

Syllabus – USP 325U Community & the Built Environment

Instructor Information

Norene Hough (she/her)
Office Hours: Tues 1:30 - 3:30 pm or via [Calendar](#)

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Urban Center Room 370N

Course Description

This course is about place-based communities: neighborhoods, towns, cities and regions; and other complex forms of community as they exist within those places. It examines the dynamic relationship between urban form and social life, and efforts by communities to shape the built environment to meet a broad range of needs and desires. Drawing on concepts from the fields of geography, urban studies, other social sciences, as well as from design and the arts, we take a critical approach to understanding how power is bound up and reflected in the built environment. We explore the ways that communities push back to create places that are vibrant, resilient, and that meet their needs. Students investigate and present on specific examples of community efforts and responses – and also independently create – place-making and design approaches that support and enhance welcoming, engaging, and inclusive adaptations of the built environment.

This course is part of the **Understanding Communities/ Community Studies & Healthy People/Places** clusters in the University Studies general education program. It is also a course for students in the **Community Urban Studies & Planning (CUSP)** degrees and the **Sustainable Urban Development (SUD)** minor.

Learning Outcomes

As part of the thematic multi-disciplinary approach to examining urban centers, students who successfully complete this course will:

- Explore community efforts to shape the built environment to meet a broad range of needs/desires;
- Observe, Investigate, & Analyze power in the dynamic relationship between urban form and social life;
- Identify & Explain key concepts from geography, urban studies, other social sciences, design, the arts;
- Create, Design, & Evaluate inclusive and just approaches to creative placemaking;
- Investigate & present on examples of community efforts and responses in relation to the urban form.
- As part of our [Community Urban Studies and Planning degrees](#) – we will integrate our degree goals of critical thinking on community building; understanding the importance of place; upholding the values of democratic decision-making, and acting to promote social justice.
- This is a UNST Cluster course – this means we integrate the 4 program learning goals from University Studies: [Communication; Inquiry & Critical Thinking; Diversity, Equity & Social Justice, and Ethics Agency & Community.](#)

Class Materials

This class has no required texts to purchase. We will rely on articles, websites, and videos that will be posed to Canvas. In addition to the main text, we will use other resources, readings, and videos to supplement the course. All of the materials will be presented on Canvas, so you need to have regular access to the internet and computer/ laptop/ chromebook for this course.

Expectations for Inclusivity

Building an inclusive learning environment requires us to work together to listen and make room for all to have a say (asking questions and interacting in an encouraging way); to support each other to find our voice; and to recognize and anticipate a wide range of perspectives, backgrounds, experiences, identities, and ways of being in the world.

We can all promote safe and inclusive learning by listening deeply (including reading carefully and reflecting) and being ready to learn from those around us. In an online learning environment, it is important to work to write clearly, thoughtfully, and respectfully (take your time and consider the impact of your words). Please learn and use the correct pronouns for your classmates, please do not make assumptions. I hope that we can begin from a place of mutual respect and gentle personalism – taking each other where we are at each day, offering the benefit of the doubt, and being aware that the workings of power and privilege impact different communities and individuals in different ways.

Grading & Assignments

This course is based on total points. Specific directions for each assignment are provided in the course including rubrics & grading information. I use the university grade percentages based on these points. Final grades: A (100–94%); A–(93%–90%); B+ (89%–87%), etc.

In Class Activities (30% of total grade)

- Attendance & Class Participation
- Google Surveys, etc
- Community Agreement
- Field Trip Worksheets
- In Class Group Work
- Questions for Guest Speakers

Exercises/ Assignments (70% of grade)

- Library Visit (75 pt)
- Foundation Paper (50 pt)
- Kevin Lynch Exercise (50 pt)
- Scavenger Hunt (75 pt)
- Inventory - Bridge (50 pt)
- Complete Other's Scavenger Hunt (50 pt)
- Inventory - Your Choice (100 pt)
- Placemaking Proposals (100 pt)
- Public Event (75 pt)
- Reflection (75 pt)

Late Work Policies

Classes move very fast. Late work makes it hard to keep up and engage with your peers. As a result, late work will be accepted for up to 1 week after the due date with no penalty (no questions asked/ no extension needed). After one week, I will automatically take off 10% from your final grade unless it was agreed upon in email as part of a work plan.

I know many unexpected things may happen, if you are behind in the course or something happens that puts you behind/ you need an extension, please contact the instructor immediately. Extensions require emailing the instructor and creating a new work plan.

Course Plan

This course plan may be adapted as the term moves forward based on the weather (for outdoor field trips); the pace & needs of students as a group, & materials. Given how many things are changing in 2026, we may need to adapt. All changes will be announced to the class, posted on Canvas and the syllabus will be changed accordingly.

