Globalizing Social Activism: Sustainable Development in Urban Areas
(ENVST-UA 9417-001/SCA-UA 9617-001/ UPADM-GP 9217-001)

Fall semester 2015, Thursdays, 9:00 am – noon.

NYU-DC classroom (to be determined) or Washington, DC field trips

Instructor Details
Prerequisites N/A

Class Description
In 2008, for the first time in world history the number of people living in urban areas exceeded the number of people living in rural areas. By 2050 between 70% and 80% of the global population will live in and adjacent to cities. In acknowledging the urgent demands of our urban present and future, this course (1) examines the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of contemporary cities; (2) makes the case for sustainable urban development as a way to mitigate the impacts of population growth, globalization, social exclusion, and the effects of climate change. We will explore what is, and what could be, by discussing many themes, including: urban spatial planning and decision-making, slums and slum typology, urban economies, air and water quality, urban food systems, new paradigms for energy/water/waste infrastructure, green building, sustainable materials, and integrated design. We will consider how to measure sustainability and discuss the effectiveness of sustainability indicators. We will examine examples of social entrepreneurship and the power of information technology and social networks in political enfranchisement and the diffusion of ideas. We will also highlight the pivotal role of art and culture in our sustainable urban future.

Desired Outcomes
• To describe the impact of cities on their regional ecologies and the global ecology;
• To analyze the components of and barriers to urban sustainability and sustainable design;
• To be able to apply this understanding to the development of solutions to real-world urban social, environmental, and economic problems;
• To be able to quantify or measure progress towards solutions.
Assessment Components and Expectations

Your grade depends on the following:

- Class participation: 20%
- Assignments: 40% total for essays and/or other short assignments (four total)
- Mid term examination: 20%
- Final collaborative project presentation and report: 20%

Failure to complete or submit any of these required components results in failure in the class.

**Grade A:** The student makes excellent use of empirical and theoretical material and offers well-structured arguments in his/her work. The student writes comprehensive essays / exam questions and his/her work shows strong evidence of critical thought and extensive reading.

**Grade B:** The candidate shows a good understanding of the problem and has demonstrated the ability to formulate and execute a coherent research strategy.

**Grade C:** The work is acceptable and shows a basic grasp of the research problem. However, the work fails to organize findings coherently and is in need of improvement.

**Grade D:** The work passes because some relevant points are made. However, there may be a problem of poor definition, lack of critical awareness, poor research.

**Grade F:** The work shows that the research problem is not understood; there is little or no critical awareness and the research is clearly negligible.

Grade Conversion

NYU Washington, DC uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numerical Range</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-94</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-90</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-87</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<td>86-84</td>
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<td>83-80</td>
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<td>79-77</td>
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<td>76-74</td>
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<td>73-70</td>
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<td>69-67</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
<td>65-66</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>below 65</td>
<td>F</td>
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Study abroad at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. **To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades.** Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure. At all Global Academic Centers, unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.

To seek an excused absence for medical reasons, students must email or discuss with the Academic Program Coordinator in advance of their missed class. For an excused absence, students must produce a doctor’s note dated with the exact dates of the missed class and/or exam.

Non-medical absences must be discussed with the Academic Program Coordinator prior to the date(s) in question, who will communicate the absence to all relevant faculty members. If faculty members do receive notification, the student has not procured an excused absence.

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Office of Academic Support in writing via email at least one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

NYU Washington, DC expects students to arrive to class promptly (both at the beginning and after any breaks), to be attentive, and to remain for the duration of the class. If full class attendance and participation becomes a problem, it is the prerogative of each instructor to apply the rule for unexcused absences, which may include a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade.

Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. This means they should initiate email and/or office hour discussions to discuss any missed lectures and assignments and arrange a timeline for submitting missed work.

Please note that for classes involving a field trip or other external visit, transportation difficulties are never grounds for an excused absence. It is the student’s responsibility to arrive at the announced meeting point in a punctual and timely fashion. Staff members may always be reached by cell phone for advice regarding public transportation.
Late Submission of Work

1) Any written work due should be submitted before the beginning of the class session by email, in modifiable MS Word format or equivalent, as an attachment sent to vk37@nyu.edu. Please use this naming convention for your work: yourname_essaynumber_date.

