

**The political geography of urban public spaces**  
**GEOG 394**  
**Macalester College**

---

Professor Dan Trudeau	Fall 2018
Office: 104e Carnegie Hall	T/R: 1:20 – 2:50 pm
Phone: 651-696-6872	Neill 409
Email: <a href="mailto:trudeau@macalester.edu">trudeau@macalester.edu</a>	
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1-3 pm, Thursdays 9:30 – 11 am, and by appointment	
Teaching Assistant: Ceren Dolma	
Office Hours: Mondays 1:00-2:00 pm and Thursdays 4:45-5:45 pm.	

---

### **Course description**

This course investigates the ways that public spaces in cities function in theory and in practice to support democratic life. Our investigation will critically assess geographer Don Mitchell’s provocative claim that we may be seeing “the end of public space” through original research on the design, use, and function of specific public spaces in St. Paul. Using geographical field methods, students will engage in a close analysis of the design and use of select public spaces in order to assemble a “field guide of public space” in St. Paul. Students will examine big picture concerns about the privatization of public space and the narrowing definition of who belongs to the public through engaged inquiry. Students will communicate the results of their inquiry to a public audience in the form of a digital field guide, which will be published online and publicized through Streets.mn, a citizen-led online news source dedicated to the exploration of pressing issues facing cities, towns, neighborhoods, and the places in between. Collectively, the field guide will inform critical examination of the claim that in cities today, we are witnessing the end of public space. Whether they’re designed well or managed properly, public spaces have an outsized effect on social inclusion and exclusion. This makes the course’s focus on generating a field guide to public space an especially timely intervention that speaks directly to St. Paul Mayor Carter’s recent call to build an inclusive city that works for all of its residents.

### **Learning goals**

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Explain the significance of public space for a functioning democracy.
- Take an original and informed position on controversial issues surrounding the design and management of public space.
- Design an original research inquiry and collect and analyze data to answer research question.
- Effectively communicate results of original research with a public audience.
- Identify skills and mindsets associated with professions associated with the design and management of public space.
- Hone your organization skills as you manage the complex task of a collaborative project.

## **Format**

We will work on understanding the theory and lived experience of public space through a collaborative research project exploring the design and operation of select public spaces. As such, this course is designed in the style of a practicum, where the focus is on doing research and communicating its results with a public audience. We will support this aim through regular meetings where we discuss readings, consider ideas through lectures, workshop writing, and collaborate on how our independent work can support the larger effort to create a field guide. We will participate in two field trips and you will make independent trips into the field to study select sites. In order to make this project an impactful learning experience for you and your peers, your regular attendance, preparation, and full participation are necessary. I therefore expect you to have completed all assignments, including the required reading, before coming to class.

I also expect you to engage in research activities that will take place outside of our scheduled meeting times. Our research project for the class will have you collecting and analyzing data (by conducting field observations and potentially other tasks) in a location to-be-determined in St. Paul. I estimate that you will need to spend at least 8 hours studying the site. This activity is an essential part of the course and I expect you to treat it as you would any other major course assignment.

## **Readings**

Required readings include websites, articles, and book chapters that are available through the course Moodle site.

## **A note about our schedule**

We will make two field trips to select public spaces in St. Paul and meet with experts who will provide their perspectives on the design, use, and management of these spaces. These trips will take place from 12:00 – 2:45 pm on September 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>. Please make arrangements to attend.

## **Policies**

Cell phones: Cell phone use is not allowed in the classroom. Please silence your phones at the start of class. Should you need to answer a phone call, quietly step out of the classroom. Texting is not allowed either as this is both disruptive and disrespectful to other students and the instructor.

Academic honesty. I expect the work you do in this course will be your own. Furthermore, take care to properly cite any and all of the work on which you draw. Instances of plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade for the class. Furthermore, I will report such instances to the Dean, which may result in suspension or even dismissal from the college.

Being there. The success of the seminar depends upon how much we can learn from each other. The interactive nature of our meetings therefore requires that you come to class prepared. Plan your schedule so that you can arrive and depart on time.

Changes. As the semester unfolds, there may be reason to make changes to the course. In the event of a change to readings, topics, or the schedule, I will announce the changes in class and over email. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

Communication. Do not hesitate to let me know if your peers or I can do anything to help improve the learning environment in our class. I encourage you to talk to me about any changes you would like to see in the course. You are welcome to meet with me before and after class, visit me in my office, or contact me by email.

