GEOS3520
Urban Citizenship and Sustainability

First Semester 2015

Professor Phil McManus  (Unit Co-ordinator)
t: 9351 4242
e: phil.mcmanus@sydney.edu.au

Dr Amanda Tattersall
t: 9036 7549
e: amanda.tattersall@sydney.edu.au
t: @amandatatts
Introduction to the Unit of Study

More than half the world’s population now live in cities. The contemporary growth of cities, however, is attached to profound political and environmental questions about what it means to be urban, and what ‘being urban’ means for the planet. Urban Citizenship and Sustainability provides grounding to these crucial questions, by examining urban environments from the dual perspectives of citizenship and sustainability. The Unit begins by addressing the issue of urban sustainability. Are cities sustainable? Why or why not? And for whom? In the second half of the semester, we will consider the different forms of citizenship associated with different approaches to urban sustainability. How are urban inhabitants taking action on urban environmental questions, and what new models of citizenship are emerging from their action?

Through the semester, a practicals program enables students to develop urban-based research projects. Key skills will be introduced relating to how to conduct consultancy research. These skills include communication, developing a CV, working in teams and critical thinking.

The Unit will also enable students to build on concepts covered in Intermediate Geography Units, especially GEOS2123 The Geography of Cities and Regions and GEOS2121 Environmental and Resource Management.
**Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

In *Urban Citizenship and Sustainability*, we aim to create a safe space for students to develop their ideas, knowledge and critical thinking skills while learning about important topics and developing useful generic skills for their future employment and life.

We have developed the following list of key learning outcomes, and we hope you will use this list to monitor your own progress through the semester. These learning outcomes relate to Faculty of Science’s Graduate Attributes, which can be found [here](#). The relevant attributes for each learning outcome are listed in brackets.

By the end of this unit of study students should be able to:
1. understand the history of sustainable development (A1, A5, B2, B5, D2);
2. recognise various approaches to sustainability (A1, A5, B2, B5, D2);
3. converse with government officials, activists and business interests about the topic of sustainability (A5, C2, C3, C4);
4. articulate their own preferred concept of sustainability and be able to justify their position (A1, A2, A4, D2);
5. define citizenship, and describe its different dimensions (A1, A5, B2, B5, D1);
6. explain the relationship between citizenship and space (A1, A5, B2, B5, D1);
7. use their understanding of citizenship to analyse instances of urban conflict across different times and spaces (A1, A5, B2, B5, D1);
8. apply their understanding of the relationship between cities and citizenship to critically reflect on different approaches to sustainability (A1, A5, B2, B5, D1, D2).

By the end of the Practicals component, students should be able to:
9. appreciate the importance of group work (C5, C6, C7);
10. work effectively in groups, and to understand why a group is working well or is not working well (C5, C6, C7, D3, E3, E4);
11. present a suitable *Curriculum Vitae* which can be developed once they leave the University of Sydney (C2);
12. write a business letter (C2);
13. present their work, using powerpoint, to government officials, etc. (B5, C2, C3);
14. write a Report (rather than just an essay) (C1, C2);
15. link this particular topic with the lecture material on sustainability (B2, B3, E5);
16. prepare a covering letter, CV and performing well in a job interview once they graduate from the University of Sydney (C2).
**Class times**

**Lectures** will be conducted in two hour blocks, once per week. The lectures take place from 10am-12pm on Wednesdays in Carslaw Lab Room 408.

**Tutorials** begin in Week 2. Students are expected to attend their timetabled tutorials each week. If on occasion you cannot attend at your regular time, please talk to your tutor about attending another tutorial in that week.

**Practical classes** will begin in Week 3 and be held on Thursdays. Students are expected to attend their timetabled prac class each week, maintaining a regular time to enable groups to function. Leonardo Valenzuela is the Prac Coordinator.

