

**Department:** Urban and Community Studies

**Course number:** URBN 290/290W

**Title:** Understanding Your Community

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Person:** Stephen L. Ross

**Catalog Copy:** URBN 290. Understanding Your Community

Either semester. Three credits. Recommended Preparation: Three courses within the Urban and Community Studies major. With a change in content, may be repeated for credit.

Examination of an urban area or local community. Production of a detailed case study including historical perspective, analysis of issues and stakeholders, evaluation of internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external threats and opportunities. Proposal of strategies for addressing problems and advancing equity, growth, and development.

URBN 290W. Understanding Your Community-

**Course Information:** a. A brief (2-3 sentences) course description that includes course goals and objectives.

The course will provide students with an understanding of both urban case study and planning processes. The students will read and evaluate existing case studies, as well as critically examine the situation of the community being studied. Throughout the entire semester, the students will participate in an on-going strategic planning process that evaluates the internal strengths and weaknesses of a community, assesses the external environment including threats and opportunities, and proposes strategies for achieving greater equity as well as the future growth and development of the community.

b. Course requirements: Specify exam formats, nature and scope of weekly reading assignments, nature and scope of writing assignments, problem sets, etc.

The students must complete weekly reading assignments and come prepared to participate in class discussion on those assignments. These assignments will include general and local material introducing students to course themes and issues through historical analyses, actual planning documents, case studies, and research methods. As the course progresses it will shift primarily to readings and speakers (in class and in more public forums) identifying issues, problems, and tensions in the community or city being studied. The last third of the course will continue the above methods of reading and public speakers, but focus on developing solutions, alternatives, and plans for the issues being discussed and researched.

Students will prepare and present orally a series of short written reports on various issues currently facing the city or community, and based on feedback on these earlier reports develop a final report on

the city or community as a whole, or on the issue as it affects the city or community. The short reports will count for 40 percent of the grade and the final report will count for 50 percent of the grade. Students will also be graded on class participation during in class discussions and during the community forums. Class participation, including these presentations, totals 10% of the final grade.

c. List the major themes, issues, topics, etc., to be covered.

Case studies, historical research, contextualizing issues, strategic planning, economic development, land-use planning, community organizations and organizing, stakeholders and power analysis, political and social processes

**W Criteria:**

1. Describe how the writing assignments will enable and enhance learning the content of the course. Describe the page requirements of the assignments, and the relative weighting of the "W" component of the course for the course grade.

Two (2) short papers are required for each student. The papers must be at least 3-5 pages in length. These short papers emphasize critical thinking and the effective presentation of ideas. The short papers requires the students to 1) contextualize an issue with an eye to historical analysis and change over time, and 2) identify a community issue with an eye to contemporary cause(s), range, impact, and debates in current literature. The short papers represent 40 percent of the final grade.

The final report must be between 15-20 pages in length. The final report incorporates and builds upon the earlier short papers. In addition to the short papers, the student will submit a detailed outline for the final report that describes the structure and overall content of the final product and describes how students plan to address shortcomings and other issues raised in the evaluation of the shorter papers. The final report will emphasize synthesis and proposed solutions, but including focus on internal and external resources, stakeholders and power, and social and political processes. The development of the full report requires the students to engage in primary and secondary research as well as rewriting at each level. The outline and the final report represent 10 and 40 percent of the final grade respectively.

2. Describe the primary modes of writing instruction in the course (e.g. individual conferences, written commentary, formal instruction to the class, and so on.)

The primary mode of instruction is written commentary and individual conferences with students concerning their progress towards the final report based on the outline and short papers received prior to the conferences. In addition, small segments of class 10-15 minutes are periodically used to address issues such as the purpose of research papers, organization, topic sentences, paragraph development, references, and plagiarism.

3. Explain how opportunities for revision will be structured into the writing assignments in the course.

The process of developing a final report provides the primary venue for student revision. The students will receive detailed written commentary on the short papers that addresses any problems in the writing

in that assignment as well as guidance concerning how this paper might be incorporated into the larger report. The student will also receive detailed comments on the report outline and these comments will be followed up with face-to-face conference with each student where both the outline and the short papers completed up to that point will be discussed. In addition to the required conference, the students will be encouraged to discuss preliminary/draft versions of the final report with the professor throughout the semester.

4. State that the syllabus will inform students that they must pass the "W" component of the course in order to pass the course. (Failure to include this clause will result in a request for revisions on your proposal.)

