

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy

762:624 PLANNING, PUBLIC POLICY, AND SOCIAL THEORY
Monday, 9:50 - 12:30 Civic Square, Room 168

Robert W. Lake
Fall 2008

OFFICE HOURS: Monday, 2-4 p.m., or by appointment.
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PURPOSE AND GOALS:

A possible starting definition suggests that planning and policy-making entail attempts “to transform reality according to the ideas and images of what we think reality ought to be” (Sack, 2003, p. 4).^{*} Much of planning and policy education takes something like this definition as given and offers instruction in how to carry out such transformation. Typical questions involve how to prepare better plans, design better or more affordable housing, engineer more efficient transportation systems, or create healthier or more aesthetically pleasing environments; how to select among alternative transformation strategies and options; how to implement the chosen transformations; and (sometimes) how to evaluate the results.

This seminar works backward from the above definition to deconstruct some of the foundational theoretical building-blocks underlying the idea and practice of planning and policy formation. Hidden within this definition are complex and contentious assumptions and premises that pose substantial challenges to the conduct of planning and public policy. How do we construct the reality we seek to transform, and what is the role of theory in this process of reality construction? Is there a universally recognized reality or does reality depend on our individually unique vantage points? If the latter, whose reality are we to transform, and whose “ideas and images” define the goals of such transformation? How do technology and expertise alter our perceptions, goals, and methods? How do power relations channel and deflect the transformative process? Through what institutional structure, including the state, is the transformation of reality enacted, and with what consequences? Who is the “we” in all of these questions, and in deciding “what ‘we’ think reality ought to be?” How are class, race, ethnicity, gender and other vectors of difference and diversity accommodated in the process of decision-making, and is this process compatible with notions of democracy? How do ethics, morality, and values enter the decision-making process?

Fortunately, we can draw from an extensive literature broadly characterized as “social theory” in attempting to answer these questions. Broadly speaking, this literature is “social” because it situates the transformative act as a collective project and it is “theoretical” because it offers a framework or an approach for understanding. This seminar will read selectively within the “social theory” literature to help us define issues and assemble tools necessary to address these foundational questions for planning and public policy.

^{*} Robert Sack. 2003. *A Geographical Guide to the Real and the Good*. New York: Routledge.

REQUIREMENTS:

- (1) Reading and active participation in seminar discussions (40%). At the beginning of each weekly meeting, each seminar participant will identify (a) question(s) or issue(s) pertaining to the week's readings. These will be listed on the board as our discussion agenda for the week.
- (2) Completion of four written essays (6-10 pages each) discussing and evaluating the weekly readings (40%). You may select readings for any four weeks during the semester as the subject of your review essays. The timing of these assignments is up to you, but you must have submitted four essays prior to the last class meeting. Your essays should not merely provide a summary or review of the readings; rather, they should offer a critical assessment of, and engagement with, ideas or issues in the readings. Guidelines for preparing these essays will be distributed at the first class meeting. Papers are due *at the beginning* of the class sessions when the readings are discussed. Essays should be typed, double-spaced, and must conform to acceptable standards of grammar, punctuation, and citation format.
- (3) Take-home final exam (date to be announced) (20%).

REQUIRED READINGS

The following books are available at the Rutgers Bookstore (Ferren Deck). I may distribute additional readings from time to time to augment (or disrupt) our discussions.

John Dewey. 1927 (1954). *The Public and its Problems*. Athens, OH: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press.

Bent Flyvbjerg. 1998. *Rationality and Power: Democracy in Practice*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bob Jessop. 2008. *State Power*. Oxford: Blackwell/Polity.

Elizabeth Minnich. 2005. *Transforming Knowledge*, 2nd edition. Philadelphia: Temple U. Press.

Timothy Mitchell. 2002. *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Alice O'Connor. 2001. *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth-Century U.S. History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Karl Polanyi. 1944 (2001). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Leonie Sandercock. 2003. *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities in the 21st Century*. London: Continuum Publishers.

Iris Marion Young. 2000. *Inclusion and Democracy*. NY: Oxford University Press.

CLASS SCHEDULE

- September 8** **Introduction and Overview**
Aims – definitions – ground rules – essay guidelines – themes – theory?
- September 15** **Knowledge, Technology, Power, and Policy**
Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, pages 1 – 152.
Abstraction – generalization – representation – case study – human and non-human actors – agency – politics of expertise – law (and order) – calculability and quantification – economy and policy
- September 22** **Constructing the Subject**
Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, pages 153 – 303.
Defining the subject – analyst’s relation to the subject – representation and interpretation – positionality – power – nationhood – development – capitalism – markets
- September 29** **The State – 1**
Bob Jessop, *State Power*, pages 1 – 156.
Defining the state – Marx on society and politics – Gramsci on geography – Poulantzas on the state as a social relation – Foucault on power
- October 6** **The State – 2**
Bob Jessop, *State Power*, pages 157 – 245.
Gender – spatial and temporal scale – globalization – metagovernance – complexity
- October 13** **States and Markets**
Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, pp. vii – xxxviii, 3 – 135.
Self-regulating markets – market and society – fictitious commodities – wealth and poverty – class
- October 20** **State Regulation**
Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, pages 136 – 268.
Laissez-faire – liberalism – regulation – planning – nationhood – freedom
- October 27** **Power, Politics, Policy, and Planning**
Bent Flyvbjerg, *Rationality and Power*.
Power – rationality vs. rationalization – politics – democracy – resistance – knowledge – expertise
- November 3** **The Public Interest**
John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*.
Pragmatism – private and public – defining the public – discovering the state – democracy – eclipse of the public – public relations – community

- November 10** **Identity, Difference, and Democracy**
Iris Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*.
 Aggregative vs. deliberative democracy – structural inequality – differentiated solidarity – representation – participation – communicative practices – civil society – public sphere – spatial segregation – geographic scale
- November 17** **Politics, Policy-Making, and the Policy Process**
Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge*.
 Social science – politics of knowledge – politics of policy-making – agenda-setting – traditions and paradigms – poverty knowledge and social policy – the knowledge industry
- November 24** **Planning Applications**
Leonie Sandercock, *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities*.
 Modernist planning – planning history – whose knowledge? – multiculturalism – insurgent planning – planning practice – storytelling
- December 1** **Theory, Thinking, and Knowing**
Elizabeth Minnich, *Transforming Knowledge*.
 Ways of thinking – transforming knowledge – transformative knowledge – categorical errors – conceptual approaches – faulty generalization – theory as constraining – theory as liberating – thinking as open-ended
- December 8** **Summary**