This course examines innovations and movements to make cities sustainable and resilient places to live and work in the face of an array of challenges of environmental and climate risk, sprawl, and inequality. We draw from emerging models of “sustainable communities,” “resilient communities,” “healthy communities,” and “just communities.” We examine cities around the world, from New York, San Francisco, Portland, and Los Angeles to Rio de Janeiro, Mumbai, Nairobi, and Kalundborg, although the main emphasis will be the U.S.

Our analyses are rooted in the dynamics of power and conflict within “urban regimes” and “growth machines,” as well as emerging processes of collaboration, trust building, and hope among engaged residents, environmental and social justice groups, civic and professional associations, bicycle associations, nonprofits, architects and planners, public agencies, local businesses, and many other kinds of urban institutions (universities, school systems, museums, libraries, zoos). We draw broadly from the discipline of sociology and related disciplines, such as political science, urban anthropology, urban and environmental studies, policy, planning, public administration, architecture, and management.

**Course Requirements**

The class will be conducted largely as a seminar, to the extent that class size permits. Students are expected to do all readings before each session and to participate actively in discussions. Norms of civility and mutual respect are expected in all discussions.

There will be TWO (2) writing assignments. All essays should be double-spaced, paginated, stapled, 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar).

1. **Midterm essays** (10 pages), due March 6 (40% of grade), based on readings, lectures, and class discussions.

2. **Final essays** (10 pages), due May 3 in class (40% of grade). Final essays are based on course readings, lectures, and class discussions. Students may substitute research papers, service learning option (see below) for part or all of these final essays, contingent upon explicit agreement with Prof. Sirianni. Research papers can be linked to presentations and draw upon further readings. Thus, someone might want to do a final paper on urban agriculture in more depth than we do in class, or focus in more depth on a particular city’s various sustainability strategies. As the course proceeds, we will seek further resources from cities around the world.

3. **Class participation** (20% of grade): engage in discussions of readings, perhaps make a class presentation on a reading or an organization working towards sustainable cities (using websites and documents contained therein). Students choosing to do a research paper as their final assignment might also wish to present this in class, though this is not a requirement.

**Service Learning:** students have the option of combining the usual reading, research, and writing with internships and other forms of active civic engagement. Students must work out a specific agreement on community engagement and course writing with Prof. Sirianni in order
for this work to count as part of the grade for Soc 147a. Students can also use this course to help survey and decide upon summer internships.

**ABSOLUTELY NO USE OF LAPTOPS OR CELL PHONES DURING CLASS**

Out of respect for each other’s contributions during class, all cellphones and laptops will be shut off and stored out of sight. Get a paper notebook for note taking, if you do not typically utilize one. (I will make an exception only if there is a dire emergency, such as a family member in surgery. You must inform me of such an emergency ahead of class.)

Readings will be available on LATTE or on websites.

**Learning Goals:**

- To understand the dynamics of urban growth, governance, risk, and inequality.
- To understand the organizations and movements that are active in generating alternatives across a range of dimensions: urban river restoration; coastal adaptation; green buildings; community gardens, urban agriculture; biking and walking; transportation equity; racial, gender, and other forms of inclusion; climate action planning; energy alternatives; urban forests and tree planting campaigns.
- To understand the various components of sustainable cities, as well as the various concepts and frames that inform and contest the meanings and forms of sustainability (resilience, social capital, community asset development, healthy communities, environmental justice, spatial justice, and just sustainabilities).
- To understand policy design that can enhance or hinder the process of creating more engaged, sustainable, and just cities and communities.
- To understand the relationship between critical analysis and normative reasoning about democracy, diversity, and social justice.
- To improve your ability to express conceptual and case study material in writing and orally.

**Jan 18-23: Introduction and case study**

The first class on January 18 will introduce the course, with an overview of topics, readings, requirements, and process. For the second class, we will look at a case study of New York in response to 9/11.

*Required reading for Jan 23:*


**Jan 25-30: Dynamics of Urban Development and Growth Machines**

How do cities generate risk and inequality, even as they often expand opportunities for economic growth and public amenities? Patterns of urban spatial development, varieties of “urban regimes,” dynamics of “growth machines.” Public health in urban development. Climate change and urban vulnerability. How do grassroots groups and movements, as well
as innovators within professional and business associations, help to reconfigure urban
development logics?

