

Department of Geography, Planning, & Sustainability
Fall 2019

GEOG 16250: Sensing The Sustainable City

TH 3:30 – 6:15 PM | Robinson Hall 306

Instructor

Dr. Jen Kitson

Email: kitson@rowan.edu

Office: Robinson 315D

Office Hours: Th 9:30 - 10:30 AM and by appointment

Office Phone: 856.256.4817

We *must* be concerned with the sensory form of what surrounds us, since it is critical to our survival as well as to our pleasure. A concern for sensory quality is an absolutely necessary part of environmental policy. Otherwise, our cities will remain alien to us.
–Kevin Lynch, 1984, p. 21

If it's not beautiful, it's not sustainable. Aesthetic attraction is not a superficial concern—it's an environmental imperative. Beauty could save the planet.
–Lance Hosey, 2012, p.7

Walking...is how the body measures itself against the earth.
–Rebecca Solnit, 2000, p. 31

Introduction

Welcome to Sensing The Sustainable City (STSC)! This course revolves around two key assertions. *First and foremost, to support humanity in the 21st century we must rethink both the built form and social practices of urban environments along the dimensions of sustainability.* Most broadly, sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present, without comprising the needs of future generations. Two global imperatives make knowledge of sustainable urbanism a critical topic in the 21st century: (1) the majority (54%) of the world population is now urban, and (2) the cumulative effects of urban life are generating the most pressing global environmental problems facing humanity. Cities, in short, are both the cause of major environmental problems AND the solution. With our population expected to reach 9.6 billion by 2050, humanity's future is hinged upon our ability to make cities *sustainable*. Springing from this imperative, we will survey key concepts, debates, and examples from around the world in pursuing sustainable urbanism.

Secondly, this course springs from the assertion that sustainable cities are necessarily designed for people (not cars). The human body is the site of everyday urbanism and environmentalism. Our senses and the city are entangled. Consider the ways touch, taste, texture, temperature, sound, smell, sight, and other sensory modalities define the experience of urban life. In the very first words of his 1953 essay "Notes on City

Satisfaction," the American urban planner Kevin Lynch famously makes the case for attending to the senses and the city when he says, "We are concerned here with the psychological and sensual effects of the physical form of the city (Lynch 1995, 135)." Yet, half a century later, and despite continued calls from notable urbanists to re-scale cities for humans—in the realm of urban practice—the human body is hardly considered beyond its bi-pedal capabilities. Walkability scores, LEED, and Smart Cities—while generative of numerous socio-ecological benefits—lack meaningful engagement with sensory experience.

This class will explore sustainable urbanism through the body, employing experiential and experimental modes of sensory inquiry in considering what it means to be human—and how to design healthy, happy, and just human habitats—in the Anthropocene (the age of humans). Our overarching goal this semester is to *sense*—and therefore to *think*—our everyday urban and social environments in new ways. To think differently we must *do things differently!*

- Learning Goals Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:
- Define key concepts related to the human dimension of urban design and planning
 - Articulate attributes of good public places and inclusive placemaking
 - Study public life and space utilizing observational research methods
 - Utilize techniques of sensory ethnography/geography to study how different environments / spaces generate different embodied effects for yourself and others
 - Consider how the physiological-psychological effects of different built and social environments are experienced differently, by diverse users
 - Design and propose sustainability solutions that simultaneously address sensory-social, and environmental dimensions

Communication I'm available for office hours in Robinson 315D and by appointment. In emergency situations, my office phone is 856.256.4817 and the Department phone is 480.965.7533.

I also invite your email communication throughout the semester. Know that I will respond to your emails as soon as possible, (24 hrs weekdays; 48 hrs weekends). To ensure clear and professional communication, please ensure your emails include the following 4 components:

- A greeting (e.g. Hello Dr. Kitson, Hi Prof. Kitson, Hi Jen)
- The course info in the title or text of the email (e.g. STSC)

- A *detailed* question (e.g. In the Lynch reading on pg. 15....)
- Closing with your name (e.g. Best, Destiny)

Community

Your presence, engagement and professionalism is critical to the making of a productive learning community. Please be courteous by arriving on time, turning off and putting away devices, and using appropriate classroom language, including discrimination-free discussion. If you need to leave early, please let me know in advance.