**Lecture Schedule and Outlines**

4 March  **Introduction: Sustainable Development and Sustainable Cities**

This lecture introduces the history of sustainability thought, the World Commission on Environment and Development definition, the subsequent UNCED conference and follow-up conferences, alternative definitions and their underlying concepts, and explores these ideas in the context of urban environments. It does so at various scales, ranging from global scale processes to local government action in Sydney. The lecture highlights unsustainable cities and the desire to make cities more sustainable, which is positioned as part of a longer-term goal to improve urban environments. (Phil, Amanda)

11 March  **Urban Form: Ideal models and less than ideal practice**

This lecture traces the evolution of thought about improving urban environments, highlighting the importance of perceptions about what needed improvement, who was going to do it, how it was going to be done and what was the vision of a desirable city. By discussing the major urban visionaries (including 18th century industrialists, Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier, among others), their ideas and the subsequent implementation (or otherwise) of their plans, this lecture highlights the links between sustainable cities and other urban visions, whilst offering potential lessons for implementation of contemporary ideas based on previous practice. (Phil)

18 March  **Measuring Sustainable Cities**

Which city is the most sustainable? The idea of comparing urban sustainability between cities is a logical extension of sustainability indicators developed for individual cities. While it contains benefits such as raising awareness about issues, providing a tool for urban environmental management, and enabling comparisons between cities across the world, the concept of measuring cities is complex and various attempts have been undertaken to provide measurements that can be used in the formulation of urban policy. This lecture looks at Ecological Footprints, sustainability
indicators and comparative sustainability metrics to explore issues related to measuring sustainable cities. (Phil)

25 March Cities and the Environment: Nature and Contemporary Eco-cities

Nature is often seen as the area outside of the city, and is contrasted with the supposed civilisation of the city. Recent thought in geography and related disciplines has thoroughly critiqued this notion, leading to an expansion of work on urban nature, including restoration, urban wildlife and urban forestry. While these ideas have been introduced, with varying success, into existing urban environments, they often form the basis for new cities, including cities currently under construction in locations such as China and the UAE. This lecture looks at the emergence of eco-cities, and links the premise of these urban environments to previous lectures on sustainable cities and greenfield development that has taken place in countries such as the UK, France, Australia and Japan. (Sue Hobley)

1 April Issues for Australian Cities and Sustainability

There are numerous issues that fall under the umbrella of sustainable cities. Many of these issues will have been raised in the previous lectures, including measurement of criteria in various sustainability metrics. In this lecture, a limited number of issues will be explored in more detail, particularly how they manifest at various scales, including that of Australian cities and local environmental issues pertaining to Sydney. The lecture will highlight the specific characteristics of some issues, while identifying similarities between issues and how they may be addressed in a move towards more sustainable cities. (Phil)

Mid semester break

15 April Climate change and sustainable urban environments

This lecture will question the ability and means to achieve sustainable cities with a focus on the process and effects of climate change, climate extremes and natural disasters. Can we ever attain sustainable cities and urban centres when so many have been constructed in geographic places subject to extreme natural hazards and their accompanying disasters? The lecture will note the intersection between the distribution of megacities and disaster zones. Case study material from NSW will be compared and contrasted with other urban centres to illustrate the complexities and pressures faced by communities and governments to build residential property to ease burden of affordable housing shortages. We will finish by exploring who is actually ‘at risk’ from occupying homes constructed in places less safe (Phil)

22 April Cities and citizenship

This session will outline the concepts that inform the second half of the Unit of Study. In the first half of the session, we discuss the meaning of citizenship, considering both its histories and its geographies. In the second half, we will consider the nature of the relationship between cities and citizenship, focusing in particular on the role of the city as a subject, site and object of citizen action. This session will set up our discussions over the next few weeks, in which we will examine the
different concepts of urban citizenship that underpin different visions of the sustainable city. (Amanda)

29 April \textit{Urban social movements and the insurgent citizen}

In this session, we will consider the ways in which groups of ‘insurgent citizens’ have taken novel forms of contentious action on the urban environment through urban social movements, in which environmental issues have been pursued alongside other social justice agendas including class, race and gender. We will focus in particular on the green ban movement in Sydney in the 1970s, and the environmental justice movement in the United States. (Amanda)

6 May \textit{Ecological citizenship and the city}

This session will consider the ways in which taken-for-granted scales and configurations of citizenship have been disrupted by the emergence of environmental politics. Given that environmental issues rarely conform to the political boundaries of nation-states typically associated with citizenship, what might it mean to talk about a set of environmental rights and responsibilities that operate at the scale of ecological processes? And where does the city fit in these emerging new geographies of ecological citizenship? (Amanda)