Completion. All assignments must be completed. Failure to complete the assignments will result in a NC grade.

Course information. A fair amount of course information will be disseminated via email. Check your Macalester email account regularly.

Deadlines. Deadlines for assignments are firm. Penalties for missed deadlines are noted in the assignment descriptions below. Note: in a couple of cases, assignments will not be accepted past their deadlines. If you have obligations that conflict with this class' scheduled assignments, you must see me no later than Friday, September 14th so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

Disabilities. If you have a documented disability or any other problem that you think may affect your ability to perform well in this course, please see me as soon as possible so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

Input. I will be happy to work with you to tailor the class to your interests provided that it will work with the subject of the seminar. I invite your input on readings, assignments and access to news sources that will enrich our discussions.

No extra credit. The number of assignments on which grades in this course are based is non-negotiable.

Respect for learning. Respect for your peers and professor are absolutely essential to create and sustain a supportive learning environment free of disruptions. As we engage in critical discussion and debate, keep your critiques focused on ideas (and not the person voicing the idea). Our goal is to create a positive classroom environment in which you and your classmates feel comfortable having bold conversations and taking risks in the learning process. Examples of behaviors that can be disruptive include chatting and whispering during class, the use of phones, interrupting others, preparing to leave before class is over, and consistently arriving late to class. Please keep these disruptions to a minimum. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a request to leave the class and/or a referral to the Office of Student Affairs.

Do not hesitate to talk with me if you have any questions or concerns regarding this class. Open communication is key to successful learning. The sooner you voice your concerns, the more opportunity I will have to respond.

## **Assignments (1000 points total)**

All assignments are due at the beginning of class, unless otherwise noted. Submit assignments via Moodle. Late assignments will be penalized 10% per calendar day.

Attendance and participation (100 points). This course is very much a self-directed and cooperative course. You are expected to be able to use your knowledge and skills to achieve the goals of the collaborative project in the Field Guide. It will be up to each of you to maintain a high level of commitment to the project. If one student fails to meet their responsibilities, the entire project suffers. Most class time will be given to working on the project, so it is in your best interest to be present! A lack of attendance and/or participation will result in a poor participation grade. If a student has more than two unexcused absences in the course, the final grade will be marked down one step. For instance, a student earning an A- in the course but with three unexcused absences will earn a B+.

### ***Field Guide***

As a class we will conduct research on the design and use of public space in St. Paul and assemble a field guide to share the results of the research. The Field Guide will be prepared in order to answer the question: “Are we making inclusive choices in the design and management of formal public spaces in St. Paul that help promote a democratic society?” While the Field Guide is a collective effort, you will have specific interim assignments to complete and will contribute to the final product through two components, a primary and secondary contribution.

### *Interim assignments:*

#### News media trace (25 points)

You will scan news sources (local, national, and international) for discussion of public space that you find interesting. Your assignment is to identify two themes and an article or news story that exemplifies each. You will share these with the class via Moodle and in-class presentations.

Due: September 11<sup>th</sup>

#### Public Space Classification (50 points)

As a reflection on our field trip during the week of September 17<sup>th</sup>, you will write a 400-500 word essay in which you identify distinct types or classifications that you want the Field Guide to examine. You do not need to be exhaustive of all types. Rather, you should reflect on what you say on the field study, what you’ve read in class thus far, and other relevant experiences, to make a case for specific kinds of public space that our class should collectively investigate.

Due: September 25<sup>th</sup>

Proposal (50 points). You will propose a specific public space to study and generate a list of supplementary readings that will help you frame and discuss this site in ways that deepen your engagement with fields relevant to the design, management, and use of public space.

Due: September 30<sup>th</sup> at 10 pm

Revised proposal (100 points). You will revise your initial proposal in light of group discussion about how to coordinate our approaches so that there is thematic consistency across respective individual projects.

Due: October 16<sup>th</sup>

Field notes (75 points). All projects will engage in observation-based inquiry, and may elect to include additional methods. You are expected to visit your site at least four times to log at least 8 hours of observation. You will share your observations at three points through a “write-up” of your observations, keeping track of questions that arise and apparent connections.

