
THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COLLEGE OF ENVIRONMENT AND DESIGN

SPRING SEMESTER 2012
EDES 6540 — IDEAS OF COMMUNITY

SYLLABUS

(2 HOURS CREDIT)

TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS, 11:00 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.

307 TANNER

ERIC MACDONALD
105A Denmark Hall
706-542-0118
eamacdon@uga.edu
Office Hours by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

EDES 6540 explores the relationship between concepts of community and the physical environments (home, village, town, city, region) that may be designed in ways that foster personal and societal commitment to community and place.

OBJECTIVES

1. Understand social dimensions of sustainability and how they can be applied to dwelling and community forms.
2. Learn theories and principles and research techniques that may be used as a basis for conceptualizing and planning civic spaces and related components³.
3. Learn techniques and practice skills that will empower you to be an effective leader and team member (i.e., a powerful and effective member of a community).
4. Participate in professional dialog about the contributions of environmental planning and design to the preservation and creation of lively, healthy, and sustainable human communities.
5. Appreciate the social purpose of environmental planning and design and the ways in which these professions may promote positive social interaction and vibrant human communities.

FORMAT AND LOGIC OF THE COURSE

EDES 6540 is an introduction to some of the ideas that are central to the practice of community planning and design. “Ideas of community” spans a vast scholarly area, and in recent decades the field of environmental planning and design research also has grown in both complexity and sophistication. There is no way to fully survey the breadth and richness of this topic in one semester, and any effort to parse the distinctions between such a diverse field of scholarship and professional practice will be at least somewhat idiosyncratic. For the purposes of this course, we will focus on selected texts or case studies that are either prominent in the area or representative of a particular approach. When you have completed the course, you should have a sense of how environmental planning and design practices relate to civic processes and community dynamics, and if you are interested in pursuing future work in this area, you should have a firm foundation in place. You also should have a solid grasp of the skills that are required for a design or planning professional to successfully work within a framework.

EDES 6540 will entail learning about the historical and social contexts that have shaped community design practices, and studying major substantive issues pertaining to civic development. We will trace various historical attitudes about individualism and community commitment, as well as recent research in the social sciences on social capital and civic engagement. We also will examine case studies and strategies for engaging the public in the design process. We will discuss current developments in design and planning practice, as well as recent trends in social cohesion in the United States, and we will speculate about what these may portend for the future of the environmental planning and design professions. Within the context of a collaborative class project, we will also *practice* the ideas and skills that we discuss. You should think of this course as a *laboratory for generating community within the context of environmental planning and design*.

The course will be structured as a workshop with a significant research and fieldwork component. Classroom activities will entail a combination of lectures, readings, discussions, research, and both written and graphic communication. Many of our class meetings, especially during the first half of the term, will be devoted to brief lectures or presentations, class discussions, and project planning activities. Readings will be assigned for most class sessions, and you will be expected to read them prior to class and share your reactions in class discussions. The core idea of the workshop format is that all participants (especially students!) take an active part in developing and conducting the course. In other words, the success of the course (i.e., the attainment of individual learning objectives) is entirely a product of the commitment and effort that participants invest in the course. Active participation in these discussions will be part of your grade for the course. The second half of the course will be devoted to developing our class project. While our classroom sessions during the first half of the course will emphasize community design principles and social theory, the class project will provide opportunities to relate theory to practice.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES, READINGS AND TEXTS

e-Learning Commons

Electronic versions of the course syllabus, handouts, lecture slides, and supplementary readings will be available from the UGA e-Learning Commons (e-LC). You may access e-LC directly via web browser at: <https://www.elc.uga.edu/webct/logon/1031000903011>.

Texts

There is no required textbook. However, the following texts are highly *recommended*:

Wendell Berry. *Bringing It to the Table: On Farming and Food*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009.

Randolph T. Hester, Jr., *Design for Ecological Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.

Daniel Kemmis. *Community and the Politics of Place*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990 (also available as an e-book through the UGA library website).

Thomas Lyson. *Civic Agriculture: Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community*. Medford, MA: Tufts University Press, 2004.

Steve Zaffron and Dave Logan. *The Three Laws of Performance: Rewriting the Future of Your Organization and Your Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

John Zeisel, *Inquiry by Design: Environment / Behavior / Neuroscience in Architecture, Interiors, Landscape, and Planning*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.

During the course of the semester we will engage ideas drawn from each of these texts, all of which—in various ways—relate to the intersection of environmental planning and design with “ideas of community.” Later in the semester, I will provide you with a more detailed, select bibliography for various themes and topics addressed in the course.