13 May \textit{Neo-liberalism and the consumer-citizen}

As markets become increasingly entrenched as the favoured mechanism for allocating resources and governing behaviour, is citizenship increasingly becoming a matter of ‘voting with your dollar’? In this session, we will examine the emergence of the ‘consumer-citizen’ and associated debates about whether cities can be made more sustainable through the exercise of consumer choice. Can we make the city more sustainable, one organic-latte-in-a-keep-cup at a time? (Amanda)

20 May \textit{Smart cities and the networked citizen}

Can technology save us? In this lecture, we will consider claims that urban infrastructures like transport and energy can be optimised for more sustainable outcomes by governing their operation with the use of computational ‘urban informatics’ systems. Can networked sensors and surveillance devices, smart-phones, and ubiquitous computing do some of the work of sustainability for us? And what place is there for citizens and citizenship in the ‘smart city’? (Amanda)

27 May \textit{Mega-cities and the squatter citizen}

In many of the emerging ‘mega-cities’ of the global South, countless urban inhabitants find themselves living ‘off the grid’ in appalling urban environments in which basic urban infrastructure such as housing, water and power is often secured informally, outside of formal regulatory networks. And yet, in several cities in India, Brazil and elsewhere, new forms of ‘squatter citizenship’
are emerging, as people assert their status as citizens with rights to the urban environment. In this session, as in the last, we will examine the ways in which urban environmental sustainability is transformed when brought into dialogue with questions of redistribution and inequality. (Kurt)

3 June Unit Wrap Up

In this final session, Phil and Amanda will lead a discussion of the connecting themes of the Unit (which might be kinda useful for the exam...).


**Assessment**

GEOS3520 is a semester course. The assessment for the whole semester is:

- **Essay** 30%
- **Tutorial participation** 10%
- **Practicals Assignments** 25%
- **Final written exam (2 hours during exam period)** 35%

**TOTAL** 100%

The essay, tutorial participation, and final written exam assess learning outcomes 1-8. The practical assignments assess learning outcomes 9-16.

A separate handout will be given to the GEOS3920 Advanced students which will involve a different assessment exercise worth 30% that replaces the essay.

Specific criteria are provided for each assessment. The broader marking criteria are as follows:

**High Distinction (HD)**
At HD level, a student demonstrates a flair for the subject and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the unit material. A ‘High Distinction’ reflects exceptional achievement and is awarded to a student who demonstrates the ability to apply subject knowledge to novel situations.

**Distinction (D)**
At D level, a student demonstrates an aptitude for the subject and a solid knowledge and understanding of the unit material. A ‘Distinction’ reflects excellent achievement and is awarded to a student who demonstrates an ability to apply the key ideas of the subject.

**Credit (CR)**
At CR level, a student demonstrates a good command and knowledge of the unit material. A ‘Credit’ reflects solid achievement and is awarded to a student who has a broad understanding of the unit material but has not fully developed the ability to apply the key ideas of the subject.

**Pass (P)**
At P level, a student demonstrates proficiency in the unit material. A ‘Pass’ reflects satisfactory achievement and is awarded to a student who has threshold knowledge of the subject.

**Fail (F)**
At F level, a student does not demonstrate proficiency in the unit material. A ‘fail’ reflects unsatisfactory achievement and is given to a study who does not have threshold knowledge of the subject.
**Essay Questions**

Answer one of the following 3 questions. The essay is due by Tuesday 12 May at 4.00pm.

Word length: 2,000 words.

A penalty of 5% per day will be deducted for lateness. The essay is to be submitted electronically to a drop box – details will be given in the lectures. If you have reasons to apply for Special Consideration for late submission, please follow the procedures described on page.

Essays should be referenced using the Harvard referencing system, details can be found here: [http://libguides.library.usyd.edu.au/content.php?pid=28083&sid=204637](http://libguides.library.usyd.edu.au/content.php?pid=28083&sid=204637)

“Suggested readings” are kept in Special Reserve in the SciTech Library or are available electronically. Students are expected to research beyond the set readings. Essay marks will be awarded for evidence of understanding the material, the ability to answer the question as set, critical thinking skills, correct spelling and grammar, correct referencing and your ability to work within the word limit.

1. “As more and more cities adopt sustainability as a goal and aim to radically change current ways of development of cities, it becomes necessary to determine whether the actions being taken are indeed enabling communities to become more sustainable.” Hiremath, et al, 2013, 556.