Week 1	3/30 - 4/5	Introduction, Community Building, & Big Questions
<p>Due for Class on Tuesday 3/31:</p>	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read & Review Class Syllabus • Poster: The Geography of Community: Understanding the role of geography in building and sustaining healthy communities. (2 pages) Becker et al (n.d) Department of Geography and Anthropology, University of Wisconsin Eau Claire. <p><i>Come Prepared For:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 4th Floor Terrace Field Trip <p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Google Intro Survey 	
<p>Due for Class on Thursday 4/2:</p>	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1, Public Space, Public Life: An Interaction (6 pages) from <u>How to Study Public Life</u> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre. • Photo Essay (5 minute click through): "Public Library: An American Commons". Photos by Robert Dawson. Text by Josh Wallaert • News Article (3 pages): Bensen, Darian. "Why your local library might be hiring a social worker" <p><i>Listen/ Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Podcast (38.5 mins): "Palaces for the People" 99% Invisible Podcast. <p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sign the Community Agreement 	
<p>Due by midnight Sunday 4/5:</p>	<p><i>To Do:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go to Your Local Library for an Exploration (30 mins) <p><i>Listen / Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio Story (51 mins): "Life Inside The Multnomah County Library" <p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discovering Your Public Library (75 points) 	

Week 2	4/6 - 4/12	Creating Community & Interdisciplinary Foundations
Due for Class on Tuesday 4/7:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social infrastructure and the public life of cities: Studying urban sociality and public spaces (9 pages) from <i>Geography Compass</i> by Latham & Layton <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the 15-min city concept? (2 mins) • The 15 minute city (8 min) Ted Talk by Carlos Moreno <p><i>Come Prepared For:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Walking Tour of South WaterFront</p>	
Due for Class on Thursday 4/9:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 2, Who, What, Where? (9 pages) from <u>How to Study Public Life</u> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre. <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Sustainability (3 mins) by UCLA • City Spaces, Human Places - William H. Whyte Recap Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (5 min 14 sec) <p><i>Come Prepared For:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Discuss your Prepared List of What is within 15 minutes of your house.</p>	
Due by midnight Sunday 4/12:	<p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Foundations Paper (50 points)</p>	

Week 3	4/13 - 4/19	Measuring & Researching Built Communities
Due for Class on Tuesday 4/14:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 3, Counting, Mapping, Tracking and Other Tools (14 pages) from <u>How to Study Public Life</u> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre • Chapter 3, The City Image & Its Elements from <u>The Image of the City</u> by Kevin Lynch (44 pages) 	
Due for Class on Thursday 4/16:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you read the readings assigned for Tuesday • Cloverleaf Case Study (15 minutes) from Houston-Galveston Area Council <p><i>Come Prepared For:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Test Walks: Walking Activity Park Blocks</p>	
Due by midnight Sunday 4/19:	<p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Kevin Lynch Exercise (50 points)</p>	

Week 4	4/20 - 4/26	Connecting Built Environments
Due for Class on Tuesday 4/21:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Garden Streets to Bike Highways: Four Ideas for Post-Covid Cities - visualized (6 pages) from <i>The Guardian</i> by Chris Micheal, Lydia McMullan & Frank Hulley-Jones • Nine Criteria for Livable Urban Density from <i>Soft City</i> by David Sims <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit Oriented Development, Explained (9 min) 	
Due for Class on Thursday 4/23:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built Environment 101 (1 page) from Harris County Public Health • Sustainable DC 2.0 Built Environment Section (11 pages) from the Government of the District of Columbia • What is New Urbanism? (2 pages) from Congress for the New Urbanism • <i>Connection's Missing Middle: Why the future of Connection is hyperlocal</i> from We Should Get Together <p><i>Explore:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website Materials on the Blumenauer Bridge (15 min) <p><i>Come Prepared For:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trip to Blumenauer Bridge 	
Due by midnight Sunday 4/26:	<p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Inventory - Bridge & Lloyd Center (50 points) 	

Week 5	4/27 - 5/3	Completing Built Environments
Due for Class on Tuesday 4/28:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Seven Principles of Universal Design" (2 pages) by Rosemarie Rossetti <p><i>Explore:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuild: Building Stronger Communities, on Park, Recreation Center, and Library at a Time website from the City of Philadelphia (spend 10 minutes) <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does Your City Have Enough Parks? (10 min 27 sec) by City Beautiful 	
Due for Class on Thursday 4/30:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5, How They Did it: Research Notes (everyone pages 81-83 & 106-107 + pick 3 of the 18 to summarize & 1 to read the whole article?) from <i>How to Study Public Life</i> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre. <p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Come to Class with your 3 summaries from Ch. 5 and be prepared to discuss your research method of choice. 	
Due by midnight Sunday 5/3:	<p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Scavenger Hunt (75 points) 	

