

The City and Justice  
Professor Brian J. Shaw

Political Science 454  
Spring 2009

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Texts:

Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History* (Chicago, 2006)  
Peter Dreier, John Mollenkopf and Todd Swanstrom, *Place Matters* (Kansas, 2004)  
Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and Jeff Speck, *Suburban Nation* (North Point, 2001)  
Oliver Gillham, *The Limitless City* (Island, 2002)  
Owen D. Gutfreund, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Sprawl* (Oxford, 2005)  
Christopher Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism* (Island, 2008)  
Alex Marshall, *How Cities Work* (Texas, 2000)  
Pietro S. Nivola, *Laws of the Landscape* (Brookings, 1999)  
Douglas Rae, *City: Urbanism and Its End* (Yale, 2005)

Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom's *Place Matters* and Gillham's *Limitless City* are available for purchase at the Davidson Student Store. Students are individually responsible for purchasing the other seven texts. (I recommend searching for new and used copies of these books at sometimes very considerable discounts at Amazon.com, or at Fetchbook.info and Totallycheap.com, websites which will direct you to the best prices available at a wide variety of online merchants. I also recommend that you place your orders for these books **very soon**, since books used ordered online can sometime take several weeks to arrive.)

Course Description:

"The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the building of houses, are not phantasms, they have weight and form and location..."

-- Walt Whitman, *To Think of Time* (1891-1892)

"During the height of automania, a zoologist observed that in animal herds excessive mobility was a sure sign of distress and asked whether this might not be true of his fellow human beings....[who] can list all the causes that led twentieth-century man to race from highway to byway, tunnel to bridge? Suffice to say that he seemed constantly going from where he didn't want to be to where he didn't want to stay."

-- Percival Goodman, *Communitas* (1960)

"Human settlements are like living organisms. They must grow and they will change. But we can decide on the nature of that growth, particularly on the quality and the character of it, and where it ought to go. We don't have to scatter the building blocks of our civic life all over the countryside, impoverishing our towns and ruining farmland. We can put the shopping and the offices and the movie theaters and the library all within walking distance of each other...We can build our schools close to where the children live, and the school buildings don't have to look like fertilizer plants. It is within our power to create places that are worthy of our affection."

-- James Howard Kunstler, *Home From Nowhere* (1996)

"There is, in practice, no such thing as autonomy. Practically, there is only a distinction between responsible and irresponsible dependence."

-- Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America* (1996)

Although suburban “sprawl” is not new – already in 1929 the authors of the New York Regional Plan noted “urban growth outside the city” and deplored it as “injurious to the central community” – the flow of persons and capital to the ever receding fringes of American cities has undeniably accelerated during the last two decades. And with it has come the exacerbation of a whole host of ills, from concentrated poverty and unemployment in the urban core to longer commuting times, unprecedented energy consumption, loss of farmland and open space, attenuated civic life, and degraded air and water quality in the suburbs. But this same exodus has brought a wealth of benefits and opportunities as well, allowing millions of increasingly mobile and prosperous American families to acquire more spacious and commodious houses on larger lots than urban life allows. It has also allowed them an enhanced freedom join with others in new communities, both public and private, of their own choosing. Not surprisingly, while many bemoan and actively seek to reform the political policies and economic trends that promote our increasingly dispersed built environment, others denounce such efforts as powerless in face of economic realities, disrespectful of property rights and individual choice, and autocratic.

To allow us some purchase on what is itself a sprawling topic of concern and contention, in this seminar we’ll examine writings by scholars hailing from a number of disciplines – political scientists, urban planners, historians, and architects – who offer strikingly contrasting views of the major issues in these debates. We’ll focus particularly on the proposals of several prominent “New Urbanists” or advocates of “Smart Growth” to redesign American metropolitan built environments in ways both environmentally and economically sustainable, and hospitable to a revived civic and community life. (This examination comprises the second part of the course, following a preparatory exploration of the most salient topics and positions in these debates.) We’ll then consider a diverse set of critical responses to New Urbanism, and conclude with examinations of several New Urbanist projects in the light of these critiques.

Given the local provenance of the author of one of our principal texts and Davidson’s own distinction as a national leader in “Smart Growth” planning policies – the Town received the Environmental Protection Agency’s “2004 National Award for Smart Growth Achievement” – we will be fortunate to have several seminar sessions led by prominent local guest speakers, including Prof. David Walters of UNCC’s School of Architecture; Mr. Kris Krider, Director of the Davidson Town Planning Department, and Mr. Craig Lewis, an architect and urban designer with the Lawrence Group. Mr. Krider, has also very generously offered to have a member of his staff lead a field trip to visit local projects during class time on April 30.