This class is centered on a teaching philosophy whereby students are active participants in the learning experience and community building. In striving for an inclusive and equitable classroom, three feminist principles guide the course design:

- Empowerment: redistribution of teacher/student agency and knowledge production and the pursuit of social equity in the learning environment
- Community: fostering a supportive classroom for the exchange of new, different, and difficult ideas (civil discourse) is the right and responsibility of all students
- Leadership: teacher is a designer of the learning environment rather than the single authority/disseminator of content and students as active agents in co-creating an engaged learning environment

Weekly Format

Each week, prior to our 3:30 pm Thursday meeting, you will read an assigned article and submit a "reading response" in the form of a 1-2 page written response uploaded to BB OR a closed-ended quiz in BB. This advance preparation will ensure everyone can meaningfully contribute to class discussion and activities.

- Mindfulness Exercises: Each week we will experiment with doing guided body scans mindfulness exercises as part of cultivating keen sensory observation skills, the ability to focus in the present, and empathy
- Sensory Interventions: Each week we will engage in experiential-experimental sensing activities. We will often leave the classroom to use the campus as an urban laboratory. *Please chat with me if you foresee any difficulties participating in these field-based, walking activities.*

Required Materials

This course requires you to read (but not purchase) weekly book chapters and articles posted on our course Blackboard site; most of these are listed below (<https://rowan.blackboard.com/>). There is also

a field trip to Philadelphia. A bus will be provided free of charge, however, if you wish to drive yourself, you will incur the associated travel costs (gas, bridge toll \$5).

- Beatley, Timothy. 2017. *Handbook of Biophilic City Planning & Design*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Gehl, Jan. 2010. *Cities for People*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Gehl, Jan and Birgitte Svarre. 2013. *How To Study Public Life*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Goldhagen, Sarah Williams. 2017. *Welcome to Your World: How the Built Environment Shapes Our Lives*. New York, NY: Harper.
- Henshaw, Victoria. 2013. *Urban Smellscapes: Understanding and Designing City Smell Environments*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hosey, Lance. 2012. *The Shape of Green: Aesthetics, Ecology, and Design*. 2 edition. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Lyndon, Mike and Anthony Garcia. 2015. *Tactical Urbanism: Short-Term Action for Long-Term Change*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Marks, Nic. 2010. *The Happy Planet Index*. TED.com
- Montgomery, Charles. 2013. *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Speck, Jeff. 2013. *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*. New York, NY: North Point Press.
- Whyte, William. 2001. *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*. New York, NY: Project for Public Spaces.

Technology and

This course requires students to have reliable access to the Internet

a computer with speakers and/or headphones (audio/video capabilities). Basic computer skills, including the use of Blackboard, Microsoft Word, Google Docs, (or an equivalent software that can save documents as .doc, .docx, or pdf files) are required. Please let me know if you have technology concerns.

Evaluation

Mastery of course objectives will be assessed through the following weighted activities. Throughout the semester grades will be posted on our course Blackboard site. The following +/-grading scale will be used.

| Activity | Weight | Percent | Grade |
|---------------------------|--------|---------|-------|
| Reading Responses (RR) | 35% | 93-100 | A |
| Sense Journal | 15% | 90-92 | A- |
| Tactical Urbanism Project | 15% | 87-89 | B+ |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|-------|----|
| Exam | 10% | 83-86 | B |
| Attendance/Participation (AP) | 15% | 80-82 | B- |
| Public Space Mini-Study | 5% | 77-79 | C+ |
| SSHP Reflection | 5% | 73-76 | C |
| | | 70-72 | C- |
| Total | 100% | 67-69 | D+ |
| | | 63-66 | D |
| | | 60-62 | D- |
| | | 0-59 | F |

R&R
posted

Most weeks you will read an assigned book chapter, article, or other media

on BB and submit a "reading response" in the form of a 1-2 page written response uploaded to BB OR a closed-ended quiz in BB. Reading Responses must be submitted to Blackboard by 3:30 pm each week. **I will accept only one late RR submission—others will not be accepted.** This practice is intended to get you reading, thinking, and posing questions *prior to class on Thursday*. I will post reading questions or a reading guide to focus your response. I strongly recommend that you print the readings and take notes on the printed copy or in a word doc or notebook, and bring the reading / notes to class.

