



University of Nevada, Reno

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
Mackay School of Earth Sciences and Engineering
College of Science
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<http://www.unr.edu/geography>

GEOG 711: Planning Theory

P. ANTHONY BRINKMAN

SPRING 2010

Class meets on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 until 8:15 in 304 Mackay Science Hall. Please make every effort to be punctual. While class absences do not directly affect your course grade, you are responsible for all the material covered in this course. Questions by individual students related to lectures and discussions missed in whole or part will receive the instructor's lowest priority. A detailed schedule of readings and assignments appears below.

INSTRUCTOR

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Please feel free to contact me for any reason. Electronic mail is the best way to reach me. I will try to respond within 24 hours. Do not, however, expect lengthy written replies from me. Office hours and telephone appointments are appropriate for more extended communication.

OFFICE HOURS

Office hours are on Monday evenings from 5:30 until 7:00 and Friday afternoons from 4:00 until 6:00. Subject to change. Other times are available by appointment.

OVERVIEW

This course primarily covers that section of planning theory characterized generally as *planning process*. It seeks to place, in context, the emergence of procedural planning theory, the rise to dominance of the synoptic, or rational, planning model and the subsequent progression of planning paradigms that compete, with varying degrees of success, to replace rational planning at the core of practice. A full appreciation of the discourse surrounding the process of planning requires competency in the compliments of planning theory-planning history and planning philosophy. Planning history provides coherence by tracing the origins of planning thought and traditions. Planning philosophy addresses the issue of legitimacy by providing answers to the question, "Why plan?"

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this course are twofold. The principal aim is to familiarize students with the planning paradigms that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century as a result of the paradigm shift that displaced comprehensive master planning at the center of planning practice. The secondary goal of this course is to locate planning process within the whole of planning theory by acknowledging the artificiality of compartmentalizing theory and exploring important linkages connecting process to both the history and philosophy of planning.

REQUIREMENTS

All course readings will be available on WebCT.

Grading

	Due	Proportion of Final Grade (%)
Informal Participation	weekly	20
Formal Participation	varies	20
Paper One	10 March	20
Paper Two	5 May	20
Final Examination	11 May	20

Informal Participation

This course will follow a seminar format. This means that the class will discuss the readings. This will only work with everyone's participation. The instructor expects all students to come to class fully prepared, having read and thought about the readings. Your informal participation grade will be based on the quality and quantity of your contributions to the general discussion of the readings each week. If you are having trouble making sense of the material assigned, use the WebCT discussion page to begin a thread or respond to the concerns and ideas of your fellow students. The instructor will monitor the online discussions and provide comments where and when appropriate. You might also consult some of the optional readings or ask questions of the instructor during office hours.

In this kind of seminar nearly anything goes. It is meant to explore ideas, so students should not be concerned if they do not understand some of the ideas discussed or if their ideas are only half-formed. In this way, everyone learns from each other. Challenge each other's ideas. Disagreements over assumptions, understandings and values can surface helpful insights, even if differences of opinion remain.

Formal Participation

Each week, a team of students will serve as the reviewers and commentators for the assigned readings. Students assigned to these tasks for the week will formally (and briefly) present the week's readings, raising issues that they think would be interesting for the class to consider. Afterward, the discussion will be opened to the entire class.

Each team will present three times during the course of the semester. Beyond the stipulation that each person must take the lead in preparing the presentation and leading the discussion, teams may distribute the work between their members as they wish.

Reviewers should concentrate on summarizing the assigned readings very briefly. Everybody in the room will already have read the materials, your job will be to highlight the main points of the author and make comparisons to the other assigned readings, readings from previous weeks or the optional readings.

Commentators should NOT summarize the articles. Your task is essentially to provide a synopsis of your reaction to the various readings. Explain where and why you agree with the author(s) and where and why you do not. If helpful, provide context for the article(s) to explain the concerns it (they) raise. The best commentaries will set the stage for the class discussion ahead.

Team ❶ Dolloff and Kono

Team ❷ Martinez and Owens

Team ❸ Wooldridge and Washa

Team ❹ Morrison and Larsen

Papers

Each student is responsible for writing two papers during the term, each approximately 15-20 pages in length (typed, double-spaced). Students should choose two topics from the syllabus and further develop the ideas in each in some way. This can be done by exploring additional literature in a particular area or by applying the theory to some planning experience you have had or that you know about. For those who wish to diverge from these guidelines, check with the instructor before beginning. Please clear topics for each paper with the instructor at least four weeks before the paper is due. Students are *encouraged* to submit drafts of their papers for comments from the instructor.