The syllabus will state that students must pass the "W" component in order to pass the course. The syllabus will also note explicitly that the "W" component is made up of the short papers and the final project, which account for 40 and 50 percent of the W grade respectively.

**Role of Grad Students:** None.

**Supplementary Information:** Syllabus from 295, which was not taught as a W.

Waterbury: Past, Present, and Future

UCS 295 Spring Semester, 2004

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION

Waterbury, Connecticut is typical of many of America's post-industrial cities. For most of its history it was a thriving center of industry. With the loss of its dominant industry in the last quarter of the twentieth century, it faces an uncertain future. *Waterbury: Past, Present, and Future* will explore Waterbury's history, its current strengths and weaknesses, and the strategies proposed for shaping its future. The course will include five community forums with expert panels to which the public will be invited. Students will be expected to prepare short written and oral reports and to work in small teams to produce final reports on issues currently facing the city and region. Instructors are Peter Marcuse, Professor of Urban Planning at Columbia University, formerly Majority Leader of the Waterbury Board of Aldermen and member of its Planning Commission, and historian Jeremy Brecher, Humanities scholar-in-residence at Connecticut Public Television and Radio and author!

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of Brass Valley: The Story of Working People's Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region.

The course will meet Thursdays 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Classes meet in the Waterbury UConn Campus Building, East Main Street, Waterbury, Room 218, Forums in Room to be announced.

#### COURSE OUTLINE

## 1. January 22

Introduction to course.

Format. Requirements.

Introductions: of instructors and of students:

Questions: Where do you live? How come? What do you think you'll be doing in 10 years? Where do you think you'll be living? Why?

The current political issues in Waterbury: taxes, downtown revival, jobs, housing, ethnic relations, quality of government, land use planning. What do you think the key issues are? Our tentative conclusions: Review of forum issues in the course, and topics for presentations;

The current issues internationally: the World Social Forum and cities in other countries

## 2. January 29 Peter

Waterbury: The national and global context

Readings: Ohio case study; New York Region economic analysis, Baltimore case study. Clippings

Technological change and social change; change in labor strength; neo-liberalism, Thatcher, Bush; the sunbelt

World Trade Organization; World Economic Forum and WSF; figures on manufacturing employment; Waterbury clippings

Intro and conclusion of Globalizing Cities.

## 3. February 5 Jeremy

Waterbury from colonial settlement to brass center of the world.

Reading: selections from BRASS VALLEY

## 4. February 12 Jeremy

Waterbury after brass: globalization, suburbanization, deindustrialization, and immigration. (Jeremy)

Reading: selections from Jeremy's Mattatuck Museum exhibit report, 2000 census results

## 5. February 19 Peter

Waterbury: Land use planning

Reading: City and regional plans; zoning ordinance, City Charter

changing role of location, from water power and manufacturing to New York City region and services

Questions: How do the plans recommendations differ from what would be likely to happen without the plan? What difference did the plan actually make? For better, or for worse?

6. February 26 Jeremy

Proposed economic strategies for the post-brass era: a review

Reading: selections from Jeremy's Mattatuck Museum exhibit report; Buckhurst study; scoping report

Questions: What are the alternative strategies? Are they all consistent with each other? How likely of success are they?

7. March 4

Community forum: Land Use Peter

Focus: The comprehensive Plan., and its recommendations for abandoned industrial sites. The pending planning process, the proposed content of the comprehensive plan. The experience elsewhere.

Stephen Sasala\*, Executive director, Chamber of Commerce;

Jim Sequin,\* Waterbury City Planner;

Ken Bower,\* Consultant for Comprehensive Plan;

Kathy McNamara\*, Neighborhood Council ex-chair; member, Committee on the Comprehensive Plan.

Cal Vinal, \* Webster Bank;

Readings: Consultant's reports; clippings; environmental studies; inventory of space, experience elsewhere (Willimantic, New London, Lowell, Providence); Main Street Application and background

Questions: What is the most effective way to get participation? what should a plan include? how is it implemented? Whom does it serve? does it make any difference in real life? How are different groups affected?

March 8-12: Spring break

8. March 18

Community forum: Economic Development Peter

Focus: Health . Health services as an Industry. The Allied Health Magnet School idea.