In addition to using these texts as references, a variety of readings—including a selection of journal articles, book chapters, and unpublished research and planning reports—will be assigned as a basis for classroom discussions. Readings are extensive but not difficult; as much as possible, they have been chosen to be fun and provocative as well as informative. Readings will be placed on reserve for EDES 6540 in the College of Environment and Design’s Owens Library, G14 Caldwell Hall. These materials will be available for you to use in the library, however you also may make copies of these items for your own personal use. Other readings, particularly electronic resources, will be made available through e-Learning Commons.

A Note on Reading and Writing

This is a reading-intensive course. I encourage you to take a minute or two to browse through the supplementary reading materials. Try to take an hour every week or two simply to wander through these texts, following topics as they catch your eye, and using the texts in this way in conjunction with other course readings. Part of being an effective designer is being willing to follow your curiosity, and learning how to find answers to questions you didn't even realize you had when you started. This is part of the research process we want to practice in the course. Wandering through the core texts—and then using their references to move on the other sources—is much more akin to what designers, planners, and preservation professionals actually do than is reading a textbook narrative.

During the semester you may be expected to do a fair amount of writing as well. Like it or not, effectively communicating ideas through text, images, and verbal presentations is an important part of nearly every type of environmental design and planning practice. ***The clarity and persuasiveness of your prose will be a factor in your grade.*** I encourage all who are interested in improving their prose to read William Strunk and E. B. White's *The Elements of Style*, ideally early in the semester. You should refer to it regularly: the book is thin but worth its weight in gold, and I recommend that you own a copy.

REQUIREMENTS

EDES 6540 Community Potlucks

As a class, we will organize and host two potluck gatherings for our EDES 6540 community—one near the beginning of the term to kick off the new year, and the second to celebrate the close of the term. The first potluck will be held on 17 January from 5:00 until 7:30 p.m. at the Tanner Building. The second potluck will occur at a time and location to-be-determined. Additional information and instructions will be provided in class. *Your participation at both events is required.* The potlucks are key opportunities for us to get to know one another, share experiences, celebrate accomplishments, and build a foundation for future collaboration.

Utopia Mini-Project

In conjunction with our first community potluck, students will complete a quick, creative project meant to spark thought and conversation about what an ideal community might look like. Detailed instructions will be distributed in class.

Community Project: *CounterSPACE 2012*

Throughout the term, our discussions about the relationship between “ideas of community” and environmental design will be oriented toward an exploration of opportunities for civic agriculture in Athens. Specifically, we will investigate the planning and design of a civic agriculture infrastructure from a food systems perspective. Our efforts will build upon the accomplishments and community networks established by previous participants in EDES 6540. Working in conjunction with faculty and students associated with the Department of Geography's Athens Urban Food Collective (AUFC) and other partners, students in EDES 6540 have created *CounterSPACE*—a framework for facilitating university/community

partnerships for the purpose of designing and developing our community’s local food infrastructure. (See www.athenscounterspace.org.)

The planning, design, development, and maintenance of a community food infrastructure is a long-term endeavor. We will accomplish only a small part of this task during the upcoming four months, but our work will be critical because it will build upon the achievements of our predecessors, and lay the groundwork for the future to come. Indeed, the most important “product” of our activities this term may not be tangible at all—it may be that our critical contribution is in sustaining a vision for what the civic agriculture infrastructure of Athens might become, and mapping out a process for its continued evolution.

Your work on this project will encompass two types of activity: (1) researching and planning related to some aspect of the *CounterSPACE* food infrastructure, and (2) working with other people to create a vision for the future and building a community around your vision—a community that is robust and resilient enough to see your vision become reality.

Attendance and Participation

We cannot learn what we never read, never hear or never experience. Advance preparation, attendance, and active participation in our seminar meetings are essential to the success of our seminars and our class project, and obvious requirements for this course. Attendance at our classroom sessions will be one measure of your participation in the course. However, participation includes not only showing up for class, but also playing an active role in discussions, demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the assigned readings, and positively contributing to the accomplishment of the class goals and objectives. Everyone’s active participation will help assure a very interesting course for us all.

GRADING AND GRADE ALLOCATIONS

Grades

The potlucks will be graded on a pass/fail basis. All other class work will be graded using the standard University of Georgia system, A – F.

Grading Standards

Excellent	Work that demonstrates superior logical and analytical ability, and superior written and/or graphic communication quality. Changes or revisions, if any, would be minimal.
Good	Work that demonstrates a good understanding of processes, concepts and theory, which must be slightly reworked to improve communication clarity. Changes or revisions would be minor.
Fair	Work that indicates a satisfactory understanding and execution of the assignment, but which needs moderate revisions to fully communicate and thoroughly demonstrate the ideas in graphics and text.

