

# Public Space, Public Life

UrbDP 498A / 598A  
University of Washington

3 credits, Summer (full term), 2018  
Tues. & Thur., 10:00–11:50am, Gould Hall 208J



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Office hours: By appointment—I'm flexible (just email me or talk to me in class)  
You can also usually find me at Café Solstice on Friday mornings, 9–10.

## Overview

Understanding public space is a way to understand how people live together in cities. Public spaces are physical locations—parks, sidewalks, buses, cafes—but they are also the *public*: the people of the city and how they interact. In the public spaces of the city people watch each other, make small talk, protest, debate, commit acts of violence, discriminate, buy and sell things, perform, hold hands, eat, sleep, etc. Designers and social theorists alike have argued that there is an important connection between social relations and the built environment of the city. This course introduces you to the concept of public space as both a space and a public. We will explore public space through two main approaches. First, we will read and discuss literature that has wrestled with some of the core issues related to public space across different times and places. Second, you will investigate Seattle spaces in assignments that will help you explore how these issues take shape on the ground.

It is my goal that at the end of this course, you will be able to:

- carefully observe behavior in public spaces.
- discuss the often ambiguous relationship between public and private.
- understand the role of public space in a democracy.
- understand the role of public space in everyday urban sociability.
- describe how public space can exclude certain people or behaviors.
- give examples of efforts in architecture and policy to create, influence, or control public space.
- demonstrate a close, critical understanding of a Seattle public space based on your own observations and research.

## Class Format

Our class will be a mixture of instructor lectures, class discussion, and student presentations. In most classes I will spend some time putting readings in context, presenting additional perspectives from other academic literature or popular media, and sharing exemplary case studies to illustrate main points. However, this is not a lecture class. We will also learn from seminar-style discussions in which students critically examine, question, and supplement course materials. Throughout the quarter, students will have the opportunity to facilitate discussions, present case studies, and share progress on their individual projects.

## Student Responsibilities

To make this class as a success, your responsibilities are to:

1. Complete all assigned readings before class.
2. *Actively* attend every class meeting.
3. Take class assignments seriously; complete assignments on time and to a high standard.
4. Think about how *you* can get the most out of this class.

If you do all of these, you will get a good grade, you will learn a lot, and you might even have fun.

## Instructor Responsibilities

My responsibilities as instructor mirror yours: to arrive prepared for all classes; to create an environment in which all students can learn; to provide timely and constructive feedback on assignments; and to take your academic goals, your work, and the class material seriously.

## Assessment

Your grade for the class is made up of several components, described below.

<i>Component</i>	<i>Due</i>	<i>Portion of final grade</i>
Participation	every class	20%
Reading Responses	most classes	20%
Case/Discussion	once for each student	10%
Observing Space	Tuesday, June 26	10%
Space Study, part 1	Sunday, July 22	20%
Space Study, part 2	Thursday, August 16	20%

### Participation

You learn by actively participating in your education. Often the best kind of learning happens in a community where many people are actively involved in learning something together—a class. This class is participatory, and so participation is an important part of your grade. Our classes will have a lot of discussion, and you will often be sharing your work with your classmates. Good participation means you come to class with all readings and other assignments completed. You listen actively and respectfully to what your classmates and instructor are saying. If you read and listen thoughtfully, then questions, disagreements, uncertainties, connections, experiences, visions, and other responses will naturally occur to you. Share these with the class when you think it will help our learning. Your ideas don't need to be fully formed or brilliant or original to benefit the class; they only need to come from your genuine desire to learn. Participation also means helping your classmates to learn by creating an environment for them to participate.

### Reading Responses

Most of our classes have required readings. Completing these before class is essential for your participation in each class period. Reading responses will help you with this. For each class with assigned readings, complete a reading response as follows.