Week 6	5/4 - 5/10	Placemaking Basics
Due for Class on Tuesday 5/5:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Placemaking: Executive Summary (4 pages) from National Endowment of the Arts by Ann Markesen & Anne Gadwa • 11 principles of placemaking (2 pages) from Placemaking Chicago <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placemaking 101 - An Introduction to Placemaking, Presented by Placemaking Europe (2 min 48 sec) • What is Placemaking? (7 min 30 sec) 	
Due for Class on Thursday 5/7:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Fordist Placemaking (20 pages) by Quentin Stevens & Mhairi Ambler from <u>Activating Urban Waterfronts</u> • Center for Tribal Nations to Transform Portland Waterfront by Nika Bartoo-Smith from underscore Native News • <i>Skim/ Flip Through: 2035 Urban Design Direction Concepts Objective Framework for Portland</i> (21 pages) <p><i>Come Prepared For:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Electric Blocks</p> <p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mid-Term Self Assessment</p>	
Due by midnight Sunday 5/10:	<p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Neighborhood Inventory - Your Choice (100 points)</p>	

Week 7	5/11 - 5/17	Placemaking & Tourism
Due for Class on Tuesday 5/12:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the Case Studies from Exploring Our Town - National Endowment for the Arts Website (about 4 pages + 20 minutes of research) <p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Come to Class ready to present your Case Study to Your Peers</p>	
Due for Class on Thursday 5/14:	<p><i>Read:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6, Public Life Studies in Practice (20 pages) from <u>How to Study Public Life</u> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre. • From Moon Village to Mural Village: The consequences of creative placemaking in Ihwa-dong, Soel by Jason F. Kovacs & Hayun Park, from the <u>The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking</u> (7 pages) <p><i>Watch:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing Urban Places that Don't Suck (a sense of place) (10 min 45 sec) from Not Just Bikes 	
Due by midnight Sunday 5/17:	<p><i>Complete/Turn In:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Discovering Peer's Scavenger Hunt (50 points)</p>	

Week 8	5/18 - 5/24	Placemaking & Creativity
Due for Class on Tuesday 5/19:	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Problem with Placemaking by Louise Platt, (3 pages) from <u>The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking</u> 	
Due for Class on Thursday 5/21:	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future of creative placemaking by Sarah Calderon & Erik Takeshita, (6 pages) from <u>The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking</u> • Translating Outcomes: Laying the groundwork for Interdisciplinary evaluation of creative placemaking by Jamie Hand, (8 pages) from <u>The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking</u> • Chapter 4, Public Life Studies from a Historical Perspective (everyone pages 37 - 49 (9 pages of text + 2 pages of single historical figure) from <u>How to Study Public Life</u> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre. Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placemaking & Community (9 min 29 sec) by Cara Courage Complete/Turn In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Come to Class researched & prepared to share to your group your historical figure 	
Due by midnight Sunday 5/24:	Complete/Turn In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Placemaking Exercise (100 points) 	

Week 9	5/25 - 5/31	Placemaking as Subversion
Due for Class on Tuesday 5/26:	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book Review of An Ecological Design Philosophy: Randolph T. Hester's Design for ecological democracy (11 pages) published in <i>Journal of Urbanism</i>, July 2008, review by James White • In Philadelphia, Beautiful Blocks Build Community and Safety by Shayla Colon and Caroline Gutman from New York Times Watch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are girls being designed out of public spaces? (12 min) 	
Due for Class on Thursday 5/28:	Read: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 7, Public Life Studies & Urban Policy (9 pages) from <u>How to Study Public Life</u> by Jan Gehl & Brigitte Svarre. • Queer Placemaking, Settler Colonial Time, and Desert Imaginary in Palm Springs by Xander Lenc, (9 pages) from <u>The Routledge Handbook of Placemaking</u> Come Prepared For: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trip to Directors Park/ Downtown Alliance 	
Due by midnight Sunday 5/31:	Complete/Turn In: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Public Event Reflection on Placemaking (75 points) 	

Week 10	6/1 - 6/7	Looking Forward at Built Communities
Due for Class on Tuesday 6/2:	<i>Read:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Igniting Sparck: Space for Pan-African Research, Creation and Knowledge (8 pages) by Dominique Malaquais & Kadiatou Diallo from <u>Rogue Urbanism Emergent African Cities</u> 	
Due for Class on Thursday 6/4:	<i>Read:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Politics of the Hidden City (15 pages) from <u>Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City</u> by Pablo Sendra & Richard Sennett 	
Due by midnight Sunday 6/7	<i>Complete/Turn In:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Reflection on Discovering the Built Environment (75 points) 	

Resources & Information

I am committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment for all of my students. If you encounter any accessibility barriers or challenges in this course, please reach out to me via email. I will work with you and our campus partners to evaluate the issue and find solutions.