#### Written Assignments:

Each student’s evaluation will consist primarily of two short and relatively informal “reaction papers” (6-7 pages) and a final (and more formal) semester paper of about 12-14 pages. Each reaction paper provides an opportunity for students to clarify and integrate their understandings of the readings assigned during the preceding weeks. Students are invited, but not by any means required, to consult secondary sources to assist in writing the reaction papers. The final semester paper provides the opportunity for an extended investigation of an issue arising in one or more of the assigned course readings. The use of some secondary scholarly sources for the semester paper is mandatory. In addition to these three assignments, students will be asked to write informal (and ungraded) weekly “critical synopses” (one or two pages each), due at the start of each Thursday’s class. These should offer a brief summary of the week’s reading and some pointed interrogations of it. Critical synopses are not due during the two weeks that students are asked to write reaction papers.

Political science majors who wish to satisfy the department’s MAJOR PAPER requirement may do so by writing a semester paper of at least twenty pages utilizing more extensive secondary sources.

Participation in seminar discussions is also extremely important. The schedule and weight of seminar requirements is the following:

First Reaction Paper:	20%	(Friday, February 13)
Second Reaction Paper:	20%	(Friday, March 27)
Semester Paper:	40%	(Monday, May 11)
Discussion:	20%	

Each reaction paper must be submitted to the instructor by 4:00 p.m. on the day it is due; the final semester paper is due at noon. Late reaction papers will be penalized one letter grade if they are handed in within one week of the original due date; after one week, they will not be accepted and a grade of F will be assigned. The final paper will be penalized one letter grade for each day it is late.

### Seminar Participation:

The seminar is structured overwhelmingly around the discussion of the assigned texts. It is accordingly extremely important that students thoroughly familiarize themselves with the readings before each class meeting. It is also crucial that students conscientiously attend and contribute to class discussions. Each student is allowed 2 unexcused cuts; excess absences will result in a grade of "F" for class discussion.

### Final Note:

While this course is not cumulative in the usual sense, it is developmental, and the papers and discussions will reflect this characteristic. It is thus very important that students make every effort to keep abreast of the schedule of readings. It is extremely difficult to assimilate this material in any "cram course" fashion. Although admittedly demanding on occasion, with adequate foresight the schedule should be manageable, and it is expected that students will be prepared on time.

All provisions of the Davidson HONOR CODE are in effect, and all course work will be pledged in accordance with it. Students uncertain about the terms and requirements of the Code should request clarification from the instructor. All Honor Code violations will be vigorously prosecuted.

### Seminar Organization:

- I. Sprawl and Its Discontents: Issues, Contexts, and Debates
  - A. Cities, Suburbs and Distributive Justice: Race, Class, and Equal Opportunity
  - B. Cities, Suburbs, and Distributive Justice: Property Rights, Markets, and the Built Environment
  - C. Cities and Suburbs in Comparative (European) Perspective
- II. The New Urbanism: Designing for Sustainability and Community
- III. Can – and Ought – New Urbanism Succeed?
  - A. How Cities *Really* Work (or Not): Politics and Transportation Policy
  - B. The End of Urbanism? Cities, “Creative Destruction,” and Nostalgia
  - C. Two Cheers for Sprawl: Cultural Elitism, Affluence, Mobility and Choice
- IV. What is To Be Done? New Urbanist Practice

## Schedule of Readings:

### I. Sprawl and Its Discontents: Issues, Contexts, and Debates

#### A. Cities, Suburbs and Distributive Justice: Race, Class, Equal Opportunity

Session 1. Why Place Matters (Jan.13)

Reading: Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom, *Place Matters*, xi-xvii; 1-63

Session 2. Spatial Segregation: A Market or Policy Consequence? (Jan 15)

Reading: Dreier et. al., 64-151.

Session 3. Urban Politics and Regionalism (Jan 20)

Reading: Dreier et. al., 152-246

Session 4. Metropolitan Governance and Regional Cooperation (Jan 22)

Reading: Dreier et. al., 247-309.