2) Late work should be emailed to the faculty as soon as it is completed. (If the assignment must be submitted in person, the Academic Program Coordinator can collect on behalf of the faculty between the hours of 9–5, M–F.)

3) Late work will be reduced for a fraction of a letter grade (e.g., A to A-, A-to B+, etc.) for every day it is late, including weekends.

4) Written work during the semester that is submitted 5 days after the submission date (including weekends) without an agreed extension fails and is given a zero.

5) Students who arrive to class late for an exam do not have automatic approval to take extra time to complete the exam.

6) Students who miss an exam (including the final) without previously arranged permission will receive a zero on that exam.

7) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Site Director.

Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or see their website (http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-andwellness/students-with-disabilities.html) for further information.
As the University's policy on "Academic Integrity for Students at NYU" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." **Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.**

The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

NYU Washington, DC takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. All your written work must be submitted as a hard copy AND in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form.

It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

http://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/policies-and-guidelines/academic-integrity-for-students-at-nyu.html
http://gls.nyu.edu/page/gls.academicintegrity
http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity
**Required Texts**  We will have one basic text: *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*, 3rd edition (Routledge, 2014), edited by Stephen Wheeler and Timothy Beatley. You may access it through this link -- [http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nyulibrary/docDetail.action?docID=10951230&p00=sustainable+urban+development+reader](http://site.ebrary.com/lib/nyulibrary/docDetail.action?docID=10951230&p00=sustainable+urban+development+reader) -- or in hard copy in the NYU reading room. All other readings will be available online or in PDF format as posted to our NYU Classes site. Please note that many required readings, though seeming numerous for some sessions, are only a few pages in length, or else a blog entry. For further investigation, I have included recommended readings for each topic.

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<th><strong>Supplemental Texts(s) (not required for purchase)</strong></th>
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**Internet Research Guidelines** Open source internet research resources, while helpful, are not entirely reliable; this includes sources such as Wikipedia. Quotes or attributions from these sources will result in a reduced grade on written work.

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<th><strong>Additional Required Equipment</strong></th>
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<td>We’ll conduct field visits during the semester. Please purchase a small notebook or sketchbook for taking notes and/or sketching during class field trips. We will engage in occasional diagramming exercises. Blick Art Supply, a good source, is a few blocks away, near 13th and I Streets, NW.</td>
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**Session 1**

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<th>Thursday, September 3</th>
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<td><strong>Introduction</strong> (no readings required for today). What is a city? What are the consequences of an urbanized world? What is sustainability? What does sustainable development mean, and what does urban sustainability look like in reality?</td>
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Introduction to such terms and concepts as: urban resilience; adaptive design; biophilic design; whole systems thinking/integrated planning; climate security; global cities; the triple bottom line; “green”/participatory governance; measurement and rating systems; sustainability indicators. Urban decline and resurgence.

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1 The order of sessions is subject to change. **Expect the addition of field trips during class sessions.**
The importance of the urban plan. Why and how urban space affects social interactions, environmental quality, and economic health, and how people “produce” urban space. The vocabulary and concepts of urban planning. “Classic” urban planning/regulations vs. sustainable paradigms. Scale and density. Place-making. Transitions and the urban edge. The planned (zoning) and unplanned.

Required readings:

- Jan Gehl and Brigitte Svarer, Chapter 3 (pp. 21-35) and pp. 106-7 from How to Study Public Life (2013), posted to Classes.

Recommended readings:

- Project for Public Spaces, “Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places,” http://www.pps.org/reference/11steps/ and
Power. Who makes decisions? Participatory governance, government regulation, the private sector, the informal sector, corporatization. Forms of exclusion and activism.

Discussion of class project.

Required readings:

- Read the critique of tactical urbanism by Neil Brenner: http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/587-is-tactical-urbanism-an-alternative-to-neoliberal-urbanism. This is a response to the MOMA exhibit associated with the concept of tactical urbanism:” http://uneven-growth.moma.org/.

Recommended readings:

- Henri LeFebvre, Chapter 14, The Right to the City.
**Green development and cooperative scale.** New forms of development, buildings, and housing. Green rating systems and mandates. Human health, behavior, and expectations. Urban biophilic and climate-responsive design.

