SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CITY

Course Description: The objective of this course is to critically examine best strategies, plans, and practices for creating a productive, just, and equitable U.S. city for all of its residents. The focus is on building and sustaining this complex, multi-textured landscape as a viable residential, commercial, industrial, and general economic arena. Lectures and discussions will provide you with the broad background of theories, concepts, and principles that will be essential for imagining and implementing these ideals, strategies and plans. Emphasis will be placed on making and sustaining best city economies, viable neighborhoods, robust public spaces, healthy citizen identities, and ideal government programs. Each of these component parts of the city are explored as entities whose purpose and function are in need of explaining, critiquing, and human managing.

Course Requirements: Mid- term  25 percent
                            Final Exam   25 percent
                            Group Discussion  25 percent
                            Final Paper  25 percent

Group Discussion: For every Wednesday class, after the lecture portion of the class, we will discuss the two required articles for that module. Everyone will be expected to have read the articles and to contribute to the discussion. All of the articles will be directly relevant to that day’s lecture. We will collectively examine the theory, empirical data, findings, and implications of each article.

Mid-term and Final Exams: Both the mid-term and final exam will be all essay tests. To assist the study process, I will hand out candidate questions for both exams approximately two weeks prior to the testing dates. Each handout will consist of 5 questions for you to interrogate and prepare to answer in class. In both cases, two of the five questions will be selected to constitute the exam. Questions will be drawn from the lectures, required readings (in asterisks in the syllabus), class discussions, and the article reviews. In the essays, students will be expected to exhibit a strong understanding of the issues being assessed, the nature of debates that frame these issues, and the content of programs and policies relevant to managing the issues.

Final Paper: The final paper will involve you critically examining a contemporary urban problem that threatens city sustainability and offering a solution to it. As we will discuss in class, there is a wide range of such problems that plague the city (e.g., inequitable gentrification, growing class-race economic divides, deepening class-race segregation, proliferating housing foreclosures and housing abandonments). In a well-written 15 page essay, you will concisely summarize the nature of the problem, discuss the actors and institutions involved, and propose a solution that will emerge out of a theoretical perspective that you will embrace (and discuss). Details of the paper will come from a handout in the second week of the class.

Learning Goals: Students in this course will acquire an important and fundamental intellectual package. At its center will be an enhanced knowledge about city theory, deepened understandings about urban policy, and upgraded comprehensions of urban programs to enable a critical assessment and propose ideal alternatives to making an ideal urban environment.

To ensure an ideal learning environment and experience, students will be expected to attend lectures. At the same time, the expectation is that students will not be late to class (this can be very disruptive) and cell phones will be turned off.
Readings: Geography 350 Reader (found at Illini Union Bookstore) that consists of:


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TOPICS

Week I. Introduction and What is Sustainability?
- Nature of the class
- Defining sustainability
- Operationalizing sustainability


**Week II. Three Dominant Paradigms to Understand the City and Sustainability**
- Neo-Classicism
- Institutionalism (Urban Managerialism)
- Marxism


**Weeks III and IV. Sustaining the City Economy**
- City economies at work
- Fair, equitable, and productive city economies
- Threats to viable city economies
- Sustaining best city economies


**Weeks V, VI and VII. Sustaining Viable Neighborhoods**
- Viable Neighborhoods at work
- Fair, equitable, and productive neighborhoods
- Threats to viable neighborhoods
- Sustaining best city neighborhoods


**Weeks VIII and IX: Sustaining Public Space**
- Public space at work
- Fair, equitable, and productive public spaces
- Threats to viable public spaces
- Sustaining planned public spaces


Mele, Christopher, 1999. Selling the Lower East Side (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota).


** Week X: Midterm (on the Wednesday before Spring Break)

** Weeks XI and XII: Sustaining the Healthy Citizen Identity
- Current identities at work
- The constituting of troubled, aberrant identities
- Sustaining healthy, ideal identities


** Weeks XIII and XIV: Recent Government Programs/Policies to Promote Urban Sustainability
- Interpreting Government goals
- Rationale for government response
- Nature of government programs – Master Plan, Zoning, CDBG, Urban Homesteading, BIDS
- Programmatic ideals for the future