Due: October 9<sup>th</sup>, October 18<sup>th</sup>, and November 8<sup>th</sup>

Primary contribution (400 points)

You will contribute to the Field Guide in two ways. The first is a primary contribution. This the essay you will compose relating your research of a specific public space to the broader questions facing the Field Guide: “Are we making inclusive choices in the design and management of formal public spaces in St. Paul that help promote a democratic society?” Your primary contribution will use images and text to convey your original analysis of the site you selected for close study.

- Draft Due: November 13<sup>th</sup>
- Second Draft Due: November 20<sup>th</sup>
- Final Draft Due: December 11<sup>th</sup>

Secondary contribution (100 points)

A second way you will contribute to the Field Guide is through select ancillary components of the Field Guide, including an introduction, description of methods, conclusion, and glossary of important terms. Specific responsibilities for your secondary contribution will be determined during the course.

Due: December 6<sup>th</sup>

Editorial (50 points)

We will collaboratively write an editorial introducing the Field Guide, which will be published on Streets.mn. This will be part executive summary, but also convey the purpose and significance of our work in the Field Guide for the audience of readers at streets.mn. This will be a group effort and individual responsibilities will take shape and be determined during the course.

Due: November 27<sup>th</sup>

Final reflection (50 points)

After assembling the Field Guide and publishing it on streets.mn, you will reflect on your experience conducting research and working collaboratively with others as well as your individual learning within the course.

Due: December 15<sup>th</sup> by 3:30 pm

Your final grade will be based on performance in all parts of the course. Letter grades will be assigned according to the following distribution:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Failing</u>
A (1000-930)	B+ (899-880)	C+ (799-780)	D+ (699-680)	NC (< 600)
A- (929-900)	B (879-830)	C (779-730)	D (679-630)	
	B- (829-800)	C- (729-700)	D- (629-600)	

## List of Assigned Readings

- Banerjee, T. (2001). The future of public space: Beyond invented streets and reinvented places. *Journal of the American Planning Association* 67(1): 9-24.
- Belmont Report 1979. *Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*. The national commission for the protection of human subjects of biomedical and behavioral research.
- Bradshaw, M., and Stratford, E. (2010). "Qualitative research design and rigor" in I. Hay (ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, pp. 69-80, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carmona, M. (2010). Contemporary public space, part two: Classification. *Journal of Urban Design* 15(2): 157-173
- Crawford, M. (2013). "Blurring the boundaries: public space and private life" in M. Larice and E. Macdonald (eds.), *Urban Design Reader*, Second Edition, pp. 344-357, New York: Routledge.
- Daher, R. (1999). Gentrification and the politics of power, capital and culture in an emerging Jordanian heritage industry. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review* 10(2): 33-46.
- Fraser, N. (1990). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text* 25:56-80.
- Gehl, J. (2011). "Three types of outdoor activities" in R. LeGates and F. Stout (eds.) *The City Reader*, pp. 530-540, New York: Routledge
- Gibson, J. (1979). "The theory of affordances." in, J. Gieseking and W. Mangold (eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*, pp. 56-60, New York: Routledge.
- Haas, T., and Mehaffy, M. (2018). The future of public space. *Urban Design International*
- Hostetter, E. (2016). Reading place, reading landscape: a consideration of city as text and geography. *Journal of National Collegiate Honors Council* 17(2): 63-81.
- Iveson, K. (1998). "Putting the public back into public space" in, J. Gieseking and W. Mangold (eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*, pp. 187-191, New York: Routledge.
- Kearns, R. (2010). "Seeing with clarity: undertaking observational research" in I. Hay (ed.), *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, pp. 241-258, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kim, H., Chae, B., & Park, S. (2018). Exploring public space through social media: an exploratory case study on the high line new york city. *Urban Design International* 23(2): 69-85

