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

Spring semester 2015, Thursdays, 9:00 am start time

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

**Instructor Details** Victoria Kiechel, AIA, LEED AP+

Office hours: after class and upon request

**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 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 assignments (to be discussed) furthering the work of the semester’s collaboration with NYU-Berlin on a project for a joint, simultaneous, environmentally-themed event in Berlin and Washington, DC on “citizen (re)claimed ground”: Templehof Airport in Berlin and 11th Street (pedestrian) Bridge, Washington, DC.
- Mid term examination: 20%
- Final 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:

- 100-94 A
- 93-90 A-
- 90-87 B+
- 86-84 B
- 83-80 B-
- 79-77 C+
- 76-74 C
- 73-70 C-
- 69-67 D+
- 65-66 D
- below 65 F
NYU Washington, DC has a strict policy about course attendance. No unexcused absences are permitted. All medical-based absence requests must be presented by the student to the Program Manager for Student Life before or during the class that is missed. The Program Manager for Student Life can help arrange doctor's appointments. In case of a longer-lasting illness, medical documentation must be provided. All non-medical absence requests must be presented by the student to the Program Manager for Academic Affairs. Non-medical requests should be made in advance of the intended absence.

Unexcused absences will be penalized by deducting 3% from the student’s final course mark. Unexcused absences from exams are not permitted and will result in failure of the exam. If you are granted an excused absence from examination (with authorization, as above), your instructor will decide how you will make up the assessment component, if at all (by make-up examination, extra coursework, or an increased weighting on an alternate assessment component, etc.).

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 becomes a problem, it is the prerogative of each instructor to deduct from the final grade for late arrival and early departure. Being more than 10 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence.

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 submitted in digital form as above to the instructor and also in person in hard copy format to the instructor or in person to the Program Manager for Academic Affairs who will write on the essay or other work the date and time of submission, in the presence of the student. If the Manager for Academic Affairs is not in the office, another member of the administrative staff can accept the work and write the date and time of submission on the work, again only in the physical presence of the student.

(3) Work submitted within 5 weekdays after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 10 points on the 100 point scale

(4) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 weekdays following the session date fails and is given a zero.

(5) Please note that end of semester essays must be submitted on time.

(6) If for whatever reason you feel you cannot submit any written work in time, you should discuss this with the instructor and the Manager for Academic Affairs.

(7) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

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.
**Plagiarism Policy** 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 in electronic form to the instructor. Your instructor may check for plagiarism or 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://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://gls.nyu.edu/page/gls.academicintegrity)  
[http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity)

**Required Text(s)** We will have one basic hard copy text: *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*, 3rd edition (Routledge, 2014), edited by Stephen Wheeler and Timothy Beatley. You may access it through the NYU reading room.


**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.

**Additional Required Equipment** 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. Utrecht Art Supply, a good source, is a few blocks away, near 13th and I Streets, NW.
**Session 1**
Thursday, February 5

**Introduction.** What is a city? What are the consequences of an urbanized world? What is sustainability? What does sustainable development mean? Introduction to terms and concepts, including: 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.

---

**Session 2**
Thursday, February 12

**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. Slums and slum typology.

**Readings:**


---

1 The order of sessions is subject to change. Expect the addition of field trips during class sessions.
**Session 3**
**Thursday, February 19**

**Power.** Who makes decisions? Participatory governance, government regulation, the private sector, the informal sector. Social exclusion. Forms of activism. Mobile media as a participatory instrument. Data, observation, feedback.

**Discussion of class project and citizen activism in Berlin and Washington, DC.**

**Readings:**
- Henri LeFevbre, Chapter 14, *The Right to the City*.
- Kurt Iveson, “Mobile Media and the Strategies of Urban Citizenship” from Marcus Foth et al.’s *From Social Butterfly to Engaged Citizen* (MIT, 2011); see also “ICT Facts and Figures: The World in 2013” [http://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/139649919?access_key=key-1nl5tov8cfhsb0vng32&allow_share=false&show_recommendations=false&view_mode=scroll](http://www.scribd.com/fullscreen/139649919?access_key=key-1nl5tov8cfhsb0vng32&allow_share=false&show_recommendations=false&view_mode=scroll)
- Newsclips on Templehof Airport (Berlin) and 11th Street Bridge design (DC).
**Session 4**

**Thursday, February 26**

**Green buildings and housing.** Conventional forms of urban housing; new forms of urban housing. Green building rating systems and mandates. Human behavior and expectations. Biophilic design; climate-responsive design; micro-housing; disaster housing.