#### B. Cities, Suburbs, and Distributive Justice: Property Rights, Markets, and the Built Environment

Session 5. Urban Centers and Suburban Sprawl (Jan 27)

Reading: Oliver Gillham, *The Limitless City*, xiii-xvi; 1-66

Session 6. The Sprawl Debates (Jan 29)

Reading: Gillham, 67-151

Session 7. Alternatives to Sprawl? “Smart” Development and Transportation (Feb. 3)

Reading: Gillham, 153-210

Speaker: Mr. Craig Lewis, AICP, CNU, The Lawrence Group Town Planners and Architects

Session 8. Alternatives to Sprawl? Regionalism (Again) (Feb. 5)

Reading: Gillham, 211-257

#### C. Cities and Suburbs in Comparative (European) Perspective

Session 9. Whence the American Metropolis? (Feb. 10)

Reading: Nivola, *Laws of the Landscape*, vii-viii, 1-51,

Session 10. Whither the American Metropolis? (Feb. 12)

Reading: Nivola, 52-92

FIRST REACTION PAPER DUE: Friday, Feb. 13, 4:00.

### II. The New Urbanism: Design First

Session 11. Politics and Urban Design: Shaping the Places that Shape Us (I) (Feb. 17)

Reading: Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation*, ix-xiv; 3-37, 59-83.  
Christopher Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism*, ix-xi, 1-30

Session 12. Cars, Spas, Soccer Moms, and Regional Planning (II) (Feb. 19)  
Reading: Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, 39-57, 85-151.  
Christopher Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism*, 31-44.  
Speaker: Professor David Walters, UNCC School of Architecture

Session 13. How to Make a Town, aka “Thinking like a Mall” (Feb. 24)  
Reading: Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, 153-214

Session 14. Building Community One Block at a Time (Feb. 26)  
Reading: Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, 215-261.  
Speaker: Mr. Kris Krider, Davidson Town Planning Director

SPRING BREAK: March 2-6.

### III. Can – and Ought – New Urbanism Succeed?

#### A. How Cities *Really* Work (or Not): Politics and (Especially) Transportation Policy

Session 15. The Sex of Cities: Kissimmee, Celebration and Silicon Valley (March 10)  
Reading: Alex Marshall, *How Cities Work*, ix-xxiii; 1-83.

Session 16. Traded Places and Master Hands: Jackson Heights (March 12)  
Reading: Marshall, 84-155

Session 17. Pathways to Community: Portland, Oregon (March 17)  
Reading: Marshall, 156-214

Session 18. Highway Federalism – or How Highways Happen (March 19)  
Reading: Owen Gutfreund, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Sprawl*, 1-85

Session 19. Highways and Decentralization (I): Denver (March 24)  
Reading: Gutfreund, 87-195

Session 20. Highways and Decentralization (II): Middlebury and Smyrna (March 26)  
Reading: Gutfreund, 197-231

SECOND REACTION PAPER DUE: Friday, March 27, 4:00 p.m.

#### B. The End of Urbanism? Cities, Capitalism’s “Creative Destruction,” and Nostalgia

Session 21. Industrial New Haven: Creative Destruction and Converging Enterprises (March 31)  
Reading: Douglas Rae, *City: The End of Urbanism*, ix-xix, 1-72

Session 22. Industrial New Haven: Enterprise and Living Locally (April 2)  
Reading: Rae, 73-140.

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Session 23. Civic Density in the “Sidewalk Republic” (April 7)  
Reading: Rae, 141-211

Session 24. Business Departures, Black Arrivals, “Inventing Dick Lee” (April 9)  
Reading: Rae, 215-311

EASTER BREAK (April 13-14)

Session 25. Urban Renewal, “Extraordinary Politics,” and the End of Urbanism (April 16)  
Reading: Rae, 311-432

C. Two Cheers for Sprawl: Cultural Elitism, Affluence, Mobility and Choice

Session 26. The History of (Ubiquitous) Sprawl (April 21)  
Reading: Robert Bruegmann, *Sprawl: A Compact History*, 1-95  
SEMESTER PAPER TOPIC SENTENCE DUE

Session 27. Three (Unsuccessful) Campaigns Against Sprawl (April 23)  
Reading: Bruegmann, 96-166

Session 28. (Futile) Remedies for Sprawl (April 28)  
Bruegmann, 169-225  
Joel Kotkin, “The Rise of Family-Friendly Cities” available at  
<http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110010911>  
Timothy Eagan, “Vibrant Cities Find One Thing Missing” available at  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/24/national/24childless.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/03/24/national/24childless.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

THESIS PARAGRAPH AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

IV. What is To Be Done? Can Markets (and Architects and Planners) Save Us?

Session 29. Market Demand for Walkable Urbanism?: Davidson, NC (I) (April 30)  
Reading: Christopher Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism*, 45-62, 86-149  
Speaker: Mr. Kris Krider (Visit to Local Projects)

Session 30. Market Demand for Walkable Urbanism?: Davidson, NC (II) (May 5)  
Reading: Christopher Leinberger, *The Option of Urbanism*, 150-176

FINAL PAPER DUE: Monday, May 11, noon.