

Metropolitan Seminar/ Urban Planning, City Design and the Public Arts

Spring Semester, 2008
2:30 to 5:00 PM Wednesdays

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Course Description.

This section of the Metropolitan Seminar/Arts in the City will focus on the importance of the aesthetic dimension in the development of the city, particularly Chicago's *Public Art*. We will explore the significance of the city's architecture, sculpture, parks, community murals, ethnic museums and proposals for the future. The course will seek to understand and critique the impact of the city's built environment on its residents through field trips, guest speakers, readings and class discussions. The course will address issues of environmental sustainability, aesthetic beauty and the importance of a shared civic culture.

Course Syllabus: Course Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the course is to explore how public art has influenced the city's development and its position in the world as an emerging global city. The course has the following objectives

1. To show how the city's planners have incorporated aesthetics into the design of the city. These plans have included designs for city parks, architecture, boulevards, sculpture, murals and museums.
2. To demonstrate the interrelationship between public art and the economy of the city, particularly via tourism, conventions, and the attempt to sell Chicago as a world class global city.
3. To explore the relationship of public art and the quality of life in the city.
4. To explore how public art is a medium for cultural diversity for the city via museums such as the National Museum of Mexican American Art or the DuSable Museum of African American History, and others.
5. To note the relationship between public art and urban spaces. These include public squares, parks, and corridors of public and private buildings in the city.
6. To explore the relationship of public art to "sacred space" in the city. These include churches, synagogues and mosques on the one hand, and also in relationship to the entire built environment.

Educational Perspective:

As a seminar, the course will be highly experiential. Much of the course will consist of field trips to places where public art is prominent. Students will be invited to visualize, experience and assess what the purpose and function of public art is for the city. As a consequence of the “City Beautiful” movement in the late 19th century, city leaders and city planners have incorporated public art in their vision of Chicago, from the White City of 1893 to Millennium Park today. Public art includes the plans for the city and also its ornate architecture, its sculpture, its park system, its murals, its prominence in the city’s diverse communities, its museums and in its spaces for public performances (dance and music and drama). A new study conducted by the McArthur Foundation noted that when cities incorporate art into their plans, they become better places culturally and economically. Virtually the entire course will feature a visual/experiential encounter of public art and its significance for the city of Chicago.

Course Requirements:

Student participation and interaction is assumed. Students will be evaluated on their level of participation in the class, as well as their ability to analyze and sum up their reaction to aspects of the course in discussion and in written course projects. The manner in which this course is taught requires that students ask questions, pursue answers for themselves and actively seek how the “fragments” of the city fit together as a whole. The instructor functions as a guide and facilitator rather than “answer person” in this process.

Texts and Course Resources:

1. Richard C. Longworth, *Caught in the Middle: America’s Heartland in the Age of Globalism* (2008).
2. *A book on the city of Chicago* that reflects its commitment to its public arts-city planning, design, parks, murals, etc.. To be selected from the course bibliography. Recommended books are hi-lighted!
3. Eric O Jacobson, *Sidewalks of the Kingdom: Christians and the New Urbanism*. Brazos, 1983. Argues for an aesthetic dimension for building a healthy viable city.
4. Web page information on individual art works and their artists.
5. Articles distributed by the instructor or guests

Assignments

1. **Attendance and participation.** Is required of all sessions. Absences: One *excused* absence without penalty. For each additional absence, 5 points off final grade average for each additional absence (10% +).
2. **First Assignment** (due March 5) - based on the Longworth book, cited below. Based on *Caught in the Middle*, write a reflection paper that describes your experience with your hometown or home region and how your experience substantiates or challenges the perspective on the Midwest as found in

Longworth's book. Is what he describes true to your experience, what is your experience in your hometown perhaps different than the author's analysis?
25%

3. **Second Assignment** (due March 26) - Pick out a sculpture, mural or public art work in the city, and report on its significance for you, with class oral presentation (15%).
4. **Third Assignment** (due April 16) - Based on your reading of a book on Chicago's architecture, parks, sculpture or what have you, what is the significance of the built environment for an enhanced quality of life for city residents? (25%).
5. **Fourth Assignment** (due May 7) - Discussion of role/function of art in your choice of a Chicago neighborhood using New Urbanist criteria in your analysis (25% =100% total).

Itinerary (Some of the following is TBA and may be adjusted)

[Note, due to the nature of the course, expect the course to go from 2:30 to 5:00 PM each Wednesday afternoon. I have left some descriptions that give you a flavoring of the topics overall significance].

