

Course Description

This course examines contemporary issues and practices in the production and use of urban public space and considers implications for future urban design and public policy. Over the past decade a global consensus has formed on approaches that enable public spaces to address the livability challenges presented by our rapidly urbanizing world. The UN-Habitat Global Program on Public Space and the related Charter on Public Space articulate key principles that shape work in this field. Those general principles frame our investigation of particular opportunities to make better use of certain physical spaces on the PSU campus, so that they support and enhance a welcoming and engaging sense of community.



How many types of public space can you identify in this birds' eye view of Springfield?

Course Format

The class format is active, experiential learning centered on a term-long project organized in four assignments, in combination with (graduate) student led discussions relating readings to the project, local issues and current events. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day (typically a Tuesday) and/or to work on assignments (typically a Thursday class).

Learning Objectives

Students will gain a critical understanding of the importance of contemporary urban public space. They will be able to discuss what we mean by public space and the qualities we want to achieve; the constraints we should be aware of; and principles that could guide action. Students will also conceptualize alternatives and develop recommendations to enliven a particular public space at PSU, and develop skills to communicate their ideas effectively using a variety of media.

Course Requirements

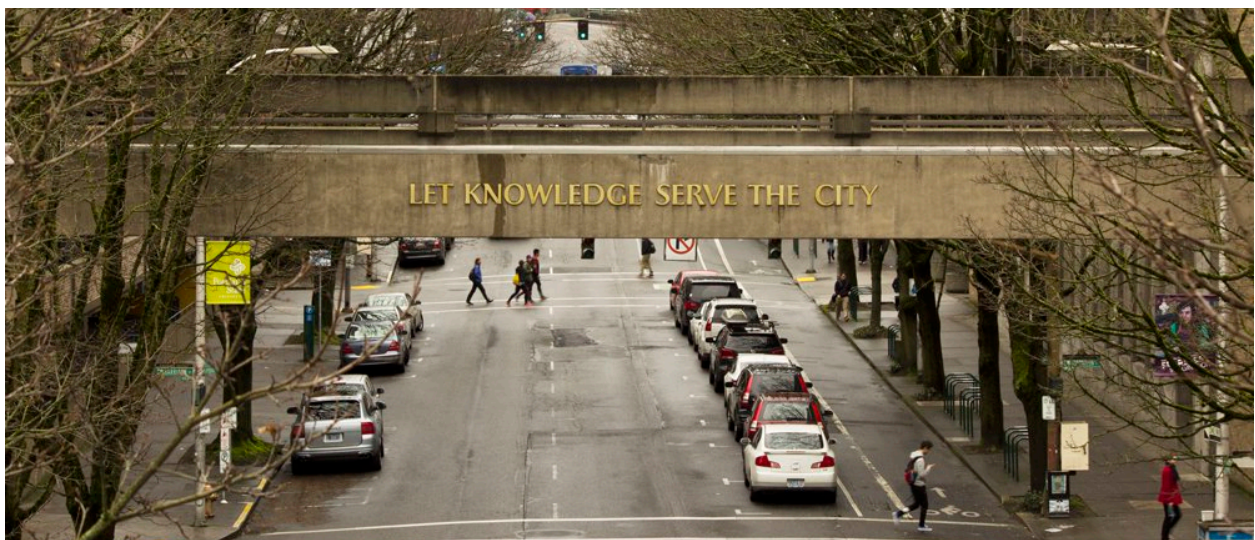
Readings: All required readings, videos and recommended resources are available on D2L in a folder labeled with the week we will discuss them in class. Print out the assigned pages and bring them to class, as we will reference them. Assigned readings may be revised during the term.

Graduate Student Led Discussions: There are so many different dimensions of public space, and issues we could explore through the lens of public space, that rather than try to predict your interests, this class will give you an opportunity to select the topics for discussion. Graduate students (alone or in pairs) will lead a class discussion focused on themes that reflect your individual and collective curiosities. Grad students will sign up to lead a particular class session and theme on Tuesday Oct. 3. Each grad student will:

1. Choose a relevant reading, listening or screening that will take less than 30 minutes to complete (a 15 page article or 30 minute podcast, etc.).
2. I am happy to help you find readings, contribute both to the lesson and its presentation. Meet with me two weeks prior to your presentation to discuss your approach and provide me with a copy of the reading or link to other media to distribute to the class.
3. Offer a 10 minute presentation on that material, connecting it to the theme, the class project and/or your own work/area of interest.
4. If you are presenting with a partner, work with them to tie your individual presentations together and determine how to use the rest of the class time (open discussion, small group activity, and exercise, etc.)
5. Reflect on this experience of organizing a class session in a brief essay.

