University of Toronto
Department of Geography and Planning

PLA1517 Citybuilders Lab: How Good Policies are Made (Winter 2019)

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Office Hours: By request
Time and Location: Tuesdays, 3-5 pm in Sidney Smith - Room 5016G
Course website: This course makes use of Canvas. Please refer to the course page regularly for announcements and course information: http://portal.utoronto.ca.

Course Description
City Builders Lab: How Good Policies Are Made aims to bust the myth that cities only get built by professionals. Modern day cities get built by a dynamic array of actors- across the private, public, charitable and social purpose sector - each bringing a diverse background, a unique approach and a unique lens to how they shape our social, environmental, economic and physical infrastructure. Further building effective policies for today’s cosmopolitan, but also highly divided cities, benefit from diverse skill sets, including: familiarity with ideas such as design thinking, an appreciation of social power, privilege and class dynamics, as well as an understanding of how to use narrative and values to inspire action. This class will ask what a more inclusive and holistic approach to city building looks like and will vary in its delivery, providing a unique experience from class to class. Classes will include: facilitated discussion, group challenges, hands-on-activities, dialogue-based lectures, and engagement with top city builders, all focused on bringing an introduction to concepts and techniques from a variety of disciplines outside of Urban Planning. The diversity in methods/approaches will increase students’ comfort levels around working collaboratively, interactively and in real-time. Students will come away with an expanded appreciation of the different ways in which dynamic cities are built and a set of tools to ensure they can understand and address the human-complexities that are embedded in the act of Urban Planning.

Course Objectives
By the end of the workshop students will have brought nuance and application to theories related to equity, leadership, and power, as they relate to citybuilding. Students will also get practical exposure to skills and practices of traditional and non-traditional participants in citybuilding. Students in this course are expected to be active in its co-creation, leveraging the opportunity of a “studio” space to ask questions, test new ideas, and build their creative confidence.

Through participating in this class, students will:

- **Gain analytical tools**: Students will be introduced to a variety of conceptual frameworks for considering public policy and social issues, enabling them to take a more holistic approach to city policy
- **Gain applied skills**: Students will be introduced to a set of new skills to add to their city building toolbox, in areas such as human-centred design, public narrative and working with interdisciplinary teams
- **Get exposure to alternative career paths**: A dynamic set of guest speakers students will give students a chance to consider the various ways that city building takes place
Weekly Overview & Key Topics
As students transition from university into professional practice, very few have first-hand experience in converting the concepts, ideas, and theories introduced to them in their education into the marketplace. This course is an opportunity for students to participate in an action-learning lab, designing to respond to the emergent challenges and opportunities that arrive while engaging in real-world projects.

WEEK 1: January 8, 2019: Introduction, establishing shared understanding

WEEKS 2-5: ANALYTICAL SKILLS FOR CITYBUILDING
January 15, 2019: Bringing an equity lens to planning/exploring intersectionality in citybuilding
January 22, 2019: Blindspots! Understanding how bad policies get made: Class Divides and Class Cluelessness (Part I)
January 29, 2019: Blindspots! Understanding how bad policies get made: Anti-politics and Technocracy (Part II)
February 5, 2019: Values Based Leadership

WEEKS 6-8: APPLIED SKILLS IN CITYBUILDING
February 12, 2019: Human-centred design + participatory policy
February 26, 2019: Leading interdisciplinary teams
March 5, 2019: An Introduction to Public Narrative

WEEKS 9-11: DYNAMIC PATHS TO CITYBUILDING (Meet your citybuilders!)
March 12, 2019: The Advocates and Activists
March 19, 2019: The Independents
March 26, 2019: Institutional Citybuilders

WEEK 12: April 2, 2019- Outro, the danger of a single story

Teaching Methods and Delivery
Across the sessions and practitioners, there will be a strong emphasis on a “show, don’t tell” pedagogical approach. The focus will alternate between learning and action, with both content delivery and in-class discussions/workshops. We aspire to create a commitment to immersive, experiential, and dialogue-focused sessions.

As we engage with each other in class, we ask that all students keep the following set of principles in mind, so that we can ensure that this class is open, engaging, productive, and meaningful.

We’re critical not negative: being negative is easy, being critical is hard. To be critical is to find ways to bring a considered and nuanced lens to the conversation, even if it is offering a counternarrative.

We’re all vibe keepers: we have a shared accountability to vocalize when we need to slow down (and really reflect on what is being shared), when we need to take a break, to hear more to deepen our understanding, to change up the room so we can have a better conversation, to flag when
something is resonating, to flag when the tone or energy is uncomfortable. (We’ll have a tangible way to do all of these things – to be explained in the first class!)

**Embrace the weird:** this theory can be brain-bending at times, in the best way. It’ll challenge you to see all of your work differently, and to bring new lenses to familiar approaches, behaviours, and attitudes. It won’t feel like you’re other classes, it’ll be generative, iterative, and organic (for the most part) – embrace it!

