



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

URPL-GP 4634
Equitable Community Engagement
Spring 2024

Instructor Information

- Perris Straughter
- Email: ps4574@nyu.edu
- Office Hours: By appointment only.

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Thursdays 455pm-635pm
- Class Location: **Bobst Library building, Room LL141, 70 Washington Square S, New York, NY 10012.**

Course Prerequisites

- URPL-GP 2660 History and Theory of Planning or CORE-GP 1022 Introduction to Public Policy
- URPL-GP 1603 Urban Planning: Methods and Practice

Course Description

Key to the planning profession is engagement. Most of a planner's work necessitates engagement of institutions and of people in order to effectuate change, and change (or prevention thereof) is the planner's currency. Specifically this course will look at community engagement, or engagement of the public within a defined geography. What is community? How is it defined? What does it look and feel like? And how does it manifest itself, or not, as part of the planning process? Communities in the United States are rarely equitable, particularly as it relates to planning. How then can community engagement be equitable? How does a planner conduct equitable community engagement? How does one even define it or recognize it? This course will examine all of this and take a brief look at best practices in the field. In particular, this course will examine the New York City community board, which is not just a convenient petris dish for studying equitable community engagement but in many ways is a laboratory where equitable community engagement will be defined, tested and perhaps ultimately succeed or fail.

Course and Learning Objectives

- Explore the intersection between community development, neighborhood planning and engagement/outreach methods
- Learn fundamentals of outreach and engagement for planning
- Understand how privilege and power affect engagement
- Learn tools for broadening and deepening engagement, and for increasing equity and accountability

Themes: equity, engagement, mobilization, power and privilege, neighborhoods as ecosystems

Required Readings

Planning as if People Matter: Governing for Social Equity (Brenman and Sanchez)

Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning (Davidoff)

Comprehensive Planning and Social Responsibility (Webber)

A Planner's Guide to Meeting Facilitation (American Planning Association)

Planning for People: Integrating Social Processes (Hoernig, et. al)

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (www.dsni.org)

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation's Engagement Streams Framework:

www.ncdd.org/files/rc/2014_Engagement_Streams_Guide_Print.pdf.

[The Elephant in the Room: Overcoming Barriers to Recruitment and Retention of People of Color in the Planning Profession](#)
(Tiarachristie)

Race, transformative planning and the just city (Song)

Racial equity in planning organizations, Journal of the American Planning Association (Solis)

Adler, B. 2015. No, gentrification does not solve the problem of segregation. Grist. 2. Arellano, G.

The Citizens' Handbook: [The Citizen's Handbook / Table of Contents \(citizenshandbook.org\)](#)

Tobar, H. 2015. Viva Gentrification! New York Times [Opinion | Viva Gentrification! - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

Who Cares?, Journal of the American Planning Association (Lyles and White)

Film: The Iron Triangle

The Brownsville Plan: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/the-brownsville-plan.pdf>

Newark: The Living Downtown Redevelopment Plan <https://www.newarknj.gov/viewer/redevelopment-plans>

The Broad Street Station Redevelopment Plan <https://www.newarknj.gov/viewer/redevelopment-plans>

Readings on NYC community boards: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cau/community-boards/about-community-boards.page>

Williams, Alfred M. Jr. 2016. Reforming New York City's ULURP: Less Confusing than Its Name. Journal of civil rights and economic development. Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 399-418 (available from NYU Library E-journal online)

Tom Angotti. 2010. Land use and the New York City Charter:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ccpd/repository/files/charterreport-angotti-2.pdf>

Equitable Development Data Tool [Equitable Development Data Tool \(arcgis.com\)](#)

Arnstein's Ladder of Participation [Ladder of Citizen Participation – Organizing Engagement](#)

Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

Grading:

Attendance and participation 15%

In class presentation 15%

Field work and blog postings 20%

Short paper 20%

Final presentation and paper 30%

Class Schedule

Week 1: March 12 Engagement theory, advocacy planning

- Course objectives and expectations
- Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning (Davidoff)
- Comprehensive Planning and Social Responsibility (Webber)
- Arnstein's Ladder of Participation [Ladder of Citizen Participation – Organizing Engagement](#)

March 19: Spring Break!

Week 2: March 26 Centering people, not just place

- Planning for People: Integrating Social Processes (Hoernig, et. al)
- Planning as if People Matter, Chapter 1
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (www.dsni.org)
- HPD Neighborhood Planning Playbook [NYC Neighborhood Planning Playbook - HPD](#)
- The Citizens' Handbook: [The Citizen's Handbook / Table of Contents \(citizenshandbook.org\)](#)

Week 3: April 2 Understanding your audience, understanding yourself

- In-class group activity: privilege walk
- Planning as if People Matter, Chapters 2 and 3
- Who Cares?, Journal of the American Planning Association (Lyles and White)
- National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation's Engagement Streams Framework: www.ncdd.org/files/rc/2014_Engagement_Streams_Guide_Print.pdf.