- *Summarize*—Write a few sentences summarizing the reading's main points. What is the argument the author is trying to make? What do you think s/he wants you to take away from this text? Don't ramble; try to get to the heart of the matter. This probably requires no more than about 70 words. Do this for each of the required readings.
- *Respond*—Then, write your response to the reading. Do you agree with the author's argument? What questions would you ask of him/her? Did you find the reading confusing, challenging, dull, enlightening, or exciting? How do the ideas from this reading relate to your own life experience, or ideas/places you're familiar with, or your class project? It's OK to focus on just one of the readings (or just part of a reading), or to draw from all of them. We'll use these to guide our discussion in class, so think of them as a way to transition from reading to speaking. This part can be a short paragraph, or more if you like.

Submit your reading assignment in two steps:

1. Before midnight on the night before class, post your response (not the summaries) to the Canvas discussion board for that class. This will help you and your classmates prepare for our discussion.
2. Print and bring the complete assignment—summaries and response—to class. Keep it on hand as a reference during our discussion. Turn this hardcopy in to me at the end of class, and I will return it with comments in the following class.

Of the 14 total classes with readings in the quarter, you will be allowed to miss one reading response without penalty.

### Case Study Presentation & Discussion Leading

Each student will be responsible for presenting a case study or leading a discussion for one class in the quarter. You will sign up for one of these on the first day of class.

A case study addresses a particular space, event, organization, or phenomenon related to one of our class themes. The specific cases are identified on the schedule below. (If you know of another relevant case you'd like to present on, let me know!) You will do some secondary research on the case, then give a presentation, using plenty of images, that tells the relevant story to the class. Plan on presenting for 10–15 minutes, plus some time for questions and discussion. Each case is different, and can often go in any of several different directions. If you're unsure where to focus, just talk to me. For the cases that are in Seattle, your original research of the site is welcome but not required.

Leading a discussion involves preparing specific questions, issues, examples, and/or in-class activities to generate and facilitate a conversation among your peers about the topic for the class. These should tie into the assigned readings, but will also inevitably invite a wider-ranging discussion of the topic drawing on other sources and experiences. You might choose to present some materials as a discussion prompt, but the focus should be on the conversation among the class.

### Observing Space

For this assignment, you will briefly observe a public space, and write about what you saw. Details will be provided separately.

### Space Study

You will choose a public space to study throughout the quarter, and will report on it in two assignments. The first asks you provide a close descriptive analysis of the space and how it works, along with an evaluation of whether or not you think it works well. The second asks you to propose some kind of intervention in this space. Assignment details will be provided separately.

The entire class meeting prior to the deadline for Part 1 will be dedicated to discussing your progress on your projects. The last class meeting of the quarter will be dedicated to formal presentations of your work.

### *Note for graduate students enrolled in UrbDP 598A*

In general, expectations for graduate students are higher than those for undergraduates. As a graduate student, you should demonstrate your ability to read, write, discuss, and research at a graduate-level standard. You are also encouraged to make an extra effort to connect course materials and assignments to your own program and interests. I am open to tailoring some course elements for your specific goals; see me if you have something in mind.

## Other Policies and Information

### Website

Readings and other resources are available on the course website on Canvas: <https://canvas.uw.edu/courses/1206930>

### Attendance

Regular attendance is important for your success in the class. If for some reason you need to miss a class, it is polite to let the instructor know in advance.

### Accommodations

I am committed to creating an environment in which all students have the opportunity to learn. If you would benefit from accommodations for a disability, let me know and we will work with Disability Resources for Students to ensure you get the most out of this class.

### Code of Conduct / Academic Honesty

As always, students are expected to adhere to the UW's code of conduct. Be respectful of each other. Also remember that students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity in all of their work. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses. If you are not sure what is OK, just ask!

### Course Feedback

There is no need to wait until course evaluations at the end of the quarter to provide feedback to the instructor. If you have any concerns or suggestions related to teaching, assignments, class organization, or other elements of the class, you are welcome and encouraged to let me know at any time. This gives me the opportunity to make improvements as we go.