**Sign up and show up:** we’ve been super thoughtful about the readings (and “listenings”) for this class, so if you’re going to sign up to engage fully. It’s not too much, and all has deeply informed each of our practices, and we hope it will do the same for yours. When you’re in class, be in class (it’s only two hours anyway!).

**We meet halfway:** show up with things to share. Whether it be in the readings, something that happened in the world that is relevant, things that came up as you reflected on past class content – anything! We’ll bring the content, but we need you to meaningfully engage with it.

**This isn’t debate club, but of course we can debate:** we’re busting the orthodoxies (we hope!) of traditional institutional graduate seminars. We are not here to posture, you shouldn’t either. Of course we’re going to debate, but we strongly discourage taking up all of the oxygen in the room just for the sake of it.

Each class will usually have:

Check in (5-10 mins)
2-3 citybuilder presentations (starting in week 3) (20-30 mins)
Content (30 mins)
Discussion or activity (45 mins)

**Course Evaluation and Expectations**

**Grade Breakdown**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment #1: Citybuilder presentation Ongoing due date</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #2: Briefing note (analytical skills) Due February 12</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment #3: Briefing note (applied skills) Due March 12</td>
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Assignments 2 & 3 will be due at the start of each class (on specified dates) and submitted through Canvas.

**Group Activities and Participation - Philosophy of Participation**

As a student in this class, you will have the opportunity to engage in a dynamic and vibrant learning experience in which an asset-based, community focused and relationship-oriented. With this opportunity comes responsibility. Your choices about how deeply you engage with the material and with your colleagues will determine the depth and usefulness of your own and others’ learning.

This class requires active participation; therefore it is essential that you arrive on time, stay for the entire class, and come prepared. Class participation is an essential aspect of the course. By
participation, we mean completing the readings (if assigned) for the appropriate days, taking part in class activities, listening thoughtfully to other students, participating in facilitated discussions and contributing generously to class discussions. We value learning through dialogue and healthy debate.

Our class meetings are not held for the sake of transmitting and receiving information, but for the sake of collective inquiry: We gather to question, propose, and test; to dis/agree, defend, and challenge; to consider alternatives, contingencies, and impacts. Come prepared to present your perspective, as much as you are willing to be open to opposing views.

Participation grade is awarded at the end of the course.

Late Penalty

.5 mark from the total assignment grade will be deducted each day (including weekend days) for late assignments (example: an assignment that receives a grade of 7/10 and is 2 days late will be given a final mark of 6/10). The final date for submission of any assignment, except by special arrangement, is 7 days after the original due date. So, if an assignment is due on the Monday and final deadline for submission is Friday. The late penalty will be waived with a medical note.

Suggested Resources

This class is all about initiative. Inform yourself. We’ve attached some starters to get you excited and inspired. There is some ‘required’ reading for the course, but we also invite you to explore the suggested resources. The more you explore the available resources, the richer the class experience will be.

Important Policies and Regulations

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.
http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm

Accessibility
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the AccessAbility Services Office as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential. AccessAbility Services (located in S302) is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations (416) 287-7560 or ability@utsc.utoronto.ca.

Electronic Devices
Research shows that levels of student performance and participation are lower when computers, tablets, smartphones, and other devices are present in the classroom. In order to create a pleasant environment conducive to everyone’s learning and free from distractions, please refrain from using phones for texting or any other purposes during classes and tutorials. The use of laptops and tablets
is allowed for course-related activities and note taking only.

Accommodations for Religious Observances:
It is the policy of the University of Toronto to arrange reasonable accommodation of the needs of students who observe religious holy days other than those already accommodated by ordinary scheduling and statutory holidays. Students have a responsibility to alert instructors in a timely fashion to upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences. Please review the policy at: http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/religious.htm

Email Policy
The instructor strives to respond to emails promptly, usually within 24 hours. However, emails sent on a Friday afternoon might sometimes not be answered until the following Monday morning. Email traffic usually increases during crunch times, just before an exam or an assignment due date. Please send your query well in advance of such dates. Email queries should in general be short, that is, require an answer of a few sentences only. If you wish to discuss a question or problem in greater detail, please phone me or come see me during office hours.

Equity and Diversity
The University of Toronto strives to be an equitable and inclusive community, rich with diversity, protecting the human rights of all persons, and based upon understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of every person. Please review the university’s Statement on Equity, Diversity and Excellence at: http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/stateequdivexc.htm

Late Assignment and Extensions
The instructor must receive assignments on the due date specified for the assignment. Assignments should be handed in during class time. Late assignments must be submitted to the instructor’s drop box located on the second floor of the Social Sciences Building (formerly Management Wing). The instructor grants exemptions from the late penalty only when supported by written documentation (e.g. a doctor’s note).