**Required readings:**

- The Sustainable Urban Development Reader, pp. 309-36 (section entitled Green Architecture and Building); pp. 497-510 (section entitled Urban Sustainability at the Building and Site Scale); pp. 511-30 (section entitled Urban Sustainability at the Neighborhood or District Scale).
- EcoDistricts Toolkit from the Portland, Oregon Sustainability Institute, as posted: “Action Guide,” “Assessment.”
- Living City Block: review content at http://www.sallan.org/Snapshot/2014/04/eco_districts_making_nyc_more_sustainability_resilient_one_neighborhood_at_a_time.php

**Recommended readings:**

- Access the Make It Right foundation website at http://makeitright.org/where-we-work/new-orleans/; read description of process, homeowner eligibility, and review the designs of homes themselves.
Mobility. Transport systems, costs and benefits, incentives and disincentives. Case studies: Curitiba, Brazil; Medellin, Colombia; Washington, DC; Copenhagen; London; Singapore.

Required readings:
- Section on Transportation in The Sustainable Urban Development Reader, pp.151-78.

Recommended readings:

Required readings:
- Kate Ascher, *The Works*, "Power" (pp. 92 - 123) and "Keeping it Clean" (pp. 152-203). This is mostly a picture book. Excerpts posted to Classes.

Recommended readings:
- Center for Neighborhood Technology, “The Value of Green Infrastructure” as posted on NYU Classes.
- View the short video on Rotterdam’s proposed water plaza at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kujf4BTL3pE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kujf4BTL3pE).
Session 7
Thursday, October 15
Mid-term examination.

Session 8
Thursday, October 22
Best practice cities. Ecocities, sustainability plans, contested examples, failures.

Required readings:
• New York City: skim PlaNYC of 2014
• Timothy Beatley, ed., Green Cities of Europe (Island Press, 2012), Chapters 1, 3 (Freiburg), 4 (Copenhagen), 8 (London).

Recommended readings:
• Read the Table of Contents and the Executive Summary of New York City’s One New York: The Plan for a Strong and Just City (2014), on Classes.

Session 9
Thursday, October 29
Food security. Urban food systems and agriculture. Field trip or guest speaker.

Required readings:
• Michael Pollan, “The Food Movement Rising,” and

Recommended readings:
• City of Detroit, Urban Agriculture Ordinance, April 2013, as posted.
• Case study, Nairobi: http://www.foodmetres.eu.case-studies/nairobi-case-study/.
Session 10
Thursday, November 5


Required readings:
- New Yorker, November 13, 2006 issue, George Packer, “The Megacity: Decoding the Chaos of Lagos,”
  http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2006/11/13/061113fa_fact_packer
- New Yorker, October 13, 2014 issue, Peter Hessler, “Letter from Cairo: Tales of the Trash,”
  http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/10/13/tales-trash
- See the Atlantic CityLab’s blog post:

Recommended readings:

Session 11
Thursday, November 12

Voice and identity. The role of art and cultural activism in constructing civic identity and in urban regeneration. Theaster Gates; public art; urban events and spectacles; art as an economic generator; global hip-hop and other cultural movements. Case studies.

Required readings:
- Article by Mark Godfrey on Theaster Gates, “Designs for Life,” Frieze Magazine Issue 149, September 2012,

Recommended readings:
- Review the Tate Modern’s Global Cities exhibition document
Session 12
Thursday, November 19

Poverty. The growth and nature of slums.

Required readings:
- Mike Davis, Planet of Slums (Verso, 2006), posted to Classes.
- Excerpts from Janice Perlman, Favela (Oxford, 2010), posted to Classes.

THANKSGIVING BREAK (November 25 through 29)

Session 13
Thursday, December 3

Prosperity. Economic development, innovation, jobs, lending.

Required readings:

Recommended readings:
**Ecocities, dystopias, future visions.**
Vulnerability and resilience. Engineered solutions for sea-level rise and coastal communities. New Ecocities. **In-class film.**

**Required readings:**
- Ursula LeGuin, excerpts from Chapter 4, *The Dispossessed (1974)*, as posted to Classes.

**Recommended readings:**

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**Final session**  
**Final presentation.**

**Thursday, December 17**

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**Classroom Etiquette**
Attention, engagement, respect.

**Required Co-curricular Activities**
See the week-by-week schedule, above.

**Your Instructor**