

Dilemmas of Modern City Planning: Equity in Design

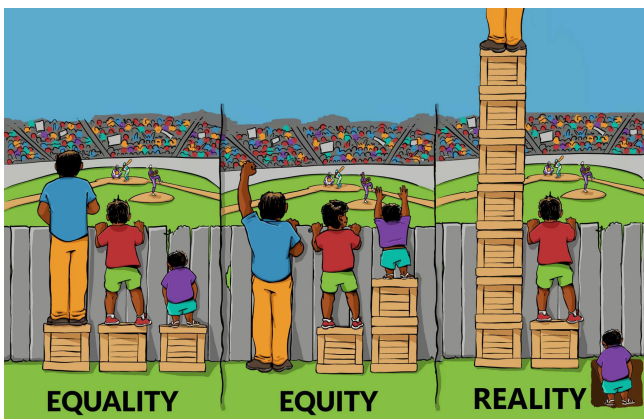
Spring 2020

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Friday mornings 9:05am – 12:05 Hybrid: Online Instructional Method + the possibility of in-person field trips
3.000 Credits

In cities in the United States, we cannot pretend that all bodies have the freedom to move through, occupy, and enjoy public space. The perception of black and brown bodies gathering in public space routinely reads as suspect, criminal, or illegitimate. Peoples' rights to convene or congregate becomes interrupted, sometimes—ever more frequently—through limitation, denied access, and force. If your very existence is read as a violation, is public space really for you?
Isis Ferguson, Place Lab

PREMISE: Economics, social forces, attitudes about density, ideas about sustainability, and incentives to encourage good design are all forces that affect contemporary urban form. A city's plans illustrate a response to these forces and together, can define a vision for its future. However, underlying these forces is a history of intentional segregation, a byproduct of explicit government policies at the local, state, and federal levels. The impact from these policies has been devastating for generations of African-Americans and other people of color who have suffered from state-sanctioned violations of the Bill of Rights, particularly the Thirteenth Amendment which banned treating former slaves as second-class citizens.

Throughout the twentieth century, the legal system in the United States upheld discriminatory policies to maintain the segregation of whites and blacks, significantly contributing to the racial unrest now taking place on the streets of American cities. Charlotte is no exception. Here, racial and economic segregation are not age-old givens, but products of a decades-long process.



CONTENT: This is a class about how local, state and national policies combined to create Charlotte's urban form, and how race was a fundamental contributor. It is an introductory course for advanced undergraduates and graduates that examines both the evolving structure of the American metropolis and the ways that it can be designed and developed. Students will benefit from a wide range of local speakers who have addressed urban problems and acted to alter cities, suburbs, and regions through modern city design and planning. We will consider the values implicit in their decision making, stressing the connections between attitudes, ideas and design. We will focus on equitable practices and principles in the design of cities. Attempts to control growth and gentrification will also be covered. Topics will include equitable urban infrastructure, gentrification, urban open space, social capital, healthy communities, and urban vitality.
(Image citation <https://vakids.org/our-news/blog/race-place-and-poverty-presentation-for-greater-richmond>)

METHOD: Students will become familiar with urban form through videos, readings, class presentations and discussions, case studies, local field trips (maybe), and research projects. Class meetings will occur via Zoom and class material will be posted on the class's Canvas site.

OBJECTIVES

- To re-consider community design and planning through an equity lens.
- To explore the enduring impact of public policies that resulted in the segregation of American cities.
- To become familiar with Charlotte's historical neighborhoods, and consider the disparate forces that have contributed to their rise, fall and gentrification.
- To understand the personal and societal impact of urban renewal, evictions and displacement in the US and especially in Charlotte
- To consider how race and mobility are intertwined
- To consider the range of remedies and resources needed and/or available to correct past inequities in urban form.
- To become aware of what the city of Charlotte is currently doing to address historic inequities in public space, and meet the many local people who are affecting change.

EVALUATION & GRADING

Evaluation will be based on the following:

Interview Preparation and Follow-up:	10%
Quiz Taking and Class Participation:	20%
Research Projects	45%
Final Project	25%

TEXTBOOKS

- Tom Hanchett, Sorting Out the New South City: Race Class and Urban Development in Charlotte, 1875- 1975
- Richard Rothenstein, The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America