DESIGNING SMART CITIES FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

NMDD 3880 | COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING COURSE
CROSS LISTED: DIGITAL TECH & EMERGING MEDIA; COMM & CULTURE; URBAN STUDIES; AMERICAN STUDIES

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Smart urbanism represents the rapid integration of digital media and communication technologies into all modes of urban living as well as the reorienting of urban economies toward creative and high-tech industries. While much of smart urban rhetoric focuses on designing efficient and globally competitive cities through data-driven platforms and practices, critics argue it has led to stepped-up surveillance, discrimination, segregation, and economic inequality in urban environments. This class combines a critical introduction to the promises and perils of the smart city with a community-based project focused on designing urban technologies that promote access, empathy, and equity.

Class readings and discussions will explore the New Yorkers and neighborhoods benefiting least from the so called “gig” or “sharing” economy symbolized by digital services like Uber and AirBnB. Instead of designing new technologies for the commercial exchange of resources and services, we will ask how a smart urban design oriented towards social justice could help rework the current flows of wealth, opportunity, and privilege in New York City.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
In this course, students will have the opportunity to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking and design skills in all course requirements.
- Develop an appreciation for, and demonstrate understanding through, oral and written discussion of key concepts and current issues relevant to big data and smart urbanism.
- Develop and demonstrate competency in analyzing issues of digital discrimination, citizenship, literacy, and access in contemporary urban design.

ASSIGNMENTS & EVALUATION

[NOTE: ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE DISCUSSED IN CLASS & MORE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLINE]

CLASS PARTICIPATION 25% of final grade
An assessment of your class participation is made based on your contributions to in-class discussion, group work, and community-engagement. Assessment is not be based on mastery of course content but rather meaningful and consistent engagement in each of these three areas.

ITERATIVE FIELD & READING NOTES 25% of final grade
You will keep weekly notes for the course that reflect on your ongoing engagements with the LSNC community in relation to class readings and discussions. These notes will first be constructed individually with Google Sheets and then shared using the Timeline JS program. Each week’s entry is due by the following class.

COURSE REFLECTIONS 25% of final grade
You will complete two course reflections of at least 1,000 words each (one as midterm, one as final). Both reflections should distill the key concepts of their designated set of course readings and explore those concepts in relation to the experiences documented in your iterative field & reading notes. More detailed directions for each reflection will be discussed in class and posted to the course site.

PARTICIPATORY PROJECT 25% of final grade
The class, in collaboration with the Lincoln Square Neighborhood Center, will design a series of hands-on workshops that address digital needs expressed by LSNC patrons. The project’s scope, course of action, distribution of labor, and timeline will be negotiated as a group and with our community partners.
WEEK 1: TUE, JAN 15 - INTRO TO DSC4SJ


WEEK 2: TUE, JAN 22 - CONNECTING ‘SMART’ URBANISM WITH COMMUNITY ENGAGED LEARNING


WEEK 3: TUE, JAN 29 - GUEST SPEAKER / LSNC ORIENTATION

WEEK 4: TUE, FEB 4 - THE URBAN (PLAT)FORM

  ➡ DUE: Field Notes Check-In

WEEK 5: TUE, FEB 11 - UNEVEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT (I) (SNOW DAY - MOVED TO WEEK 6)


WEEK 6: TUE, FEB 19 - NO CLASS (MONDAY SCHEDULE)
WEEK 7: TUE, FEB 26 - UNEVEN URBAN DEVELOPMENT (II)

WEEK 8: TUE, MAR 5 - DESIGNING FOR JUSTICE
- Red Hook WiFi: https://redhookwifi.org/

WEEK 9: TUE, MAR 12 - IN-CLASS WORKSHOP
- DUE: Field Notes Check-In (BY CLASS TIME)
- DUE: Midterm Course Reflection (BY CLASS TIME)

SPRING BREAK: TUE, MAR 19 - NO CLASS

WEEK 10: TUE, MAR 26 - CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES & ONTOLOGIES (I)
- Researchers for Fair Policing: http://researchersforfairpolicing.org
- DUE: DiscoTech Proposals

WEEK 11: TUE, APR 2 - CRITICAL EPISTEMOLOGIES & ONTOLOGIES (II)

WEEK 12: TUE, APR 9 - PLATFORM COOPERATIVISM
- Selections from Ours to Hack and to Own:
WEEK 13: TUE, APR 16 - ‘SMART’ REPRODUCTION

➡ DUE: Field Notes Check-In

WEEK 14: TUE, APR 23 - CITIZEN SENSING

WEEK 15: TUE, APR 30 - IN-CLASS WORKSHOP
➡ DUE: Planning, Promotion, Community Input, and Distribution of Labor for each DiscoTech.

FINAL EXAM PERIOD - TUE, MAY 7 @ 1:30PM
➡ DUE: Final Course Reflection
➡ DUE: Collaborative Project Archive