1. **Monday, February 4- Course Introduction: 1-2 PM:**
READ: .
2. **Wed. Feb 13: Chicago Tour-** Planning History and tour of monuments, murals and significant sculpture on South Side of Chicago. It is hardly surprising that the important city of Chicago is crammed full of spectacular landmarks and monuments. Famous throughout the world, many of these landmarks date back hundreds of years and are in remarkable condition. We will travel in a *rented passenger* van (meet me by Silvia's desk at 2:25 PM). Jacobson, *Sidewalks*, pages 1-73; Longworth, *Caught in the Middle*, pp 1-81 - *chapters1-5*.
3. **Wed. Sept 20. "Public Art, Culture Industries and the Role of Tourism in Urban Development"-** Costas Spirou, Ph.D. Social Studies, National Louis University. **Read Longworth, *Caught in the Middle*, chapters 6-9.**
4. **February 27 Millennium Park: *The Sculpture of Millennium Park*.** Today, with its unprecedented combination of architecture, monumental sculpture and landscape design, the 24.5 acre Millennium Park has become the crowning achievement for Chicago in the tradition of its original founders. We begin with the new Ice Sculpture exhibit, and then tour of Millennium Park sculpture and grounds. **Read Longworth, chapters 10-14.**
5. **Wednesday, March 5:** Longworth lecture. **"Caught in the Middle: The Decline and Rebirth of Chicago and the Upper Midwest."** Richard C. Longworth, the Global Chicago Center/Chicago Council of Global Affairs (This will be a combined event for the three Metropolitan Seminar sections, in Adler).
First Assignment due- Compare your MW hometown with Longworth's analysis.
6. **March 12. *Architecture in downtown Chicago*.** Some of the distinguishing features of the Chicago School of Architecture are the use of steel-frame buildings with masonry cladding (usually [terra cotta](#)), allowing large plate-glass window areas and the use of limited amounts of exterior ornament.

Sometimes elements of [neoclassical architecture](#) are used in Chicago School [skyscrapers](#). Many Chicago School skyscrapers contain the three parts of a classical [column](#). The first floor functions as the base, the middle stories, usually with little ornamental detail, act as the shaft of the column, and the last floor or so represent the capital, with more ornamental detail and capped with a [cornice](#). *This walking tour will highlight the contributions of architects Burnham and Root, Adler and Sullivan, Holabird and Roche and William LeBaron Jenney. [Begin Reading your book on Chicago: Select your public art piece.](#)*

7. **March 19: Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT), and the birth of modern architecture and legacy of Mies Van Der Rohe.**
8. **March 26: Jim Morris. Photographing the City and its diversity.**
Second Assignment Due: Your description of a public art piece.
9. **April 2: Trip to Pilsen National Museum of Mexican American Art and Murals Tour of Pilsen.** The National Museum of Mexican Art is the largest Latino culture organization in the country and the only Latino museum accredited by the American Association of Museums. For the past two decades, the Museum has presented a vast range of educational exhibitions that have continued to offer a vibrant and comprehensive picture of Mexico's art and history, and of Mexican communities in the U.S. Our understanding that Mexican culture is "*sin fronteras*" (without borders) guides our exhibition schedule and permits us to display artistic expressions from both sides of the border. From ancient Mesoamerican civilizations to contemporary artistic movements, the Visual Arts Department has a longstanding history of producing original exhibitions with *first-voice* scholarship. Pilsen is also famous for its murals. The history of the murals is often misspoken of as a purely Mexican cultural type which is historically and factually inaccurate. The original murals in Pilsen along 16th Street started as a cooperative effort between Slavs and Mexicans when the neighborhood was undergoing change. The exhibits for the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) should still be present. [Continue reading book on Chicago.](#)
10. **April 9: Garfield Park. A Westside haven.** Exquisite representative of Jens Jensen's Prairie School Landscape Design methods. [Finish your book, and begin completion of third assignment due on April 16.](#)
11. **April 16: Third Assignment Due, review of book on Chicago.** Based on your reading of the book of choice, what is the Role/Significance of Public Art in Chicago?
12. **April 23: Ellen Shepard, Andersonville Community Development Corporation. *The New Urbanism in practice. A trip to Andersonville, Chicago.*** A reaction to the suburban sprawl of the 1980s, the New Urbanism is a design movement led by belief in "walkable" cities with diverse housing and job opportunities. Its tenets include regional planning for open spaces, appropriate architecture, historic preservation, and green building. In 2004, the *Congress for the New Urbanism* met in Chicago, a city of groundbreaking achievements in architecture and urban design. This Congress focused on the smallest scale addressed by the Charter of the New Urbanism. With "Streets, Blocks and Buildings Today: The New City Beautiful." Andersonville is designing its retail district with New Urbanist ideals in mind. [Read Jacobsen, pages 74-152, chapters 5-10.](#)
13. **Wed. April 30: 2:30-4:30 PM. Peggy Notebaert Museum and environs.** The Green Roof on the [Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum](#) is part exhibit, part declaration and part solution. The Museum thanks the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for being the primary sources of financial assistance for this project through Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.

- AN EXHIBIT: The rooftop garden at the Museum is a learning opportunity for visitors and researchers in the field of Green Design. The Museum has brought the best available experts together to create a state-of-the-art garden.
 - A DECLARATION: By defining itself as the premier museum focused on the Midwestern environment, the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum takes on a mission of teaching and acting on one of the crucial issues of our time: protecting and conserving our environment.
 - A SOLUTION: Installation of the Rooftop Garden—and other Green Design initiatives—contribute in a real way to storm water management.
- May 7, 2008. **Final Course Project on theme:** The Role of Art in the Public Domain. Your final papers on role of art in the neighborhood that you study using the criteria of Eric O. Jacobsen, 's Sidewalks of the Kingdom: Christians and the New Urbanism. **Finish reading Jacobsen, especially the conclusion, pages 153-156.**

[Chicago Semester will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students can alert us in the "Additional Information" portion of the Application Form prior to their coming, or they can notify the Director privately if necessary. Students should also alert their instructors during the first two weeks of class so that accommodations can be made. For further assistance, contact Clinton Stockwell at Clintons@chicagosemester.org.]