

Summer 2026



Social Justice, Planning & Cities

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we explore social justice, diversity and equity in cities. Rather than considering social justice as an abstract or theoretical idea, we will examine the ways that justice and equity are achieved or eluded in the planning and everyday practices of cities. After an introduction to historical and contemporary ideas about cities and justice, we will explore equity and justice as they relate to 5 dimensions of urban planning: growth and design, community development, economic development, transportation and sustainability. Together we will learn about planning in urban spaces through discussion, the class readings and films drawn from past and present urban planning theorists, writers, observers, architects and journalists from around the world.

We will also hear from local planners and advocates. Our assignments will require you to engage with the theories, values, and practical work of fostering socially just cities and they will connect directly to your lives.

Cities are organic and constantly evolving. Urban space both shapes and is shaped by dimensions of social justice. In this course, we will explore how social justice impacts diverse urban issues

i n c l u d i n g :
i m m i g r a t i o n / m i g r a t i o n ,
p o v e r t y / w e a l t h , r a c e , g e n d e r ,
o r i e n t a t i o n , c u l t u r e , e c o n o m i c s ,
h o u s i n g , l a n d u s e , e m p l o y m e n t ,
t r a n s p o r t a t i o n a n d o t h e r f a c t o r s a s
i d e n t i f i e d b y t h e s t u d e n t s .

LEARNING GOALS

During this class, students will:

- Build knowledge about the inter-related forces, processes and people that shape cities.
- Examine the importance of social justice, diversity and equity in cultivating 'great' cities.
- Acquire skills to craft and evaluate socially just solutions to urban challenges.
- Connect classroom ideas and assignments to communities in which you live, work and travel.
- Acquire knowledge about urban planning and policy making in cities.
- Practice and improve writing and critical thinking skills.

Integration with Hull-House Materials

(Content adapted from original course syllabus by Hull-House educators to reflect how materials were used for in-class instruction and assignments)

TOPIC 1: ROOTS OF URBAN PLANNING IN THE UNITED STATES

Students will read selected texts, including essays by and about Jane Addams, to get oriented to the week's topic.

READINGS

- Chapters 1, 3, and 5 from *What Would Jane Say?* by Janice Metzger (2013)
- "The Objective Value of a Social Settlement" by Jane Addams (1893)

TOPIC 2: IMMIGRATION, URBAN PLANNING & FORM

Students will read selected texts, including articles about the location and work of Hull-House and its residents, to get oriented to the week's topic.

READINGS

- "The conscience of a nation: The social work of Jane Addams in Chicago's immigrant communities" by Susan Watts (2014)
- "Education, experience, and exchange: The Hull House Women, an international network, and Chicago's immigrant population" by Alice Bailey Cheylan (2023)

RELATED PROJECTS: WEEKLY & FINAL REFLECTIONS

Students will complete weekly reflections in response to a prompt that will help integrate their readings with class discussions and learning goals. They will also turn in a final reflection at the end of the course in which they describe the process they used to complete their final paper or presentation on an urban planning issue (which could be related to Hull-House or make use of its materials) of their choice.

Sample Assignments

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT 1

What types of ideas about cities are the authors from weeks 1 and 2 sharing through their work (e.g. ideas about how cities should be? The role of social justice? Ideas about how planners should intervene?)? Which arguments or authors do you like best and why?

A well-developed reflection will take care to compare and contrast the work of Jane Addams and Hull House Reformers with early urban planners from weeks 1 and 2.

REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT 2

Compare and contrast the social justice issues faced by immigrants during the late 1800s- early 1900s and today in the United States. How have they changed? Remained the same? What strategies did early urban immigrants use? What strategies are available to them today?

Consider the role of Settlement Houses (like Hull House) in your response.

FINAL REFLECTION ASSIGNMENT

Please describe the community based urban planning issue that you chose to explore. Why were you personally interested in this topic? Why, in your opinion, is this both a social justice AND an urban planning issue? How did you research proposed equitable planning innovations for the issue? Which innovation did you decide to present and why? Lastly, what social justice implications should urban planners consider when exploring this issue and potential innovations? Be sure to cite all work.

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