   How may urban sustainability indicators address the above concern raised by Hiremath et al (2013)? To what extent has this concern been addressed by work done to date on this issue? What, if anything, remains to be done in urban sustainability indicator work to make cities more sustainable and to promote sustainability generally?

Suggested readings:


2. Are the contemporary eco-cities an improvement or not on the work of earlier urban reformers such as Benjamin Ward Richardson, David Dale/Robert Owen, Titus Salt, Ebenezer Howard and Le Corbusier, amongst others? Why or why not?

Suggested readings:


Plus special issues with multiples articles of relevance;


3. How do issues of urban environmental sustainability challenge conventional configurations of citizenship associated with the nation-state? Be sure to use examples of specific events or campaigns to substantiate your argument.

Suggested readings:


Essay Marking Criteria

High Distinction
The information in this essay is accurate, the material is referenced, well-written and demonstrates a sophisticated analysis of the question. The HD essay will generally go beyond the references provided. Students will show a high level of critical thinking, understanding and sophistication in their response.

Distinction
The information in this essay is accurate and there are sufficient references. The material is well-written. The question is answered, and the student will show a strong capacity for critical thinking and some sophistication in their response.

Credit
Key concepts are explained (mostly accurately) and some main features are identified. The material is referenced, generally well-written and the question is answered. There is likely to be less research than a HD or D essay, but the understanding and written communication exceeds that of a P essay.

Pass
Key concepts are explained somewhat accurately, but the level of detail and knowledge is less than essays that are awarded a credit grade or above. The material is generally referenced correctly, there are some grammatical errors but the essay is readable and the structure of the essay is logical, even if the content within this structure is deficient in various ways.

Fail
Explanations are mostly inaccurate and the material is poorly referenced. The question is not answered. Students will show little understanding of key concept and will have difficulties applying those concepts in answer to the question. There are likely to be problems with one or more of the following: spelling, grammar, referencing, structure and/or presentation.
Practicals

Practical classes in this course are based on developing skills for consultancy research. Many of these skills are transferable and would be advantageous for students who are seeking work in federal, state and local government or continuing with higher education. Practical classes involve team-based tasks, and emphasise presentation skills. During the semester you will be required to complete two team projects, worth a combined 25%. Note that in allocating 25% to these tasks, we have attempted to balance differing feedback from previous years. Some students do not like having high marks associated with group work exercises, but the two tasks nevertheless represent a quantity of work that needs to be recognised in the overall assessment.

Full details about the Practical Project, including grading criteria will be provided at the first Practical Session in Week 3.

The schedule for Practical classes is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Practical</th>
<th>Assessment tasks due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 (5 March)</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2 (12 March)</td>
<td>No class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3 (19 March)</td>
<td>Prac 1: Intro/ team formation</td>
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<td>Week 4 (26 March)</td>
<td>Prac 2: Working on Task 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5 (2 April)</td>
<td>Prac 3: Presentations</td>
<td>Task 1 due</td>
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<td>Easter AVCC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6 (16 April)</td>
<td>Prac 4: Intro to Task 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7 (23 April)</td>
<td>Prac 5: Working on Task 2</td>
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<td>Week 8 (30 April)</td>
<td>Prac 6: Working on Task 2</td>
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<td>Week 9 (7 May)</td>
<td>Prac 7: Working on Task 2</td>
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<td>Week 10 (14 May)</td>
<td>Prac 8: Working on Task 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11 (21 May)</td>
<td>Prac 9: Presentations</td>
<td>Task 2 presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 12 (28 May)</td>
<td>No class</td>
<td>Task 2 report due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13 (4 June)</td>
<td>No class</td>
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Tutorials and Required Reading

Tutorial attendance and participation is expected in this unit.

Tutorial discussions will be based on the Designated Readings listed below. These readings are provided electronically via the Library Catalogue. We have also provided ideas for further reading on each topic.

Tutorial marking criteria

Tutorial participation will be marked using the following criteria:

**Attendance** will account for 5 marks in total, with 0.5 marks deducted for every session not attended without Special Consideration.

The remaining 5 marks will be awarded for **participation**. Participation will be assessed as follows.