Week 4: April 9 The NYC Community Board

- NYC Community Boards, ULURP

- Williams, Alfred M. Jr. 2016. Reforming New York City's ULURP: Less Confusing than Its Name. Journal of civil rights and economic development. Vol. 28, Issue 3, pp. 399-418 (available from NYU Library E-journal online)
- Tom Angotti. 2010. Land use and the New York City Charter:
<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/ccpd/repository/files/charterreport-angotti-2.pdf>
- Planning as if People Matter, Chapters 4 and 5
- In-class short presentations

Week 5: April 16 The Elephant in the Community Meeting: Race

- Race, transformative planning and the just city (Song)
- Racial equity in planning organizations, Journal of the American Planning Association (Solis)
- [The Elephant in the Room: Overcoming Barriers to Recruitment and Retention of People of Color in the Planning Profession](#) (Tiarachristie)
- Tobar, H. 2015. Viva Gentrification! New York Times [Opinion | Viva Gentrification! - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)
- Equitable Development Data Tool [Equitable Development Data Tool \(arcgis.com\)](#)
- Planning as if People Matter, Chapter 6

Week 6: April 23 Planning for whom? Power and privilege

- In-class roleplay group activity: stakeholders and power dynamics
- Case studies: Brownsville, Edgemere, Downtown Newark, Willets Point
- Film: The Iron Triangle
- Planning as if People Matter, Chapter 7
- The Brownsville Plan: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/hpd/downloads/pdfs/services/the-brownsville-plan.pdf>
- Resilient Edgemere Plan www.nyc.gov/edgemere
- The Broad Street Station Redevelopment Plan
- <https://www.newarknj.gov/viewer/redevelopment-plans>
- <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/planning/download/pdf/plans/hudson-yards/hyards.pdf>
- Readings on NYC community boards:
- <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cau/community-boards/about-commmunity-boards.page>
- Short paper due

Week 7: April 30 Final presentations

- Individual student presentations

Week 8: May 7 Final presentations (part 2 if needed); final paper due

Assignments

All papers will be 12-point or less font type double-spaced using no more than 1" margins. Papers should follow APA (American Psychological Association) formatting and citation standards. See the project schedule for more details on required assignments. All assignments are to be emailed to the lead instructor the day before class no later than midnight (12am).

Field work and blog posts:

Throughout the course students will attend/observe neighborhood planning meetings as well as at least NYC one community board meeting where a land use item is discussed. Students will be expected to at minimum 3 and up to 5 blogs about their observations. Blogs postings shall be posted via Brightspace and should be no less than 50 words and no more than 100 words. They may include photos (encouraged) but photos will not be graded. Blog posts will be graded based on completion (minimum five posts are required) and based on the student's demonstration of being inquisitive and reflective of what they saw at the meeting.

Final blog post (Due Week 6, by April 16): visit to an NYC Community Board (either a land use committee meeting or a full board meeting)

Describe the procedures of the community board in how they make motions, conduct voting and give comments on items up for a vote. Comment on how power is distributed between the community board and the public and amongst community board members. What role does the board's leadership play? How is the process democratic? How is the process not-so-democratic? Why? Are there winners and losers in this process, who, and why?

Short paper (3-5 pages):

Incorporating learnings from the course readings, how does power and privilege manifest itself in the planning process? Be as specific as possible and address all of the following:

- 1) What is the difference between personal privilege and structural or systematic privilege and how does it apply to stakeholders in a planning process? Give examples.
- 2) What are ways to make planning processes more equitable and what can the planner do?
- 3) What are some of the obstacles the planner will encounter and how do you suggest to mitigate those obstacles? Provide a concrete example.
- 4) Pick a planning issue, topic or legal framework and propose a systematic reform that would address the imbalance of power and privilege among people as it relates to that issue, topic or framework.

In class short presentation:

Each student is required to attend a NYC community board land use committee meeting (boards will be assigned at the beginning of the class, or the student must attend the board in which the subject of their final project is located) and give a 5 minute presentation with at least 2 and at most 5 PowerPoint slides about that community board addressing all of these questions:

- 1) Who are the board members? Describe them in terms of demographics, demeanor, personality traits and if known, occupation and their location of residence in the district.
- 2) What interpersonal dynamics do you observe between board members and between members of the public?
- 3) What are the prominent issues and perspectives that came up at the meeting? What are board members and members of the public most concerned about, as evidenced at that meeting?
- 4) Pick one project/land use related issue that came up at the meeting and describe how it was presented, how board members questions/reactions went and what the ultimate resolution was (if there was one) and why
- 5) Are there obvious power dynamics you've observed between community members, board members and officers of the board? Comment about this.