If you prefer to give feedback anonymously, you may do so online at <https://goo.gl/forms/v9rhJiS3WJII0qk2>. This form will remain open all quarter, and I will see responses when they are submitted.

## Schedule

Please visit the course website for up-to-date readings and additional resources. All readings are available on the course website as PDFs.

### Introduction

Tues. 19 June

*Introduction to topics and overview of syllabus and class expectations.*

*No readings.*

### Public

Thurs. 21 June

*What is public space? How do we distinguish public and private? Why is public space important for democracy? For social life?*

- Read* Franzen, J. (1998, October 12). Imperial bedroom: The real problem with privacy? We have too much of it. *The New Yorker*, 48–53.  
Lofland, L. (1989). The morality of urban public life: The emergence and continuation of a debate. *Places*, 6(1), 18-23.

### Observation

Tues. 26 June

*How can we pay attention to what happens in everyday public spaces?*

- Read* Whyte, W.H. (1980). Selections from *The social life of small urban spaces* (pp. 10–49). Washington, DC: The Conservation Foundation.  
Low, S.M. (2000). Notes from the field. In *On the plaza: The politics of public space and culture* (pp. 3-30). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Due* Observing Space assignment

### Flânerie

Thurs. 28 June

*What was the flâneur? How does he help us think about sociability in public spaces? What does flânerie look like today?*

- Read* Solnit, R. (2000). Paris, or botanizing on the asphalt. In *Wanderlust: A history of walking* (pp. 196-213). New York: Penguin Books.  
Loukaitou-Sideris, A. & Ehrenfeucht, B.. (2009). Promenading and the performance of individual identities. In *Sidewalks: Conflict and negotiation over public space* (pp. 39-60). Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

*Case* Pike Place Market, presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Encounter**

Tues. 3 July

*What happens when strangers encounter each other on the sidewalk? How does that make the city? Can that be political? Who organizes it?*

- Read* Jacobs, J. (1961). The uses of sidewalks: Contact. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House.
- Hitt, J., Lapham, L. H., et al. (1990, July). Whatever became of the public square? *Harper's Magazine*, 49–60.

*Discussion* led by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Independence Day Break**

Thurs. 5 July

*An extended holiday—no class.*

## **Community**

Tues. 10 July

*Is there something between public and private?*

- Read* Oldenburg, R. (1989). The character of third places. In *The great good place: Cafes, coffee shops, community centers, beauty parlors, general stores, bars, hangouts and how they get you through the day* (pp. 20-42). New York: Paragon House.
- Hester, R. (2007). Neighborhood space. In Larice, M. & Macdonal, E. (Eds.) *The urban design reader* (pp. 376-386). New York: Routledge. (Originally published 1975.)

*Case* Starbucks as “third place”, presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Speech**

Thurs. 12 July

*Protest, assembly, speech, rights...how are they related to public space?*

- Read* Zick, T. (2009). Introduction: The geography of expression. In *Speech Out of Doors: Preserving First Amendment Liberties in Public Places* (pp. 1–24). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Noujaim, J. (2016). Tahrir Square, Cairo: Lost and found in the square. In C. Marron (Ed.), *City Squares: Eighteen Writers on the Spirit and Significance of Squares Around the World* (pp. 112–127). New York: Harper.

*Case* Seattle WTO protests, presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Memory

Tues. 17 July

*How are memories embedded in place? Whose history is memorialized?*

- Read* Hayden, D. (1995). Place Memory and Urban Preservation. In *The power of place: Urban landscapes as public history* (pp. 44–78). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Solnit, R. (2017, January). The Monument Wars. *Harper's Magazine*, 10–13.
- Case* *Stolpersteine* (Holocaust memorial), presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Project Workshop

Thurs. 19 July

*Come to class prepared to share your work to date on the Space Study project with your classmates. We will discuss common issues and provide constructive feedback.*