0 marks:
Shows no interest in the class (i.e., patchy attendance, sits in class, says nothing, and does not provide any evidence of having done the reading).

1 mark:
Participates in some discussions, shows some evidence of having done the reading.

2-3 marks:
Displays more active engagement in discussions. (Note: the more a person speaks in class does not automatically mean they are making a better quality contribution to the class discussion. ‘Participation’ is not to be equated to talking too much!)

4 marks:
Regular contributor with high-level interpretive contributions, more thorough evidence of having thought about the reading, etc.

5 marks:
Student ‘shines out’ because of innovative, high quality contributions and leadership in the group (where leadership does not mean domination, but helping to set direction of discussion and facilitate the contributions of others in the room).
Week 1  Sustainable Development and Sustainable Cities


Further reading

Week 2  Urban Form: Ideal models and less than ideal practice


Further reading:


**Week 43 Measuring Sustainable Cities**


Further reading:

Astleithner F.; Hamedinger A.; Holman N.; Rydin Y.,(2004) Institutions and indicators – the discourse about indicators in the context of sustainability”. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 19, 1, pp 7-24


**Week 4 Cities and the Environment: Nature and Contemporary Eco-cities**


Further reading:


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**Week 5**

**Issues for Australian Cities and Sustainability**


Further reading:


### Week 6 Climate Change, Natural Disasters and Sustainable Cities


Further reading:


Week 7 Cities and Citizenship


Further reading:

Week 8 Urban Social Movements and the Insurgent Citizen


Further reading:
Week 9  Ecological Citizenship and the city


Further reading:
   Environmental Politics, 15(3), pp. 435-446.

Week 10  Neoliberalism and the consumer citizen

Further reading:


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**Week 11**  
Smart cities and the networked citizen

(Note: a visual essay to accompany this piece can be found [here.](#))

Further reading:


**Week 12  Mega-cities and the squatter citizen**


Further reading:


Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

The role of the University of Sydney is to create, preserve, transmit and apply knowledge through teaching, research, creative works and other forms of scholarship. A commitment to academic excellence and high standards of ethical behaviour is essential in this undertaking. As such, the University requires all students to act honestly, ethically and with integrity in their dealings with the University, its employees, members of the public and other students.

In 2010, a new policy covering the issue of student plagiarism in coursework Units of Study offered by the University was introduced. That policy defines Academic Dishonesty as “seeking to obtain or obtaining academic advantage (including in the Assessment or publication of Work) by dishonest or unfair means or knowingly assisting another student to do so”. Plagiarism is a form of Academic Dishonesty which involves “presenting another person’s Work as one’s own Work by presenting, copying or reproducing it without Acknowledgement of the Source”. The policy also sets out how the University will respond to instances of Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism.

You can download a copy of the policy here:

The policy also requires all students to sign and submit plagiarism compliance statements to each School or Department of which they are a student member. For this Unit of Study, we require you to include a signed plagiarism compliance statement for both your essay and your practical project report.

The School of Geosciences compliance statements can be found here:
Guidelines for Application for Special Consideration

All applications for Special Consideration in the School of Geosciences must be processed officially through both the Faculty of Science (regardless of the student’s particular faculty) and the School of Geosciences. The Faculty of Science official guidelines can be found at: http://www.science.usyd.edu.au/cstudent/ug/forms/special_cons.shtml

Process to follow to submit an application for Special Consideration:
1. Students obtain a Special Consideration Pack from the Faculty of Science website (above). This pack includes all instructions needed to fill out the documentation correctly.
2. Within five working days from the end of the absence or misadventure, the completed application must be stamped by the Faculty of Science (this must occur prior to the forms being given to the School of Geosciences). Students then bring the completed forms to the Administration Assistant for the School of Geosciences, Nikki Montenegro, in Room 348 in the Madsen Building for processing.
3. Nikki will check that the forms have been completed appropriately and then forward them to the academic in charge of the Unit.
4. The decision will be recorded on the student file in the Faculty of Science, who will subsequently notify the student by email of the decision made. Copies of all completed forms will be kept in-confidence by the School of Geosciences for future reference.

If you have any questions about the process, please speak to Nikki on 9351 2912 or by email: nikki.montenegro@sydney.edu.au. If you are seeking advice about the academic decision please speak to Kurt.