OVERVIEW
This seminar course introduces students to the topic of social justice as it relates to planning and the city. We will focus both on higher-order social-theoretical questions related to the origins of the concept of justice and on applications of justice to and in the city, particularly as they relate to issues of uneven development, gentrification, poverty, food justice, homelessness, environmental justice, vulnerable populations, immigrants and refugees, urban politics, right to the city, public housing, segregation, racial discrimination, affordable housing, social exclusion, and public space.

The course will provide a very strong foundation and grounding in principles of justice that will guide you as you begin your career in planning or a related field. As such, we will grapple with complex questions such as “for whom are we really planning our cities?” and “what are the most powerful contemporary challenges to a just society?” and “what might a just society even look like?” and, finally, “what role does planning have to play in all of this?”

This course is unique in the MURP program, and perhaps also in the ARCH and LA programs, in that it will be run as a true seminar with weekly discussion and a substantial and deep “reading” of potentially difficult material, to include not only books and articles but also videos, images, and other popular media. I intend to let the course take on new directions as a result of student input. This is a true graduate seminar in that we will be exploring these significant questions together as peers.

We begin the semester by defining key terms such as justice, equity, and fairness. We will then work to become aware of our own social identities and cultural positioning as we begin to challenge our own views of the world. A key feature of the course is an analysis and dissection of best practices for socially just planning and policy and the development of new frameworks and criteria for action.

FORMAT
This small graduate-level seminar course relies heavily on your participation. At times, students will be asked to take the lead on a discussion topic. As such, participation should be professional at all times.
Our class sessions are equivalent to a professional meeting. This means that each student should attend every class, arrive on time, be prepared to engage the topic and other members of the class, have agency within the group, respect fellow members of the class, and use professional and inclusive language. Using laptops, tablets, or phones during class is not permitted unless it is required to facilitate an exercise, discussion, or presentation.

COMMUNICATION
Unless otherwise noted, we will use Canvas for all official course communication and it is the responsibility of each student to use Canvas settings that enable reliable communication. For example, this may mean selecting a personal e-mail address as the default in Canvas. I will use Canvas for course announcements, changes to the schedule, returning graded assignments, personal communication, or other course-related business. All assignments, unless otherwise noted, must be submitted on Canvas. Each student should be familiar with Canvas’s assignment submission procedures. During class, use of laptops, smartphones, and tablets is not permitted. This is predominantly because it can compromise your and your peers’ learning (see here, here, and here).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
This course has five official learning outcomes per the Planning Accreditation Board guidelines. After completing this course, students will have essential knowledge about the following:
- **Purpose and meaning of planning**: appreciation of why planning is undertaken by communities, cities, regions, and nations, and the impact planning is expected to have.
- **Planning theory**: appreciation of the behaviors and structures available to bring about sound planning outcomes.
- **Professional ethics and responsibility**: appreciation of key issues of planning ethics and related questions of the ethics of public decision-making, research, and client representation (including principles of the AICP Code of Ethics).
- **Governance and participation**: appreciation of the roles of officials, stakeholders, and community members in planned change.
- **Social justice**: appreciation of equity concerns in planning

ASSIGNMENTS *

*Participation and attendance*
Student grades for participation are based on in-class participation and will take into account attendance and participation as evidenced by the student’s readiness to summarize the materials, critique them, and engage effectively in class discussions and exercises. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and absence is excused only in cases of emergency or illness. Attendance is taken at each class using the Roll Call function in Canvas. All students must arrive on time to class to avoid disrupting other students’ attention and learning. Arriving up to 10 minutes late to class reduces attendance points for the class session by 50%. Students who arrive later than 10 minutes to class do not receive attendance credit for the class session. This policy also applies to all unexcused absences.

Because this is a small class, your consistent participation is very important. This does not mean you can just “show up” and sit quietly, nor should you simply respond to every question posed; effective participation is not measured by amount. Active participation means involving yourself in the discussion by showing up on time, completing all readings before class, listening intently to who is speaking, asking pertinent/pointed questions, offering opinions respectfully, and otherwise being deeply “present” in class. Discussing honest questions and true struggles within you is often the best way to contribute.

