CURRENT ISSUES IN PLANNING:
GENTRIFICATION AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT

School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP)
University of British Columbia

Plan 548B (1.0 Credits). 2017W Term 1
Fridays 14:00 – 17:00
WMAX Room 150

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Course Description

Gentrification is displacement. It is a specific type of displacement that is entrenched in inequalities of income and power, and it is accelerating globally in various forms. This course is embedded in the intellectual tradition of researchers like Neil Smith, Tom Slater, Kate Shaw, Mindy Thompson-Fullilove, and others who consider the word gentrification as a critical term, and who see displacement as a disruptive and traumatic process for affected communities.

As much as gentrification is a cause of particular outcomes, it is also a consequence of other processes, both global and local. Globally, the neoliberal transformation of cities has resulted in increasing pressures on residential, commercial, and industrial land-use that privilege exchange-values over use-values. Locally, dominant visions for liveability, housing mix, poverty alleviation, and economic development have promoted dramatic changes in neighborhoods that only rarely serve vulnerable or marginalized populations. Gentrification is one of the phenomena resulting from these intersecting forces, and is the spatial expression of them in the urban fabric.

For planners and community developers, however, the question should be clear: how am I complicit? Interestingly, the planning literature and profession is circumspect in its treatment of gentrification. While planners are often quick to promote greenspace, “social mix”, bike lanes, and neighborhood revitalization, there is little reflection on how these “enhancements” generate (un)intended consequences like displacement, the breakdown of social capital networks, and the disempowerment of communities of color. Moreover, it is unclear if even the best of intentions and the best of processes can slow or stop gentrification, in which case the justice of our work becomes questionable or even doubtful.

Although a crash-course in gentrification theory and case studies, this class is more specifically an investigation into the consequences of urban development and community development. It engages critically with issues relevant to contemporary planners, and forces us to dig below our own aspirations to confront the often negative outcomes of our ‘well-meaning’ work.
Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students should:

1) Have a basic understanding of key concepts in gentrification research, and major theoretical frameworks for understanding gentrification;
2) Be able to analyze urban development policies/practices and determine how the displacement of vulnerable communities from urban neighborhoods may result;
3) Be able to consider changes and interventions in urban development that may protect low-income and marginalized populations from displacement.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory for 1.0 credit courses.

Evaluation Criteria and Grading

Grading for the course is based on the following:

40% - Participation and attendance
60% - Submission of final research-blog assignment.

Final Assignment – Due November 30th

The final assignment for this course is a 3000-4000 word research-based blog post. Each student will be required to choose a current case study of gentrification and write a personal analysis of the case utilizing the theories and comparative cases presented in the course. Rather than submitting a research paper that will only find its way into a landfill and be forgotten by the sands of time, students will be asked to turn their knowledge into instruments of social justice. All of the research-blog posts from the class will be posted online to a public class website. (If you would rather not have your essay made public you can use a pseudonym or request that it remain private to the group). In writing the posts students will be required to use the learnings from the course to make an argument, but in a style that is personal, compelling, and aimed at inspiring social action. As planners, community developers, and activists it will be important to connect academic training to social change, so practicing the art of communicating with both inspiration and rigor is critical.

Cases for the assignment may be drawn from anywhere, but an excellent source of material can be found on the Facebook group “Gentrification and Urban Redevelopment” (https://www.facebook.com/groups/252296791780989/). Professor Dennis Grammenos of Northeastern Illinois University curates a vast collection of articles on gentrification, and has graciously agreed to allow students of Plan 548B to join the group and explore the articles. If help is necessary to access this site, please contact me.
Recommended Course Text – Not Required

There is no required text for this course. However, students are encouraged to consider acquiring either or both of the following:


*Gentrification* by Loretta Lees, Tom Slater, and Elvin Wyly is the only full-length textbook on gentrification and is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the array of relevant issues. *Urban Fortunes* by John Logan and Harvey Molotch is not about gentrification per se, but is a foundational text for understanding why and how displacement occurs.

Course Schedule and Readings

This is a short course of only four weeks, so it is impossible to capture the breadth and depth of the issues. The following schedule and list of readings give students the option to read two readings per week for minimum understanding, or more on their own time to get a deeper dive into the relevant issues. Most of the readings can be found online through the UBC library, or will be provided by the instructor.

Week 1: Friday, September 22

*A Brief Foray into Neighborhoods and Gentrification*

This class begins with the questions what are neighborhoods and what is place? These serve to understand what is lost in “dis-place-ment”. The class concludes with a survey of gentrification theories and research. It will examine different causal theories of gentrification, different types of gentrification outcomes, and the socio-spatial terrains of gentrification.

Required readings: Read the Duany piece and at least one (1) of the Shaw or Slater pieces.


**Week 2: Friday, September 29**

*Development and its Discontents*

This class will look critically at development in urban neighborhoods and begin to unpack the complexities of its outcomes. We will look at several examples of development including social mix policies, greenspace development, economic development, and disaster recovery.

**Required readings:** Read any two (2) of the following. You may read just two from one category, or a mix of articles from different categories. It’s like a ‘Choose Your Own Adventure’ of gentrification research.

**Social Mix and Poverty Eradication**


**Greenspace Development and Sustainability**

http://escholarship.org/uc/item/8pf8s47q


**Economic Development**


Disaster Recovery


Week 3: Friday, October 6
*Messiness, Commons, and the Problem of Multiple Publics*

This class delves into the problem of what it means to be a resident of a city by exploring issues of the urban commons and stratification in the city. If no one owns neighborhoods but everyone needs them, then who properly has the “right to the city”? When residents with similar identities but different class positions want different futures for the neighborhood, then who controls change?

Required readings: *Read the Blomley piece and any one (1) of the following.*


• Deener, A., 2007. Commerce as the Structure and Symbol of Neighborhood Life:

http://journals.sagepub.com.ezproxy.library.ubc.ca/doi/abs/10.1080/0042098032000136174

**Week 4: Friday, October 13**

*Resistance*

This class seeks a path forward. Solutions to the problem of gentrification are explored. Case studies are discussed from different geographic contexts. We finish with the question: is there any hope?

**Required readings:** Read the first two (2) pieces (don’t worry, they’re short) and either one (1) of the Tracy or powell & Spencer pieces.


http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2038&context=facpubs

**Special Needs**

Please inform the course instructor as soon as possible if you have special needs and require accommodation of any kind. Please visit http://www.students.ubc.ca/access/ for more information on campus resources.

**Academic Integrity**
Assistance with the creation of a course syllabus is available through the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, www.ctlt.ubc.ca Resources related to the development of assessable learning outcomes can be accessed through http://ctlt.ubc.ca/resources/webliography/course-design-development/ The academic enterprise is founded on honesty, civility, and integrity. As members of this enterprise, all students are expected to know, understand, and follow the codes of conduct regarding academic integrity. At the most basic level, this means submitting only original work done by you and acknowledging all sources of information or ideas and attributing them to others as required. This also means you should not cheat, copy, or mislead others about what is your work. Violations of academic integrity (i.e., misconduct) lead to the breakdown of the academic enterprise, and therefore serious consequences arise and harsh sanctions are imposed. For example, incidences of plagiarism or cheating may result in a mark of zero on the assignment or exam and more serious consequences may apply if the matter is referred to the President’s Advisory Committee on Student Discipline. Careful records are kept in order to monitor and prevent recurrences.

A more detailed description of academic integrity, including the University’s policies and procedures, may be found in the Academic Calendar at http://calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,0.