Design Thinking: While no design or drawing skills are required for this course, students will engage in a *design thinking process*. Design thinking is a method for creative problem solving using the strategies designers use during the design process including teamwork, iteration and prototyping. Design thinking includes the belief that everyone is creative, and that creativity isn't the capacity to draw or compose or sculpt, but a way of understanding the world.

Urban Design: Likewise, you don't need drawing skills to think about public space as an urban designer. As Harvard professor of urban design Alex Krieger advises: "Urban design is less a technical discipline than a mind-set among those of varying disciplinary foundations seeking, sharing, and advocating insights about forms of community."¹



¹ Krieger, Saunders, eds. (2008): *Urban Design*, University of Minnesota Press.



Fall Term 2019 Project

This term the class will engage in a placemaking project that could lead to the transformation of a particular part of the PSU pedestrian skybridge network: the area connecting Cramer Hall and Smith Memorial Student Union (SMSU). This project, which involves a partnership with the PSU Living Lab program and the Campus Planning Office, builds on the previous work of students in fall term 2018, who examined how the Skybridge Network as a unique, three-dimensional component of the public realm—a “network of corridors, parks, and plazas [that] creates a web of active open spaces connecting people across and beyond”²—and proposed how various sites along the network could be reimaged and redesigned to better serve the campus and the community. Now the Campus Planning Office would like this class to develop one of those student proposals further: to transform the passageway between Cramer and SMSU into a more a more inviting gathering place for people to enjoy. More broadly how can this space better connect with the surrounding context and become more integral in the life of the campus community? The project is organized into four assignments that model a design thinking process. *Detailed instructions will be provided for each assignment and discussed in class.*

Assignment 1. Site Survey: Individually you will develop an understanding of the site (area connecting Cramer and SMSU). First review the student proposals from last year and other background material provided on D2L Then observe and experience the site and its immediate surroundings on several occasions. Each student will use a variety of methods (activity mapping, sketch maps, route maps, sound maps, photographs, collage maps, etc.) to record and present your observations. The format for this assignment is deliberately unstructured in order to produce many different perspectives of this place and provoke discussion of possible futures.

² “Final Findings and Decision by the Design Commission Rendered on August 6, 2015 regarding PSU School of Business,” available on D2L.

Assignment 2. Skybridge Placemaking Concepts: You will work in teams of 4-5 to brainstorm ways to temporarily activate this space by an intervention that complements existing activities and encourages people to meet and linger. Identify physical, programming and operational opportunities to make this space more inviting and create a sense of place. The design of this intervention is less about aesthetics and more about curating and choreography of experiences—the *process* of placemaking. Consider how partners from across the university community might contribute to the programming and implementation of events and activities that invite people to feel alive, at home, and part of the larger fabric of the university. Each team will develop one placemaking concept as a prototype to be implemented during Week 8 or 9; and present (“pitch”) this proposal to our Campus Planning and Living Lab partners and other key stakeholders.

Assignment 3. Skybridge Placemaking Project: Based on feedback from our Campus Planning and Living Lab partners and other key stakeholders, the class will collectively design and produce a pilot project (prototype) and test these placemaking concepts (get feedback) during Week 8 or 9. The class will then work in teams of 4-5 to produce a report for our Campus Planning and Living Lab partners documenting this process, identifying lessons learned from the pilot project and making recommendations for more permanent improvements to this space. Ideally this project will serve as a model for similar placemaking projects elsewhere on campus.

Assignment 4. Reflection Essay: You will each write a brief (3-5 page) essay reflecting on the experience of participating in this placemaking project *in the context of the readings*.

Assignment	Grading		
	Date Assigned	Date Due	% of Grade
1. Site Survey (Individual)	10/01	10/18	15 %
2. Skybridge Placemaking Concept (Team)	10/16	10/29	10 %
3. Skybridge Placemaking Project (Class)	10/29	12/10	30 %
Placemaking Event			20%
Placemaking Project Report			10%
• Reflection Essay	10/29	12/10	25 %
Participation (undergrad only)			20 %
Reading presentation and reflection (grad only)			20 %

100 Point System (used to calculate FINAL grade):

Points	0	48	52	58	63	68	73	78	83	88	93	100
Grade	F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A

No incomplete grades will be given without a substantial cause.

Students experiencing difficulty should seek help from the professor as soon as possible.

As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for my students and for the campus as a whole. 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. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment, sexual violence or discrimination to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find [a list](#) of those individuals or contact a confidential advocate at 503-725-5672. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module [Creating a Safe Campus](#) in your D2L.