Listening is also participating. If you do not actively listen and share your questions and ideas with everyone, they can’t benefit from what you have to offer. Each of you has important questions and ideas to share that we can all learn from, and I believe you have a responsibility to contribute it. If you have a question that you do not already have an answer for, you will genuinely want to hear what your classmates have to say. The worst thing for discussion is a series of unrelated monologues. What we are
shooting for are true dialogues in which you engage the comments and questions of others rather than following them up with unrelated comments and questions. Be curious about what others have to say. If you share your thoughts, concerns and questions in an effort to explore the material in the spirit of intellectual curiosity, you will receive a good participation grade.

To make sure you are learning outside the classroom, at times I will take volunteers or randomly call on one or two of you at the start of class to discuss a planning or design issue that relates to justice in the city. Check out sources such as http://citylab.com or http://www.theguardian.com/cities.

In addition, we will watch several episodes of Season 1 of the Wire each week – and start each class with a brief discussion about what we learned and how it pertains to social justice and the city, and specifically how it dovetails with what we have read and discussed so far in the semester. You will be responsible for gaining (legal) access to the show; check Amazon Prime (free six-month trials for students!), the Denver Public Library, or other outlets.

**Discussion lead**

You will be asked to prepare and bring copies of a one-sheet maximum (can be double-sided) handout that provides a summary of the main point(s) of the readings. Your summary should outline the main thesis, the crux, of each of the readings as well as summarize the key arguments and assumptions the authors make. Be sure to discuss how the reading is relevant to our broader discussions of justice and equity, why they are helpful, and what they leave out. Include 3-5 broad discussion questions to guide the discussion. During class, you will be asked to spend 5-10 minutes going through your summary with the class, and then facilitating a discussion after that. Be creative, and feel free to prepare or bring additional material, such as videos or newspaper or magazine articles, to illustrate your argument or further encourage discussion on the topic. The idea is for you to inspire everyone to explore the reading in insightful ways. Good discussion questions are “open-ended,” and have a complex answer and/or a range of possible answers. They are also genuine, meaning you have not already made up your mind what the answer is. Some of the best questions ask about what actually is happening in the reading, or in the world. A descriptive example might be: “Does the author mean to say…?” A normative example asks what should be going on in the readings, or in the world, such as “Is the U.S. right to intervene in world affairs?” The latter open up the issue of values, of what people think the world should be like. You can ask either descriptive or normative questions when facilitating discussion, or a combination of both.

**Book review**

Books are important. They allow you to “settle in” to a topic or a story, and take the time to think deeply about an issue. Books, especially well-reviewed books about current events and popular topics, also connect you to what non-planners and designers are talking and thinking about in their everyday lives. In this assignment, you will choose one of five carefully selected books that grapple with issues of social justice in the city. And none of the five deals explicitly with the issue of “planning” or “design”; it is your job to tell us why the information in the book matters for planners or designers. The goal is for you to reflect deeply on an author’s arguments, to think through how they relate to concerns about social justice, and to consider how your new knowledge might guide your professional practice. All five deal with the plight of African-Americans in our current world, but all are told from very different perspectives. All five are also told from the perspective of folks who have dedicated their lives to enacting social change. We will assign these books to you together in class on Week 2.

- **Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. Between the world and me.** New York: Spiegel and Grau.
Specifically, you’ll be writing a book review. A book review is a critical essay that not only gives the reader an idea of what the book is about, but why it matters (or doesn't), and why she should (or shouldn’t) read it. There are wonderful sources for book reviews, so please take the time to read as many examples of reviews as you can in outlets such as the New Yorker, the New York Review of Books, the New York Times Book Review, and the Los Angeles Review of Books. See how the best are written and notice any patterns in the reviews themselves that can act as a guide or format for your own review. But your review will be a bit different: your audience is a professional planner or designer. Your goal, then, is to outline what professionals (broadly construed) need to know from this book and how should/might they respond to the arguments presented. The book review should be no more than 2,000 words (typically around 1,000-1,500) and have a clear beginning, middle, and end, with any references properly cited using any style you wish (just be consistent). Please, please, please work with the writing center – or with a trusted writer friend/partner – to improve your paper. Unless you request otherwise, I will circulate your papers to the other students in the class.