Basis for Assessment

From 1,000 possible points, the instructor will assign grades based on the following schedule.

1,000–900 A	699–650 C+
899–850 A-	649–600 C
849–800 B+	599–550 C-
799–750 B	549–500 D
749–700 B-	< 500

DEADLINES

Students are required to meet the assignment deadlines set for this course. Except in very rare cases, the instructor will not grant deadline extensions. Late assignments will carry grading penalties based on the age of the deadline at assignment submission.

ORIGINAL WORK

As professionals—or future professionals—and graduate students, you should adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct. The instructor assumes that a paper, report or other material that bears your name is your original work. The line between scholarship and plagiarism is very thin. You may use the ideas and words of others in your work, but only with proper attribution. Exact passages from other sources also require quotations. In your professional work, failure to adhere to this rule will have severe consequences—this course is no different. Plagiarism of any kind will result in a failing grade on the assignment in question and may subject the plagiarist to disciplinary action by the University.

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMODATION

If you have a disability for which you will need to request accommodations, please contact the instructor or the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building, Suite 101) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

TOPICS

The topics selected for this course are in no way exhaustive nor can they be said to even comprehensively summarize the entirety of issues that could conceivably be included under the rubric of planning process. Rather, they represent a fair sampling of the main procedural issues, debates and ideas that have come to the fore in the planning literature since, roughly, 1950. Organization of the various planning paradigms below

borrowed from Yiftachel¹ and others and reflects the usefulness and clarity of certain typologies for this forum rather than any perceived or stated agreement by practitioners or in the academy on the superiority of one classification over another. The inclusion of typologies—the classification schemes that organize the paradigms into a coherent body of knowledge and help bound the sub-field of planning process—as a course topic concedes, and highlights the conclusion that, any system of categorization hides as much as it highlights.

The readings for this course are arranged chronologically by topic, reflecting the importance of history and the key role interactive discourse plays in developing and refining ideas. Few, if any, of the articles below stand in isolation. Rather, they stem from a continual sifting and winnowing of ideas by a community of scholars in the context of human history that both shapes those ideas and is shaped by them. Exploring each reading in chronological order may, at times, seem disjointed. However, by doing so, students are apt to discover linkages and unifying threads of thought sometimes cloaked by further categorizations. Furthermore, these connections have the potential to challenge higher order schemes.

I. THE ROOTS OF PROCEDURAL PLANNING THEORY

By most accounts, Faludi made the first *formal* distinction between procedural and substantive planning theory, although the reality extends at least as far back as Banfield's "Note on Conceptual Scheme" (Section II). Also at this time, a separate dichotomy, not unrelated to the process/substance division, emerged that defines planning theories as either normative or empirical. Although the usefulness of this second dichotomy is problematic, theorists have relied upon it to stress the importance of empirical theories informing the normative, challenge basic assumptions, and clarify debates.

The paradigm shift that ushered comprehensive land use planning from the center of practice, also, in some minds, divorced planning from content. Although the content/process split was ephemeral, planning process (i.e., an identifiable literature centering on the "how" of planning) survived, ostensibly for its usefulness in conceiving of the larger field of planning theory. The Planning Accreditation Board institutionalized the process of planning in later years as a distinct area of inquiry with through its guidelines requiring curriculum in "theory about the manner in which planning...is, and should be, undertaken." So, although there is still much dissent over how to categorize and organize its ideas and issues, planning process remains a generally accepted sub-field of planning theory, which describes the various planning paradigms. In short, it attempts to answer the question, "How should planners plan?"

¹ O. Yiftachel, "Towards a New Typology of Urban Planning," *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 16, no. 1 (January 1989): 23-29.

II. RATIONALITY AND PLANNING

Two main issues occupied the process discourse during the brief period marked by the rise to ascendancy of the rational, or synoptic, model. The first was definitional and concerned the idea of rationality and its multiple variants. In many instances, planning theorists used the term *rationality* to refer to something different from the standard social science meaning of the term. They also differentiated types of rationality to circumscribe and temper their utopian ideas. The second addressed problems of associated with ends for which planners would design means. Who is responsible for formulating planning goals and how should it be done? Can means be rationally justified? Some sidestepped these questions while others made valiant efforts to answer them. Ironically, both issues (i.e., rationality and ends) remain the subjects of considerable hand wringing today, long after the rational model fell from favor within the academy.