A+P
week.

Attendance (1 pt) and participation (1 pt) grades will be earned each

Participation grades will be based on your *level of engagement* with what we do in class. To earn 100% participation your bodily comportment must reflect a high level of engagement; this is conveyed in attentiveness (focus), responsiveness (answering questions), and active listening (listening to understand rather than to respond). If you are disinterested, distracted, or disruptive, your lack of participation will result in a weekly grade reduction. Please talk with me if you have questions or concerns in regards to in-class participation.

Everyone is allowed 1 absence without penalty. Any subsequent absences will result in lost attendance and participation points unless arrangements are made with me in advance for University recognized reasons that are accompanied by documentation (e.g. doctor's note or other form of supporting evidence). University recognized reasons for excused absences include: Official University activities, Documented illness, Death of a family member or loved one, Inclement weather, Religious observance: notification must take place before the holiday

If a major life event of any kind is impacting your schoolwork beyond 1 week in the form of absences, tardiness, difficulty focusing in-class or completing coursework please contact the Office of Student Life/Dean of Students. Their office is equipped to assist students undergoing difficult life events, including communicating with your professors if temporary accommodations are needed to help you through a difficult period. To request a meeting with the Vice President for Student Life and Dean of

Students, please e-mail Martha Aderinto at williamsm@rowan.edu or 856.256.4283.

*Sense
Journal
so*

The sense journal is intended to get you both *observing* and *documenting* your everyday sensory experience in different environments

that we might better design cities for real human bodies. This weekly practice of *taking note* (observation) and *note taking* (documentation) is intended to cultivate greater awareness of the interface between your body and environs. The goals of the sense journal are threefold, to:

- observe sensory change over time so that patterns and themes emerge
- experiment with techniques of sensory expression
- cultivate the habit of sensory attunement and presence

You should make contributions in your sense journal on a frequent basis (e.g. 2-3 times a week if they are short; or one 1 long entry a week). Your journal will be reviewed 2 times over the course of the semester for evidence of concerted effort to observe, record, and creatively express your sensory experience especially in regards to different types of spaces, materials, and urban environs. A grading rubric will be posted on BB.

*Tactical
Urbanism*

"The goal [of tactical urbanism] is...is to make something – even something temporary – that will change how a place works and is perceived" says Mike Lyndon, the author of *Tactical Urbanism II* (CityLab 2012). In this project you will co-develop a tactical urbanism (pilot or prototype) project that explores strategies for making sustainability problems-solutions sensible (detectable by the human senses). Each project teams will IMPLEMENT, DOCUMENT, and REPORT on a campus tactical prototype that gets (at least a few) real human bodies to think/experience their campus environment in a new way. The 5-step Tactical Urbanism design framework will guide your project.

*SSHP
Reflection
Jane*

Because public spaces are the true site of for the taking place of democratic values (for the people, by the people), influential urbanists like William Whyte,

Jacobs, and Jan Gehl (among others) have studied public spaces and social life for the purpose of making healthy, happy, just, and sustainable *human habitats*! To establish a strong conceptual understanding of these spaces, we will take a field trip to Spruce Street Harbor Park in Philadelphia where we will conduct a public space study with students in Prof. Bucknum's course. You will draft a 1-2 page reflection paper about your experience completing the activity and the park itself. Details will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

*Pop-Up
the Event
placemaking*

You will study the built form and social practices of good public spaces along dimensions of sustainability. You will apply the principles of creative

and tactical urbanism in transforming an unused space for one night! Through twinning arts, sociality, culture, and environmental goals, this temporary event is intended to contribute to building long-term social capital and civic engagement. You will develop and propose design and activity elements of this event during in-class workshops.

Response-abilities A safe and productive learning environment is both the *right and responsibility* of all students and faculty. Students enrolled in this course are responsible for: understanding the information in this syllabus, complying with all published policies and regulations in the college catalog and/or student handbook. Students will be notified in class and via Blackboard emails when adjustments to the syllabus are made; it is the responsibility of the student to attend class and check Blackboard/Rowan email accounts so as to be informed of any changes. Audio and video recording are not permitted without prior instructor permission.