Final paper
The paper has two parts. In the first, you will discuss your definition of social justice, including the norms and criteria that comprise that definition. In week one, we will spend time discussing your “starting” definition of social justice, a definition that will inevitably then shift and morph either slightly or significantly as you move through the semester. Talk about this process and discuss how and why you settled on your current definition. In the second part, use this new definition, norms, and criteria of social justice to analyze and assess the performance of an existing government or non-profit program, project, design, plan, proposal, or other initiative at any geographic scale. Be clear in your assessment criteria and suggest what modifications you might make to the initiative to bring it in line with your norms without undermining its central intents. The paper should be around 12-15 pages, but this is very flexible; I only ask that you address the prompt completely. To make sure you are on track, I will ask you to submit a one-page outline of your final paper in Week 6, which should include some initial discussion of your performance criteria and a clear choice for the entity you’ll be assessing.

Final presentation
In class on weeks 15 and 16, present your final paper in ten minutes or less (I’ll be using a timer, so practice, practice, practice until you are 100% sure you will stay within that limit). Note that you’ll be presenting your paper before it’s actually due in week 16; the intent of this is for you to use the ensuing feedback to inform your final paper. Be creative and engaging in your presentation, and feel free to use images or “primary sources” to bolster your argument.

* Thanks to Dan Immergluck, Robert Lake, Carey McAndrews, Mark Purcell, and Jenny Steffel Johnson for help on assignments.

**GRADING**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage of grade</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Every class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion lead</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>See sign-up sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>October 27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>December 1 or 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>December 15</td>
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Grading for assignments will be based primarily on the quality and depth of the work presented, but organization, composition, and presentation (editing, spell checking) will also be taken into account. Students are expected to turn in all assignments on time by bringing a hard copy to class, except for the final paper, which should be emailed to me. Out of respect and fairness for all members of the class, late assignments will not be accepted.

**SCHEDULE**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Aug 25</td>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sep 1</td>
<td>Foundations/antecedents</td>
<td>Justice definition; choose book</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Sep 8</td>
<td>Structure vs. agency</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Sep 15</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sep 22</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sep 29</td>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Final paper topic due</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 6</td>
<td>Public space and the right to</td>
<td>Bike tour of Northeast Denver</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the city</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 13</td>
<td>Gentrification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 20</td>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>Guest: Esther Sullivan, Dept of Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Tour of Mariposa I Book reviews due</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 3</td>
<td>NO CLASS – ACSP CONFERENCE</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 10</td>
<td>Segregation</td>
<td>Guest: Zoë Williams, 9to5</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 17</td>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nov 24</td>
<td>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Final paper presentations I</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dec 8</td>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>Final paper presentations II</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Dec 15</td>
<td>NO CLASS – FINALS WEEK</td>
<td>Final paper due</td>
</tr>
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**READINGS**

All required readings are drawn from peer-reviewed research and popular media. All can be accessed either online or on Canvas. Please complete these readings before the week under which they are listed.

**Week 1. August 25: Defining justice.**

None.

**Week 2. September 1: Philosophical foundations.**


**Week 3. September 8: System vs. culture, or, structure vs. agency**


Week 4. September 15: Democracy


Week 5. September 22: Diversity


Week 6. September 29: Equity


Week 7. October 6. Application 1 – Public space and the right to the city


**Week 8. October 13: Application 2 – Gentrification**


**Week 9. October 20: Application 3 – Housing**


**Week 10. October 27: Application 4 – Transportation**


Conference, Washington, DC.

**Week 11. November 3: NO CLASS – ACSP CONFERENCE**
None.

**Week 12. November 10: Application 5 – Segregation**


**Week 13. November 17: Fighting injustice I – Research**


**Week 14. November 24: NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING**
None.

**Week 15. December 1: Fighting injustice II – Advocacy**


**Week 16. December 8: Fighting injustice III – Practice**


**Week 17. December 15: NO CLASS – FINALS WEEK**

None.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Education at the University of Colorado Denver and in the College of Architecture and Planning (CAP) depends on honesty and integrity, as well as appropriate conduct. CAP students are required to follow the Student Code of Conduct and the Honor Code. Please refer to this document for details. All University and College policy, as well as common sense, regarding academic honesty applies in this course. Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated and will be handled through the University’s official process. When working in a group, it is the responsibility of everyone in the group to maintain the norms of academic integrity. Students may do joint work with other courses only with the permission of all instructors and when the work is suitable for the topic and the course.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any student who needs, or who may need, accommodations due to a disability should speak with the instructors as soon as possible, and should contact the Disability Resources and Services Office on campus to arrange accommodations. See here for more details.