Invited participants:

Michael O'Connor\*, NVDC;

Jonathan Kellogg,\*(i) Executive Editor, Waterbury Republican-American;

Mary White,\* former President, Board of Education;

Dr. Robert Ritz, \* President, St. Mary's;

Paul Rodia,\* Drubner Industrials;

Steve Shrag\*, SEIU

Readings: statistics on health services, hospital employment; residence of hospital personnel; Health Planning Agency reports; market studies for medical offices

Questions: What steps might produce more jobs in Waterbury? By whom? What industries? What role does residential quality (housing, education, recreation, etc.) play? What role does the level of local taxes play? What does the real estate market tell us? How can the city support health services provision as an economic growth sector for Waterbury? Could an Allied Health Services Magnet School be a tool for economic development?

9: March 25

Community forum: Government Peter

Focus: Regional cooperation: What happened to Regional Planning Agency; What future for Council of governments; Tax equity; politics; educational finance City and regional planning

Invited participants:

Sam Caligiuri\*, ex-mayor, Chair, Partnership for Waterbury;

Mayor Michael Jarjura \*.

Debbie Lewis, (i) ex-Board of Aldermen;

Peter Dorpalen\*, Council of governments of the Naugatuck Valley;

Liz Brown,\* former state senator, Center/Edge Program, Archdiocese;

Readings: Charter; Charter Revision proposals; RPA and COG mandates; Prospect medical building case study; tax rates; State legislation, Intergovernmental relations council reports

Questions: How efficient is Waterbury's government today (on a scale of 1-10)? How democratic? What, if any, changes should be considered? How important is the tax rate, and for whom? What role can the city government play in economic development? Are there regional issues? What differences do the various planning processes suggest in contrast to what would be likely to happen without the plan? Do all the plans agree with each other? What difference did the processes actually make? For better, or for worse?

10. April 1

Community forum: Grassroots Waterbury Jeremy

Focus: Housing. What is the role of grassroots organizations in addressing Waterbury's problems?

What's the need for housing, by income level, household size. What's the supply: vacancies, quality, rent levels, demolitions, subsidies, role of public housing. Locational issues. Artists, health care workers, school personnel, city employees.

Invited participants:

Adele Strelchin, Neighborhood Housing\*;

Blair Bertuccini\* Western Connecticut Labor Council

Carol Burkhardt-Lyons,\* Naugatuck Valley Project,

Joe Burns, Housing Development Consultant (p);

Cicero Booker, (i) NAACP and Board of Aldermen

Readings: Census, maps, from Mattatuck exhibit, Housing needs analysis, real estate ads, broker interviews. National Low-Income Housing coalition, Out of Reach, 2003 ([www.nlihc.org/oor2003/](http://www.nlihc.org/oor2003/))

Questions: What priorities in investment between economic development and neighborhood improvement? How "grass-roots" responsive is local government? State? Is national relevant? Are ethnic differences important? How should they be handled? Is there segregation?

11. April 8

Community forum: Culture Jeremy

Focus: The role of cultural activities in Waterbury's future

How can the civic role of cultural activities be maximized. Performing arts, visual arts, museums. Artists residences. Educational role,. Jobs. Civic pride.

Readings: Grant applications for the Palace and/or other institutions; curriculum etc. of Magnet Arts School; Annual reports of Symphony, Museum, Waterbury Foundation. History of Civic Theater.

Invited participants:

Marie Galbraith\*, Mattatuck Museum;

Semina DiLaurentis\*, Seven Angels Theater;

Frank Travera\*, executor director, Palace Theater; Chair, NVDC;

Ingrid Manning,\* Waterbury Foundation;

Alan Kramer (i), Principal of Magnet Arts school;

Tracey O'Shaughnessy,\* Waterbury Republican Associate Features Editor

Questions: What is the civic role of cultural activities? What can cultural programs contribute to Waterbury's revitalization? What are the potential audiences for cultural institutions? What is the relation between Waterbury cultural institutions and the wider suburban context? How can the different cultural subcommunities of Waterbury enrich each other? What role do the city's cultural institutions have to play in that process?

12. April 15

Student Task force reports

13. April 22

Student Task force reports

14. April 29

Alternatives and choices for Waterbury's future Jeremy and Peter

Focus: Open discussion; synthesis of the Course

Readings: Mahailo Tmali, The Community Economic Development Handbook: Strategies and tools to Revitalize Your Neighborhood. Amherst H. Wilder Foundation ([www.wilder.org](http://www.wilder.org));, 2002  
[www.ncced.org/edac.html](http://www.ncced.org/edac.html)

· means confirmed

· i means invited

· P means probable