Student Resources: Includes a wide range of resources, including various centers for students with different identities- e.g. [Cultural Resource Center](#), [Disability Resource Center](#), [Queer Resource Center](#), [Students with Children Resource Center](#), [Women's Resource Center](#), and [Veterans Resource Center](#); lots of academic resources like the Library, tutoring, and technical support (Office of Information Technology); and various counseling, financial, health and wellness services- including some that are culturally specific.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities/ DRC: PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, usable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center, drc@pdx.edu, <https://www.pdx.edu/drc>. **If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.**

Multicultural Student Services: Includes links to Multicultural Retention Services, Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) Initiative, the Native American Cultural Center, and more, including some duplications from the above and some additional resources.

University Career Center: Job Search Resources, Networking, Resume Help, Interviewing Practice, and workshops with employers.

PSU is a Sanctuary Campus: Please note, I will protect the confidentiality of students and will not voluntarily participate or facilitate immigration actions.

Basic Needs at Portland State: It can be challenging to do your best in class if you have trouble meeting basic needs like safe shelter, sleep, and nutrition. Resource centers across campus are here to provide assistance, referrals, and support. Please contact anyone on this list for assistance:

- [Basic Needs Hub:](#)
 - basicneedshub@pdx.edu
- [Portland State Food Pantry:](#)
 - SMSU 325 pantry@pdx.edu
- [Emergency/ Hardship Fund](#) - emergency financial assistance
- [C.A.R.E. Team:](#)
 - askdos@pdx.edu (503) 725-4422
- [Student Health and Counseling:](#)
 - askshac@pdx.edu (503) 725-2800
- [Housing Service](#)

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Writing Resources

This course does require you to stretch yourself as a writer. In order to be an effective communicator your writing needs to 1) meet the assigned task; 2) be designed for the intended audience; 3) convey all important information. Every writer needs to proof-read and revise their work to obtain the best finished product. If you need help with this process, PSU's Writing Center (www.writingcenter.pdx.edu) has a variety of free services. **This is a great free resource for everyone to use.** Please use this resource.

Discrimination, Violence, & Mandated Reporter/ Title IX Reporting Obligations

PSU is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and our school policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which regards sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We expect a culture of professionalism and mutual respect. Please be aware that as a faculty member, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to PSU's Title IX Coordinator, the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Dean of Student Life and cannot keep information confidential. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment or sexual violence to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact a confidential advocate at 503-725-5672 or by scheduling on-line (psuwrc.youcanbook.me) or another confidential employee found on the sexual misconduct resource webpage. For more information about your obligations and resources for sex/gender discrimination and sexual violence (Title IX), please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your Canvas.

Generative AI

The assignments in this course are designed to be completed **WITHOUT** the use of generative AI and in most cases, using generative AI will not give you the "correct" answer. Factually correct (or incorrect) AI answers will not substitute for reflective answers in this course and you will not receive a passing grade.

If you feel that generative AI is helpful to you, please be sure to clearly attribute what text was generated by the AI tool (e.g., AI-generated text appears in a different colored font, quoted directly in the text, or use an in-text parenthetical citation). It is important to note that if AI tools like chatGPT/ similar tools are permitted to be used for an assignment, then they should be used with caution and proper citation. **AI is not a replacement for your own thinking and research.** As this is fast changing, please review the [University's Policy](#).

Resources, Policies, & Information, page 3

Free Speech Policies & Guidelines

Portland State University has [free speech policies and guidelines](#) for the classroom environment. I will use the PSU Conduct policy: disruptive behavior will be asked to leave and discriminatory or harassing behavior will be reported.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: engages in any form of academic deceit; refers to materials or sources or uses devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; engages in Plagiarism. Cheating and or plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment which may result in a failing grade for the course as well. For more information, please look at the PSU Student Code of Conduct (www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct)

Resources & Reporting - Diversity, Equity, & Belonging

The Toulon School and PSU strive to ensure that everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Sometimes there are conflicts between students or between students and instructors. We want to hear your concerns and respond in a timely manner. Please see the [Conduct and Community Standards Reporting Page](#) and look at our larger [Resources](#).

[Portland State University Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#) - addresses the definition of discrimination and harassment and provides appropriate contacts for reporting cases.

The Office of the Dean of Student Life houses the Academic Appeals process. Students who feel they have received a prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation may submit an [Academic Appeal Request](#). Before students submit this request, students must have appealed to the instructor, department chair and appropriate dean. Students should then read the [Academic Appeals Guidelines](#) to see if their grade dispute fits the purview of the Academic Appeal. For more information please visit the [Academic Appeals website](#), email askdos@pdx.edu, or call 503-725-4422.

Many of the sections of the syllabus were adapted from other professors and a variety of university sources.