Sun. 22 July

*Due* Space Study, Part 1

## Exclusion I

Tues. 24 July

*How are spaces gendered? Racialized? Who is excluded?*

- Read* Tonkiss, F. (2005). Embodied spaces: Gender, sexuality and the city. In *Space, the city and social theory* (pp. 94–112). Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Staples, B. (1986, September). Just walk on by: A black man ponders his power to alter public space. *Ms.*, pp. 54 & 88.
- Moore, D. (2015). Urban spaces and the mattering of black lives. In *The Just City Essays: 26 Visions for Urban Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity* (pp. 18–20). New York: The J. Max Bond Center on Design for the Just City. <https://www.thenatureofcities.com/the-just-city-essays/>

*Discussion* led by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Exclusion II

Thurs. 26 July

*What happens when a public space is someone's home? Can public space belong to people of a certain class or culture?*

- Read* Mitchell, D., & Staeheli, L. (2006). Clean and safe? Property redevelopment, public space, and homelessness in downtown San Diego. In Low, S. & Smith, N. (Eds.) *The politics of public space* (pp. 143–175). New York: Routledge.
- Zukin, S. (1995). Whose culture? Whose city? (Selections TBA) In *The cultures of cities* (pp. 1–47) Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell.

*Case* Seattle tent cities, presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Secure

Tues. 31 July

*How can public spaces be ordered? Who is allowed access? Who is watching? What are the rules?*

*Read* Kelling, G.L., & Wilson, J.Q. (1982, March). "Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety." *The Atlantic*.  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/>

Beckett, K., & Herbert, S. K. (2010). Toward banishment: The transformation of urban social control. In *Banished: the new social control in urban America* (pp. 37–61). New York: Oxford University Press.

*Case* Newark police cameras, presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Private

Thurs. 2 Aug.

*Is public space disappearing because of private spaces like malls and gated communities? Does it matter if city spaces that look public are actually owned or managed by private interests?*

*Read* Crawford, M. (1992). The world in a shopping mall. In Sorkin, M. (Ed.), *Variations on a theme park: The new American city and the end of public space* (pp. 3-30). New York: The Noonday Press.

Kohn, M. (2004). The mauling of public space. In *Brave new neighborhoods* (pp. 69-92). New York: Routledge.

*Case* Downtown Seattle Association (Westlake Park, Occidental Square)  
–or– Amazon-owned public space in South Lake Union  
presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## Designed

Tues. 7 Aug.

*How do designers think about the process for creating public spaces? How should the physical elements of public space be designed?*

*Read*

Project for Public Spaces. (2018). Eleven Principles for Creating Great Community Places. <https://www.pps.org/article/11steps>

Project for Public Spaces. (n.d.). 5 Steps to Making Places.  
<https://www.pps.org/article/5-steps-to-making-places>

Gehl, J. (2010). Toolbox. In *Cities for People*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

*Case* Seattle parklets, presented by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Insurgent**

Thurs. 9 Aug.

*How does the public make its own space? How are these spaces different than those produced by more powerful actors?*

- Read* Hou, J. (2010). (Not) your everyday public space. In Hou, J. (Ed.) *Insurgent public space: Guerrilla urbanism and the remaking of contemporary cities* (pp. 1-17). London; New York: Routledge.
- Iveson, K. (2013). Cities within the City: Do-It-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(3), 941–956.

*Discussion* led by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Virtual**

Tues. 14 Aug.

*How do smartphones, social media, and location-based services change the character of public space?*

- Read* de Souza e Silva, A., & Gordon, E. (2013). The waning distinction between private and public. In K. Gates (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Studies* (1st ed., Vol. VI). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Badger, E. (May 16, 2012). "How smart phones are turning our public places into private ones." *CityLab*. <https://www.citylab.com/life/2012/05/how-smart-phones-are-turning-our-public-places-private-ones/2017/>.

*Discussion* led by: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Project Presentations**

Thurs. 16 Aug.

*The entire class is dedicated to students' presentations of their work studying a public space throughout the quarter.*

*Due* Space Study, Part 2