- Poor Work that exhibits significant technical problems and a poor or inconsistent resolution of the assigned project. Substantial revisions would be necessary to meet project requirements.
- Unacceptable Work that is incomplete and shows a failure to implement or comprehend the subject matter.

Grade Allocations

Assignment	Per cent of Final Grade
Class Potlucks	05
Utopia Mini-project	10
CounterSPACE Community Project	70
Classroom Attendance & Participation	10
Total	100

Point totals for the course will be rounded up to the nearest whole number and converted to letter grades in accordance with the following scale:

- A > 93%
- A- 90-93%
- B+ ... 87-90%
- B 83-87%
- B- 80-83%
- C+ 77-80%
- C 73-77%
- C- 70-73%
- D 60-70%
- F < 60%

LOGISTICS, DISCLAIMERS, AND OTHER THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

Religious Holidays

If a scheduled assignment conflicts with a religious observance or practice, please contact me as soon as possible.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability that prevents your full participation in the course or affects your ability to demonstrate learned knowledge and skills, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

Attendance Policy

The success of the course depends on everyone’s attendance and participation in our classrooms and other activities. Skipping class is inconsiderate and disrespectful of your fellow classmates and our invited guest speakers. Don’t do it. Your absence will impact not only the quality of *your* learning experience, but *also that of your classmates*. Attendance and participation account for a portion of your final grade. If you miss class, it WILL affect your grade. If you must miss a scheduled class session, I request that you contact me as soon as possible so that we may arrange a way to cover what you missed.

Classroom Etiquette

Please be on time for class. If you do arrive late, please have your materials out and ready before entering the classroom to minimize the disruption.

Cell phones, games, ipods, ipads, laptops and other portable electronic devices should be turned off during the class period. These machines and their associated “social media” are powerful technologies for redefining “community.” When we’re in class, however, let’s see what it’s like to disconnect from the virtual information-universe and connect with one another via old-fashioned dialog.

Policy on Late Work

Late work will not be greeted enthusiastically. Late projects will be marked down by *at least one letter grade for each day that they are late*, unless you have made other arrangements well in advance of the due date. No course work will be accepted after the final week of the semester without a medical excuse. Only in documented circumstances of personal illness or special emergency, will this policy be altered. It is the student’s responsibility to bring documentation of any such emergency to the instructor’s attention as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty

All students are expected to uphold the University of Georgia’s academic honesty policy (see www.uga.edu/ovpi/). ***Students who violate the academic honesty policy will receive, at a minimum, a final grade of ‘F’ for this course. There will be no exceptions to this policy.***

OVERVIEW OF THE SCHEDULE

In the spirit of a true workshop, we will devote some time during the middle of the semester to planning goals and objectives for the CounterSPACE projects and aligning on a schedule. Thus, the following table presents only a tentative schedule of the ground we might cover during the semester. A more detailed calendar will be developed in class.

Week	Dates	Lecture and Discussion Topics / Activities	Readings
1	Jan. 10	Introductions	
	Jan. 12	What is community? And how does it relate to environmental planning and design?	e-LC
2	Jan. 16	<i>EDES 6540 COMMUNITY POTLUCK,- Tanner Building, 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.</i>	
	Jan. 17	Utopian vision and community design	
	Jan. 19	Social capital, social networks, & civic engagement	e-LC
3	Jan. 24	<i>(no class)</i>	e-LC
	Jan. 26	Civic space	e-LC

Week	Dates	Lecture and Discussion Topics / Activities	Readings
4	Jan. 31	CounterSPACE - Nominal Group Technique (NGT)	e-LC
	Feb. 02	CounterSPACE - Nominal Group Technique (NGT)	TBA
5	Feb. 07	Define Goals for CounterSPACE 2012	e-LC
	Feb. 09	Establish CounterSPACE projects and teams	TBA
6	Feb. 14	CounterSPACE project work	N/A
	Feb. 16	Overview of social research techniques for planners and designers	e-LC
7	Feb. 21	CounterSPACE project work	N/A
	Feb. 23	Bioregionalism: A Framework for Nature and Community	e-LC
8	Feb. 28	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Mar. 01	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
9	Mar. 06	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Mar. 08	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Mar. 12-16	<i>SPRING BREAK</i>	
10	Mar. 20	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Mar. 22	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
11	Mar. 27	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Mar. 29	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
12	Apr. 03	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Apr. 05	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
13	Apr. 10	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Apr. 12	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
14	Apr. 17	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	Apr. 19	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
15	Apr. 24	CounterSPACE project work	TBA

Week	Dates	Lecture and Discussion Topics / Activities	Readings
	Apr. 26	CounterSPACE project work	TBA
	TBA	<i>EDES 6540 COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE & POTLUCK,</i> <i>Location TBA</i>	N/A