Academic or Integrity in Academic integrity is expected of all Rowan students. Do not accidentally knowingly commit academic crimes (plagiarism, cheating). Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself, (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class, (3) present ideas or sentences that are not your own without proper citation, (4) cheat on an exam, or (5) sign someone else in on an attendance sheet. Per Rowan Policy, **any** infraction includes the possibility of failure of the entire course <http://www.rowan.edu/provost/policies/AcademicIntegrity.htm>

Disability within Services ensure You have the right to accommodations in this class; please contact me the first two weeks of the semester so we can make arrangements to ensure you excel in this course. The Academic Success Center is in Savitz Hall, 3rd Floor (856-256-4234): <http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/asc/disabilityresources/>.

Name Policy in Many students prefer to be known by a name other than their legal name. Students who wish to have a preferred first and/or middle name appear (1) the phone and email directories, (2) on their Rowan ID card, (3) on Blackboard, and (4) on Canvas may request this by sending an email to support@rowan.edu with "Preferred Name" in the subject line. Direct questions to socialjustice@rowan.edu.

Veterans Services There are a number of services available to assist veterans with education benefits. Staff are located in Savitz Hall, 3rd floor (856-256-4233) or visit: <http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/asc/veterans/>.

Writing with Services The writing center, located in the Campbell Library, 1st floor, can assist you with your writing assignments for any class. For appointments: 856-256-4367 or

<http://www.rowan.edu/colleges/ccca/departments/writingArts/writinglab.html>

Counseling The Wellness Center at Winans Hall provides physical and mental health services for students, such as time management, test anxiety, relationship issues, career assessment tools, and crisis situations. You can make an appointment during business hours at 856-256-4333. After hours call 856-256-4922 to speak with a counselor on call. If you are in crisis call 856-256-4911. <http://www.rowan.edu/studentaffairs/counseling/>.

Sexual Assault advocate 24/7 Sexual assault is one of the most underreported violent crimes on university campuses. To reach a confidential, trained sexual violence call 866-295-7378. Rowan provides resources and programs designed to prevent sexual violence and other acts of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, provide information about what to do when an incident has occurred, and increase awareness of campus resources for support and response. <http://www.rowan.edu/open/studentaffairs2/sexualviolence/>.

Starfish You may receive email from the Rowan Success Network (RSN) team (Starfish®) regarding your academic performance. Please pay attention to these emails and consider taking the recommended actions and . In addition, utilize the RSN's scheduling tools to make appointments at your convenience for advising, tutoring and more. Additional information about RSN may be found at www.rowan.edu/rsn.

Tentative Course Schedule as of 9/7/19

| Wee k | Date | Topic | Due Dates (by 3:30 pm in BB) |
|----------|---------------------|--|--|
| 1 | 9/5 | Welcome! | |
| 2 | 9/13 | The Human Dimension | RR 1 - <i>Cities for People</i> Ch. 1 & 2 |
| 2 | 9/20 | Study of Social Life & Space - William Whyte | RR 2 - <i>How to Study Public Life</i> Ch. 1 & 2 |
| 4 | 9/26 | No Class | RR 3 |
| | 9/27 FRI | Field trip – @ Spruce St. Harbor Park Study | |
| 5 | 10/3 | Tactical Urbanism | SSHP Reflection |

| | | | |
|----|-------|---|---------------------------------|
| 6 | 10/10 | Public Space Design Lab | Public Space Mini-Study |
| 7 | 10/17 | Public Space Activation | Sense Journal (submit notebook) |
| 8 | 10/24 | Biophilic Urbanism | RR 4 |
| 9 | 10/31 | Green Aesthetics | RR 5 |
| 10 | 11/7 | Universal Design | RR 6 |
| 11 | 11/14 | Smell Studio | RR 7 |
| 12 | 11/21 | Biophilic Design - Helena van Vliet guest speaker | RR 8 |
| 13 | 11/28 | No Class - Giving Thanks | |
| 14 | 12/5 | Presentations | Tactical Urbanism Project |
| 15 | 12/12 | Exam | |