III. PARADIGMATIC CRISIS

At mid-century, even its proponents recognized rational planning as an ideal and acknowledged that practice represented something quite different. The confidence of rationalists reflected a belief that the theory/practice gap would eventually close and, as it did, planning outcomes would steadily improve. However, by the 'seventies, it seemed clear that these theorists had misplaced their optimism. If the reality of practice had changed appreciably (empirical research was still rare), social upheaval that marked the period and prevailing disillusionment discredited its utility. Planning had entered a period of paradigmatic crisis, similar in dimension to that which Kuhn described. It has been, and continues to be, marked by innumerable attempts to develop a new and unifying paradigm for planning. To this point, these efforts have all been unsuccessful. Perhaps, because of this in part, the rational paradigm, while discredited, persists.

IV. ALTERNATIVE PLANNING MODELS

Presentation of the planning models below as alternatives to the rational paradigm is not intended to afford the synoptic model a privileged place within the sub-field of process. Rather, it reflects only the particular chronology of development of planning thought and practice and the fact that most schemes of process, to some extent, take the rational model as their point of departure.

A. INCREMENTALISM AND VARIATIONS THEREOF

Lindblom's point of departure is as much the rational planning model, as it was the normative approach of theorists such as Banfield and Meyerson. In contrast to the ideal of rational action, Lindblom presented what he found to be the actual way decisions are made—incrementally. While some take exception to the characterization, today disjointed-incrementalism is viewed generally as the antipode of rational planning. Finding value and fault in both approaches, a number of theorists have developed alternative processes designed to fall somewhere on the spectrum between these extremes.

B. ADVOCACY, EQUITY AND EMPOWERMENT PLANNING

Advocacy planning represented a radical departure from rational planning, not because it rejected the concept of rational action per se, but because it acknowledged the bankruptcy of the functional role of value-neutral technician in a pluralist world. Equity planning is a variation of advocacy planning where the planner works from within the system (i.e., public agency) for the stated goal of equity in allocation of scarce resources. A closely related variant, termed here *empowerment planning* and ascribed most often to Alinsky, aims to redistribute power by organizing grassroots action. Although it is strictly consequentialist in approach, it differs from radical reform in that it does not seek to fundamentally alter the political structure of society, but aims rather to enhance the ability of the disadvantaged to achieve their objectives through collective action.

C. THE CONTINGENCY APPROACH

If contingency theorists have not abandoned hope for finding a unifying planning paradigm, they are resigned to the idea that such a discovery is not imminent. The contingency approach teaches planners to pay attention to the nature of planning problems and match methods (i.e., role and process) to context in a systematic way. In many cases, planning process typologies serve the dual purpose of organizing the field and framing the choice of planning model. Hudson's framework is a notable example of this. While the approach of contingency theorists might be pragmatic in the sense that it is *practical*, its connection to the tradition of Dewey et al. is a spurious one.

E. RATIONAL PRAGMATISM

Although planning academics, practitioners and students alike sometimes use the term haphazardly to mean any of a number of things, in the context of this course, *pragmatism* refers to the model of practice stemming from the philosophy of pragmatism articulated by the likes of John Dewey, Charles Peirce and William James. Planners considered rational pragmatists, stress experience as

that through which individuals learn what counts both as a problem and as its solution. The centrality of the planning process, therefore, lies in shared consideration of the consequences of planned action. Furthermore, according to theory, the liberating consequences of this reflective transaction (i.e., social learning) would be enough to encourage broad voluntary participation. Coercion, in any form, would be self-defeating.

Rational pragmatists do not reject instrumental problem solving, rather they adopt a broader notion of rationality that does not name planning arbitrary and irrational if it fails to follow strict procedural rules. According to the pragmatists, the key to successfully addressing wicked problems is collective reflection on action to reframe problems and inject solutions with vision. Criticisms of this approach tend generally to focus on the continued reliance on positivist ideas and a perceived failure to recognize the coercive nature of entrenched power relationships.

D. RADICAL REFORM

Planning as *radical reform* is intended to substantially alter the political and economic institutions of society as a means of enhancing the democratic rights and power of workers, or more broadly, average citizens. Even though most theorists of radical reform write from a Marxist perspective, they, as a group, believe the changes they advocate are possible without crisis or revolution. This has generated a good deal of debate among radical reformists and Marxists over the merits of participation-working for change, often only at the margin. Radical reform stands in contrast to other forms of planning by its rejection of the legitimacy of the existing social structure. Conversely, even empowerment planners like Alinsky believe that the underclass can effectively stake its claim in a capitalist system.

F. COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Communicative action is a planning paradigm that seeks to understand planning practice by exploring in rigorous ways what exactly planners do. To make sense of what they see and hear, communicative action theorists draw heavily from critical theory, which is grounded in functional Marxism. Critical theorists understand characteristics of society as mechanisms for maintaining the position of a ruling class. More precisely, they contend that distortions of communications by societal power structures effectively derail democracy. By being critical, planners can learn to uncover and correct distortions of communication. Doing so will increase the influence of planners in decision-making by enhancing their ability to communicate more effectively.

Unlike radical reform, communicative action is imbued with the belief that society can rely on reason to identify and ameliorate the problem of distorted communication. In this view, institutional change is not necessary. Like rational pragmatism, communicative action rests on the power of reason. However it avoids overemphasis of instrumental rationality and accepts many different ways of knowing. This revised approach is sometimes called radical pragmatism.

V. TYPOLOGIES

Typologies of planning paradigms are useful for providing a coherent account of the literature gathered under the rubric of process. Each theorist uses a different set of assumptions and criteria for arranging paradigms. Consequently, each typology varies in what it includes, what it ignores and what it highlights. Therefore, it is instructive to consider alternate typologies as a way of both exploring various interpretations of key concepts and casting a wide net to cover, at least in a cursory fashion, a number of ideas not explicitly included in any single course on process.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

It is all too easy to restrict the study of planning process to discussions of the history and utility of various practice paradigms advanced over the years. However, such an approach ignores the fact that planning theory, in all its conceptions, including the one presented here, is not a whole neatly divisible. Planning process shares concerns and issues with planning history and philosophy and attempting to ignore the overlaps runs the risk of oversimplifying the subject matter. Therefore, set aside for clarity sake, this course includes a brief exploration of what process choices may imply for some matters more closely aligned with the philosophy of planning; namely roles, public participation and ethics.

A. ROLES

While the nature of planning problems and the professional environments in which planners work are often strong determinants of the roles they assume, practice generally provides varying degrees of latitude for selecting suitable roles. However, decisions concerning planning process often further restrict the range of roles available. Similarly, assuming a particular role determines the viability of certain process schemes to a large extent. In that planners commonly operationalize their values by the roles they assume, it is important that they reflect on the interconnectedness of process and roles. By doing so, they ensure that role selection and, by extension, their values that shape practice are, to the greatest extent possible, a matter of choice rather than default.

B. ETHICS (*Covered in GEOG 655, Planning Ethics*)

Questions of ethics are perhaps the easiest linkages connecting planning process and planning philosophy to identify. Since nearly every process decision has an ethical dimension, whether intended or not, what practitioners decide about how they will plan says a great deal about their ethics. Therefore, thoughtful practice requires that planners, at the very least, recognize the ethical implications of their work. Hopefully they will endeavor to map their own moral positions so that ethics will lead their decision-making rather than follow it.

The process of selecting readings for this topic is admittedly more arbitrary than for other sections of the course. Each citation, does, however, touch on issues that place various aspects of planning process in an ethical light. Missing are readings that focus primarily on normative ethical issues (e.g., theories of ethics) which are more appropriately taken up when considering why planners plan.

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation, for all extents and purposes, can be included under the ethics heading. For certainly decisions about whether or how to include citizens in decisions that affect their lives (sometimes for generations) are ethical in nature. The readings concerning public participation are broken out simply to highlight their importance. Too often citizen involvement is only an afterthought in discourses on planning ethics.

COURSE SCHEDULE

January	19	Introduction
January	26	Theories of Planning
February	2	Roots of Procedural Planning Theory
February	16	Rationality and Planning
February	23	Paradigmatic Crisis
March	2	Incrementalism and Variations Thereof
March	9	Advocacy, Equity and Empowerment Planning
March	23	The Contingency Approach <i>Paper One Due</i>
March	30	Rational Pragmatism

April	6	Radical Reform (Conflict)
April	13	Communicative Action
April	20	Typologies; Planning Roles
April	27	Public Participation; The Future
April	4	Why do we plan?
May	5	Conclusion <i>Paper Two Due</i>
May	11	<i>Final Examination</i> 7:00-9:00 PM