**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*)
Session 5  
Thursday, March 5

Videoconference with NYU-Berlin teammates. Discussion of joint project. Room TBA.

Mobility. Transport systems, costs and benefits, incentives and disincentives. Case studies: Curitiba, Brazil; Medellin, Colombia; Washington, DC; Copenhagen; London; Singapore.

Readings

As preparation for the joint project with NYU-Berlin:

- Read three articles on Templehof Field in our Classes folder provided by Professor Meyer of NYU-Berlin ("The Field as ‘Field’,” “Careers of a Conflict,” “The Skylark Is Brooding Here")
- Read the following news stories and web material on the upcoming 11th Street Bridge-Park:
  - http://bridgepark.org/community-impact

For transportation:

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

Readings:
- Kate Ascher, The Works, “Power” (pp. 92 - 123) and “Keeping it Clean” (pp. 152-203). NYU Library link at https://getit.library.nyu.edu/go/9364193.
- On the new water paradigm: from the Water Environment Research Foundation (WERF), “Integration Report” on NYU Classes
- 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 7</th>
<th>Mid-term examination.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, March 19</td>
<td>Attend screening of Ecocide at NYU DC (DC Environmental Film Festival)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring Break</th>
<th>NO CLASS.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 8</th>
<th>Check-in teleconference session with NYU Berlin.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 2</td>
<td><strong>Cooperative scale.</strong> Neighborhood plans and neighborhood-level shared systems. Asset-based community development. EcoDistricts and the influence of the Portland, Oregon EcoDistrict model. Living City Block.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attend *Bodies and Boundaries* conference session on Friday April 3 on urban planning and human health.

**Readings:**

- Section entitled *Urban Sustainability at the Neighborhood or District Scale*, in *The Sustainable Urban Development Reader*, pp. 511-30.
- EcoDistricts Toolkit from the Portland, Oregon Sustainability Institute, as posted: “Action Guide,” “Assessment.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session 9</th>
<th>Food security. Urban food systems and agriculture. <strong>Field trip or guest speaker.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday, April 9</td>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- City of Detroit, Urban Agriculture Ordinance, April 2013, as posted.
Session 10  Thursday, April 16

Waste as opportunity? Rag-picking and entrepreneurship. Case studies: Cairo, Kibera, New Delhi, Mumbai, Porto Allegre.

Readings:

Session 11  Thursday, April 23

Voice and identity. The role of art and cultural activism in construction 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.

Readings:

Session 12  Thursday, April 30

Possible check-in with NYU Berlin.


Readings:
- Mike Davis, “SAPing the Third World,” Planet of Slums, Chapter 7 (Verso, 2006)
Session 13
Thursday, May 7
Visit with and review of project ideas with Berlin NYU Professor Jan-Henrik Meyer.

Session 14
Thursday, May 14
Ecocities and future visions.

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

Final session
Thursday, May 21
Final presentation.

Classroom Etiquette
Attention, engagement, respect.

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

Suggested Co-curricular Activities
DC Environmental Film Festival attendance; *Bodies and Boundaries* conference attendance.

Your Instructor
Vicky Kiechel, AIA and LEED AP+, is a practicing architect, native Washingtonian, and the mother of two college-aged native Washingtonians. She works for the Cadmus Group, Inc., an environmental consultancy, on the development and implementation of green building policy for clients in the public (federal, state, and local) and private sectors. Her clients have included the US Green Building Council, US EPA, the states of Wisconsin and Arkansas, and the Appalachian Regional Commission. Vicky’s design work includes small-to-medium scale residential and institutional projects such as the Washington, DC offices of the Mexican-American Legal
Defense and Educational Fund and the Maury Public Elementary School Library for the DC Capitol Hill Libraries Project, a public-private partnership. Vicky also teaches in the Global Environmental Politics Program at American University, where she was named Most Innovative Green Teacher of the Year in 2010. She holds degrees from Yale College; Oxford University, where she was a Rhodes Scholar; and the Harvard Graduate School of Design.