- Knowles, A., Westerveld, L., Strom, L. 2015. Inductive visualization: a humanistic alternative to GIS. *GeoHumanities* 1(2): 233-265.
- Kohn, M. (2004). *Brave New Neighborhoods: The privatization of public space*. New York: Routledge.
- Low, S. (2014). "Spatializing Culture: An engaged anthropological approach to space and place" in, J. Gieseking and W. Mangold (eds.), *The People, Place, and Space Reader*, pp. 34-38, New York: Routledge.
- Madanipour, A. (2013). "The changing nature of public space in city centres" in M. Larice and E. Macdonald (eds.), *Urban Design Reader*, Second Edition, pp. 443-458, New York: Routledge.
- Mitchell, D. (1995). The end of public space? People's park, definitions of the public, and democracy. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 85(1), 108-133.
- Mitchell, D., and Staeheli, L. (2009). "Public Space" in R. Kitchin and N. Thrift (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Boston: Elsevier, pp. 511-516.
- Nemeth, J. (2009). Defining a public: the management of privately owned public space. *Urban Studies* 46(11): 2463-2490.
- Project for Public Spaces (no date). *Placemaking: What if we built our cities around places?* New York: Project for Public Spaces.
- Roberts, J. (2012). "How to build a better block." TEDx Talk University of Austin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8HTkBTnZ9D4>
- Sorkin, M. (2013). "The end(s) of urban design" in M. Larice and E. Macdonald (eds.), *Urban Design Reader*, Second Edition, pp. 618-634, New York: Routledge.
- Varna, G. and S. Tiesdell (2010). Assessing the publicness of public space. *Journal of Urban Design* 15(4): 575-598.
- Wycoff, W. (2016). Producing public geographies: creating a field guide to the western American landscape. *Historical Geography* 44: 3-26.
- Zamith, R., & Lewis, S. (2014). From public spaces to public sphere: Rethinking systems for reader comments on online news sites. *Digital Journalism*, 2(4), 558-574.

## SCHEDULE of READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS

Topic	Day	Readings	Assignment/Deadlines
<u>Week 1:</u>			
Introductions	Sept 4		
The end of public space?	Sept 6	Mitchell Kohn Ch3 Zamith and Lewis	
<u>Week 2:</u>			
Privatization of public space	Sept 11	<a href="#">99pi #219</a> Nemeth Kohn Ch4	News media trace
How to study public space	Sept 13	Varna and Tiesdell Gehl Kearns Project for Public Spaces	
<u>Week 3:</u>			
Field Trip 1	Sept 18	Mitchell and Staeheli Hostetter Low	
Field Trip 2	Sept 20	Gibson Madanipour Carmona	
<u>Week 4:</u>			
Types of public space	Sept 25	Crawford Iveson	Classification essay
Research design	Sept 27	Bradshaw and Stratford Belmont report Kim et al	Proposal due Sept 30th



Topic	Day	Readings	Assignment/Deadlines
<u>Week 5:</u>			
Designing our approach	Oct 2	Wycoff	
Fieldwork	Oct 4		
<u>Week 6:</u>			
Tutorial meetings	Oct 9		Field notes – first entry
Fine-tuning our approach	Oct 11		
<u>Week 7:</u>			
Reports from the field	Oct 16	Fraser <a href="#">A better block</a>	Revised proposal
Fieldwork	Oct 18		Field notes – second entry
<u>Week 8:</u>			
Making sense of observations	Oct 23	Knowles et al.	
No Class	Oct 25	<i>Fall Break</i>	
<u>Week 9:</u>			
Writing for a public audience Guest lecture: Bill Lindeke	Oct 30	<a href="#">Los Angeles Urban Rangers</a>	
Field guide design	Nov 1		Identify secondary contributions
<u>Week 10:</u>			
Fieldwork/Tutorial	Nov 6		
Design for public life Guest lecture: Kristine Miller in <b>Harmon Room 12-1 pm</b>	Nov 8	Miller Nelson	Field notes – third entry

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignment/Deadlines</b>
<u>Week 11:</u>			
Topics in Public Space	Nov 13	TBD	Draft of primary contribution
Peer Review	Nov 15		
<u>Week 12:</u>			
Drafting an editorial	Nov 20		Revised primary contribution
No Class	Nov 22	<i>Thanksgiving Day Break</i>	
<u>Week 13:</u>			
Expert review	Nov 27		Final editorial
Topics in Public Space	Nov 29	TBD	
<u>Week 14:</u>			
The Future of Public Space	Dec 4	Banerjee Haas & Mehaffy	
The design field	Dec 6	Sorkin	Secondary contribution
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignment/Deadlines</b>
<u>Week 15:</u>			
Why public spaces matter	Dec 11	Kohn Ch 9 & 10	Final primary contribution
<u>Week 16:</u>			
Final Reflection due @ 3 pm	Dec 15		