International Development Planning: Theory and Practice

Introduces students to the histories, debates, actors and approaches that shape planning in much of the Global South. The course is divided into five sections. First, we read about the history of the colonial city and the emergence of the “development” as a (contested) benchmark for planning and urban policy. Next, we discuss some of the major paradigms or approaches to development that have shaped international planning in the past 50 years including economic modernization, neo-liberalism, decentralization, and privatization. Third, we learn about the state and non-state actors that engage in, or influence, development planning, including multilateral and bilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, and financial institutions, among others. Fourth, we study several approaches to project planning and evaluation. Finally, we survey some of the major challenges facing cities and communities in the Global South, like poverty, inequality, migration, housing, natural hazards and climate change. As important, we will learn about planning policies and actions that emerge from developing cities and regions, highlight successful cases, and debate what lessons should be learned for policy and practice.

Learning Objectives

If you fully engage in this course, meaning that you 1) read and reflect on assigned materials, 2) actively participate in seminar discussions and activities and 3) complete your assignments with care, you should be able to:

1. Describe the trajectory of development thinking in the 20th and early 21st centuries;
2. Describe the actors and institutions in development at the international, national, regional, and local scales;
3. Critically examine some of the major development challenges facing planners in developing countries;
4. Analyze development projects or initiatives to assess their underlying assumptions, fact basis, strategies for intervention, and evaluative criteria;
5. Evaluate both the successes and failures of planning processes;
6. Understand the range of knowledge that informs development planning and the assumptions that underly data;
7. Develop your own knowledge and expertise about an area of development planning and effectively communicate your findings to your classmates and colleagues.

Course Requirements
Attendance: As a member of this seminar, you will be expected to attend each class and to arrive on time and well prepared. If you cannot attend class because of an illness or emergency, please email me ahead of the class period.

Participation: Your participation in seminar discussions, activities, small group discussions, peer-review sessions, and course evaluations is critical to the success of the class. I expect you to participate in ways that you find comfortable and rewarding. I also expect you to treat other seminar participants with courtesy and respect, and you should expect the same from me.

Assignments & Grading Policies

There are three assignments for this course:

1. Seminar Papers (due throughout the semester)

Seminar papers are written reflections on the week's readings. Seminar papers are due five times throughout the semester. You may skip ONE of these papers without penalty. If you choose to complete all five papers, I will automatically drop the lowest scored paper when determining your final grade.

For each seminar paper assignment, the instructor will provide a prompt that includes questions to guide your response. Your primary source materials should be that week's readings, but you may also draw from sources outside the syllabus like current events, newspaper/magazine articles, online discussions, documentaries, or your own personal experiences.

Your seminar papers will be graded based on your ability to: 1) respond to the paper prompts with a well-reasoned and referenced response; 2) identify and summarize the core themes that emerge in the readings; 3) engage with the authors through your own critique and analysis 4) raise interesting and thought-provoking questions or points for discussion; 5) write clearly, cogently, and with proper spelling and grammar.

The papers should be 400-500 words (about 2 pages double-spaced). You do not need to include a bibliography unless you are citing sources from outside the syllabus. Your papers must be uploaded to Canvas by 5 p.m. on the day before class to receive credit.

A general rubric for the evaluation of seminar papers is available.

2. Country Profile

For this assignment you will select and profile one country in the Global South with regards to their development history and major contemporary development challenges. You may choose any country that interests you, but it should be one that scores a "medium" or "low" on the human development index and that continues to receive foreign aid in the 21st century.

Your country profile should answer three substantive questions or sets of questions. First, provide a
brief introduction to the country. Where is it, when did it become a state, how many people live there, what are the major economic activities, and so on. This first section should be no more than 250 words. Second, and constituting the majority of your paper, what are the major development challenges facing your country today? There are numerous ways to answer this question: through the human development indicators and data for your country, as stated in country assistance papers and development strategies, and/or through major reports published by bilateral and multilateral development agencies. Third, who are the major development actors in your country? You should focus at the national level and describe actors and organizations both at the national and international level. For example, does the country have a national development ministry? If so, who is the head? Does it have ongoing loans through the World Bank or IMF? Are any major international organizations headquartered there? Throughout your paper, make sure you rely on good sources of information and cite your research.

Your country profile should be 2,000-2,500 words, exclusive of references.

3. Planning Memo

Your final assignment is to write a planning memorandum that frames and analyzes a planning challenge and makes recommendations for development intervention(s). You should first choose an area of planning (i.e. housing, economic development, housing, water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction, etc.) and a place that experiences major challenges in that area. You should be specific about scale – are you interested in a neighborhood? City? Region? Country?

Your assignment should be written in memorandum format and addressed to the Minister of Planning and Development (or equivalent position) in your place of interest. The memo should:

1. Define the problem at your selected site. What factors (environmental, economic, social-cultural, political) shape the problem? Who is most affected? The least? Who are the relevant actors and institutions?
2. Analyze attempted interventions, either in the place you are writing about or in some other place that faces similar challenges. You could focus on successful interventions (paying attention to the differences in context), unsuccessful interventions, or some combination of the two.
3. Propose an alternative approach for addressing the issue at your site. As part of your proposals, make sure to include a fact base (what sources of information would you use? Who would you involve?), a plan for implementation, and an evaluation strategy (how will you tell if the approaches are working or not?)

Your memorandum should be 4,500-5,000 words in length, excluding figures, illustrations, footnotes/endnotes, and references. You should include a full bibliography.