Final project, presentation and short paper:

Students are to select a neighborhood planning process or planning project for observation and analysis. The project could be a rezoning or a community plan and may be initiated by a private entity or developer, neighborhood group or by a governmental entity such as a municipality or State. It is strongly encouraged that students pick a local project where, if deemed safe, in-person meetings can be attended. This is not a requirement, however. At minimum, the student is required to observe public planning meetings virtually. At the end of the course each student will give a 5-7 minute presentation and write a 3-5 page paper outlining an assessment of the dynamics of the involvement of the public in that process. The assessment should draw on course readings and discussions to answer the following questions:

- 1) Describe the project briefly and the community briefly. Describe “the community” as indicated by those attending these meetings.
- 2) Who are the stakeholders? What role do they have? Describe their interrelationships. How is power in both the planning/engagement process and decision-making process distributed among them and why?
- 3) Describe the methods of engagement. What is legally mandated versus voluntary? How accessible is the information to various segments of the community and the population at large?

Letter Grades

Letter grades for all assignments as well as the entire course will be assigned as follows:

Letter Grade	Points
A	4.0 points
A-	3.7 points
B+	3.3 points
B	3.0 points
B-	2.7 points
C+	2.3 points
C	2.0 points
C-	1.7 points
F	0.0 points

Student grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- (A) Excellent: Exceptional work for a graduate student. Work at this level is thorough, articulate, well-reasoned, creative, innovative, sophisticated, and extremely well written. Work is of exceptional, professional quality.
- (A-) Very good: Very strong work for a graduate student. Work at this level shows signs of creativity, is thorough and well-reasoned, indicates strong understanding of appropriate methodological or analytical approaches, and meets professional standards.
- (B+) Good: Sound work for a graduate student; well-reasoned and thorough, methodologically sound. This is the graduate student grade that indicates the student has fully accomplished the basic objectives of the course.
- (B) Adequate: Competent work for a graduate student even though some weaknesses are evident. Demonstrates competency in the key course objectives but shows some indication that understanding of some important issues is less than complete. Methodological or analytical approaches used are adequate but student has not been thorough or has shown other weaknesses or limitations.
- (B-) Borderline: Weak work for a graduate student; meets the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Understanding of salient issues is somewhat incomplete. Methodological or analytical work performed in the course is minimally adequate. Overall performance, if consistent in graduate courses, would not suffice to sustain graduate status in “good standing.”
- (C/-/+) Deficient: Inadequate work for a graduate student; does not meet the minimal expectations for a graduate student in the course. Work is inadequately developed or flawed by numerous errors and misunderstanding of important issues. Methodological or analytical work performed is weak and fails to demonstrate knowledge or technical competence expected of graduate students.

- (F) Fail: Work fails to meet even minimal expectations for course credit for a graduate student. Performance has been consistently weak in methodology and understanding, with serious limits in many areas. Weaknesses or limits are pervasive.

Late Submission Policy for Assignments

Extensions will be granted only in case of emergency, out of respect to those who abide by deadlines despite equally hectic schedules. Late submissions without extensions will be penalized one point or one letter grade. Assignments that are substantially late (more than 3 days) without a granted extension will be penalized two points or two letter grades. Assignments are due at midnight of the day prior to class.

NYU Brightspace

All announcements, resources, and assignments will be delivered through the NYU Brightspace site. I may modify assignments, due dates, and other aspects of the course as we go through the term with advance notice provided as soon as possible through the course website.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Student Accessibility

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click the "Get Started" button. You can also call or email CSD (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

NYU's Wellness Exchange

[NYU's Wellness Exchange](#) has extensive student health and mental health resources. A private hotline (212-443-9999) is available 24/7 that connects students with a professional who can help them address day-to-day challenges as well as other health-related concerns.

Class Policies

This is a condensed 7 week course as opposed to a full course and as such attendance is of paramount importance. If you cannot attend due to an emergency you must notify me in writing beforehand and not less than one hour before the scheduled start time of the class. In class participation via contribution to discussion is also required. Mutual respect of other students and the instructor is also required. My class is a safe space for everyone and although debate has its place in the classroom, any disagreement or debate must always be respectful and professional. I am available outside of class for any questions at anytime via email. If I do not respond immediately please do not hesitate to follow up.

Attendance and Punctuality: Attendance is very important during this course. This includes being present at all weekly course meetings and attendance at the required community meetings as part of the required assignments. If for any reason you are unable to attend anything, you are required to email the instructor in advance at ps4574@nyu.edu. While we understand that emergencies happen, responsible communication is of the utmost importance and is an expectation of all students.