Class Schedule and Required Reading Assignments

Week One	
T 10/01	Overview of the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Introduce ourselves and course content</i> • <i>Go over syllabus and term project</i> • <i>Identify themes for grad student led discussions</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>ASSIGNMENT 1 discussed in class</i></p>
Th 10/03	Global Consensus on Public Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The importance public space for quality of life and urban sustainability</i> • <i>What we mean by public space</i> • <i>The qualities of good public spaces and constraints on achieving them</i> • <i>Placemaking.</i> <p>REQUIRED READING: <i>UN Habitat Public Space Toolkit</i> — p.viii: Glossary; pp. 4-10: Introduction; pp. 14-33: The case for public space; Goals and constraints; [pp. 127-31: Annex 1: Charter of Public Space SKIM] Susan Silverberg, (2013). <i>Places in the Making: How Placemaking Builds Places and Community</i>. MIT, 5-12.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Grad students sign up to lead one weekly class discussion</i></p>
Week Two	
T 10/08	Walking Tour: PSU Pedestrian Skybridge Network and Portland (Halprin) Open Space Sequence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Overview of goals and objectives of Living Lab project presented by Liz Hoekstra, Campus Planning Office, Living Lab program partner</i> • <i>An experiential sense of space, the built environment and the cultural landscape</i> <p>REQUIRED READING: <i>PSU Open Space Plan</i> (2019) SKIM South Downtown/University District Plan, pp. 133-36, 141. In Chapter 5: District Goals, Policies and Implementation Actions, <i>Portland Central City 2035: West Quadrant Plan</i>, March 5, 2015 <i>Montgomery Green Street Plan</i> (2009) SKIM History of the Portland Open Space Sequence http://halprinconservancy.org/history/</p>
Th 10/10	Work on Assignment 1: Individual Site Survey <i>RECOMMENDED:</i> film “Social Life of Small Public Spaces”
Week Three	
T 10/16	Theoretical Frameworks — planning and design perspectives on public space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critiques of trends in current public space design and management • Impacts of current trends on the quality of public space • Typologies and classification of public space <p>REQUIRED READING: Matthew Carmona, (2010). Contemporary Public Space: Critiques and Classification, Part One: Critique. <i>Journal of Urban Design</i>, 15(1), 123-48. SKIM Matthew Carmona, (2010). Contemporary Public Space: Critiques and Classification, Part Two: Classification. <i>Journal of Urban Design</i>, 15(1), 123-48.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>ASSIGNMENT 2 discussed in class</i></p>

Th 10/18	Assignment 1: Individual Site Survey DUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Student presentations (required)</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>ASSIGNMENT 2 teams formed</i></p>
Week Four	
T 10/22	Factors That Shaped the PSU Skybridge Network and Portland (Halprin) Open Space Sequence—An Interconnected Three-Dimensional Pedestrian Network <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Urban renewal</i> • <i>Bio-regional planning context for central city revitalization</i> • <i>The University District as a hybrid urban public space</i> <p>REQUIRED READING: Review material posted on D2L</p>
Th 10/24	Work on Assignment 2: Team Skybridge Placemaking Concepts
Week Five	
T 10/29	Assignment 2: Team Skybridge Placemaking Concepts DUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Team presentations (required)</i> • <i>Feedback from Campus Planning Office, Living Lab Program</i> • <i>Agree on direction for development of Skybridge Placemaking Project</i> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>ASSIGNMENTS 3 & 4 discussed in class</i></p>
Th 10/31	Evolution of the ideal of multi-level pedestrian urbanism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The radical origins of 21st century urban skyways in utopian modernism</i> <p>REQUIRED READING:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Yoos and V. James, (2016). “The Multilevel Metropolis,” <i>Places Journal</i>, Accessed 14 Sep 2019. https://doi.org/10.22269/160518 • J. Yoos and V. James, (2016). “Ch. 1. Visionary Cities,” in <i>Paralel Cities</i>, Minn.: Walker Art Center, 17-44. SKIM <p style="text-align: right;"><i>ASSIGNMENT 3 work plan developed in class</i></p>
Week Six	
T 11/05	Grad student led discussion <p>REQUIRED READING: TBD</p>
Th 11/07	Work on Assignment 3: Skybridge Placemaking Project
Week Seven	
T 11/12	Grad student led discussion <p>REQUIRED READING: TBD</p>
Th 11/14	Work on Assignment 3: Skybridge Placemaking Project
Week Eight	
T 11/19	POTENTIAL Skybridge Placemaking Event or Grad student led discussion

Th 11/21	POTENTIAL Skybridge Placemaking Event or Grad student led discussion
Week Nine	
T 11/26	POTENTIAL Skybridge Placemaking Event or Grad student led discussion
Th 11/28	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Week Ten	
T 12/03	Work on Assignment 3: Skybridge Placemaking Project — Report
Th 12/05	Work on Assignment 3: Skybridge Placemaking Project — Report
Week Eleven	
T 12/10	Assignment 3: Class Placemaking Project Report DUE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Class Presentataion to Campus Planning Office and Living Lab Program</i> Assignment 4: Reflection Essay DUE