban Place Project



## STUDENT WORK

Each student will be required to complete three assignments to be submitted in written form: **Book Review, Urban Place Analysis and Design Sketch Problem**. The instructor will review these submissions and provide written evaluations. Each of them will be 25% of the course requirement and final grade. **Active participation** in the class is also a requisite and the remaining 25% of the course grade. This includes presentation of a required reading, required videos, required readings and participation in the debates and discussions held in class. Much of the material presented is in the form of slide lectures that can only be obtained through **mandatory class attendance**.

## BOOK REVIEW

Each student will write a critical review of a book from the following list. Other books from the Bibliography that put forth a point of view, as opposed to formal content, can also be reviewed with the instructor's approval. The 1000 word review should not summarize the book but rather offer an appraisal of its value to an urban designer. How do the concepts and content of this book improve our ability to design humanistic cities? A brief discussion of the book's relationship to similar books would be a useful introduction.

Each student will be asked to make a critical commentary on the chosen book during a given class. What issues does the book address regarding urban design theory or knowledge?

Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jane Jacobs (1961)

Design of Cities, Edmund Bacon (1968)

Design with Nature, Ian McHarg (1969)

Collage City, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (1978)

Image of the City, Kevin Lynch (1960)

City: Discovering the Center, William Whyte (1988)

The Next Metropolis; Peter Calthorpe (1993)

The City Shaped, Spiro Kostof (1991)

The City Assembled, Spiro Kostof (1992)

Suburban Nation, Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck (2000)

Downtown, Robert M. Fogelson (2001)

Ideal Cities, Ruth Eaton (2002)

Building Suburbia, Dolores Hayden (2003)

Preserving the World's Great Cities, Anthony M. Tung (2001)

The Edifice Complex, Deyan Sudjic (2005)

The Great Society Subway, Zachary M. Schrag (2006)