Required Readings:

Jan 25:

Jan 30:

Jan 28-Feb 8: Sustainable, Resilient, Healthy, and Socially Just Communities:
Key Concepts and Movements

Sustainable communities, resilient communities, healthy communities, and environmentally just communities are concepts that have emerged as part of movements over the past several decades in the U.S and globally. How, why, and where did they emerge? How are they related to other concepts of community organizing, community development, just sustainability, spatial justice, community building, community policing? How have they been promoted through grassroots organizations, as well as through various nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and other institutions? The sociology of emotions in the face of risk, and the politics of hopeful and constructive civic action.

Required Readings:

Feb 1:

Feb 6:

Feb 8:
Jason Corburn and Irene Karanja, “Sanitation and Women’s Health in Nairobi’s Slums,” chapter 10 of *Slum Health* (189-207).
Feb 13-27: Walkable and Bikable

Making cities healthy and livable, with reduced air and noise pollution as well as carbon emissions, has been linked to local grassroots and national movements for urban design and planning that enhance opportunities to walk and bike, as well as to convenient public transportation and safe car and truck use. The cycling renaissance in Europe, North America, and Australia, with growing inclusiveness of women, people of color, children, seniors, and people with disabilities. Economic rationales, as well as health benefits and time costs. The role of bicycle associations. “Complete streets,” “smart growth.” Federal policy designs (ISTEA, TEA-21, etc.). The bicycle movement as a social movement.

Required Readings:

Feb 13:
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition: www.sfbike.org

Feb 15:

Feb 27:
Alliance for Biking and Walking. 2105. The State of the Movement: Benchmarking Biking and Walking Advocacy. (30 pages)
PeopleForBikes and Alliance for Biking and Walking. 2014. Building Equity: Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Protected Bike Lanes – An Idea Book for Fairer Cities. (36 pages)
Alliance for Biking and Walking: http://www.bikewalkalliance.org/

Winter Break: Feb 20, 22

March 1-13: Restoring Urban Rivers and Estuaries; Coastal Protection and Retreat

Urban rivers, while once used as open sewers for cities, have become the focus of restoration efforts in countries around the world, though not without conflicting visions and struggles among many kinds of actors to transform riverfronts from warehouses and factories to open space, parks, housing, ecosystem functions, and access by once excluded communities. Environmental justice at the waterfront.

Required Readings:

March 1:


March 6:

March 8:

Peruse:
River Network: [www.rivertnetwork.org](http://www.rivertnetwork.org)
Riverkeeper Alliance: [http://www.riverkeeper.org/](http://www.riverkeeper.org/)
Waterkeeper Alliance: [http://waterkeeper.org/](http://waterkeeper.org/)

**March 6: Midterm essays due in class:** double-spaced, paginated, stapled, 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar).

**March 15-20: Community Gardening and Urban Agriculture**

Community gardening has a long history in the U.S. and elsewhere, but its most recent wave has been linked to questions of urban sustainability, multiracial and multiethnic community engagement, food security and justice, environmental learning and youth engagement, restorative environments, and open space organizing. Local civic and neighborhood groups contest and partner with city agencies, university extension services, school systems, and other institutions. We look at urban agriculture and community-supported agriculture (CSA) more broadly, as well as the larger problem of greening the food supply chain.

Required Readings:

March 15:
March 20:
National Farm to School Network: http://www.farmtoschool.org/
Rooted in Community: http://www.rootedincommunity.org/

**March 22-27: Urban Forests**

Urban forestry seeks to restore many of the vital ecological functions of trees within cities, and reduce the urban heat island (UHI) effects that result from built environments and climate change. Some cities have launched, even completed, One Million Trees campaigns that engage ordinary families, volunteers, nonprofits, businesses, and public agencies, such as parks or forest departments.

March 22:
Million Trees NYC: http://milliontreesnyc.org/

March 27:
Chicago Wilderness: http://www.chicagowilderness.org


**March 29-April 5: Green Building**

The “green building movement” includes a broad array of citizen groups, homeowners, architects, building trades networks, real estate developers, public housing authorities, and leadership teams within major institutions, such as schools, downtown businesses, and other institutions. It has established standards for green building through the U.S. Green Building Council and similar groups in countries around the world, and has engaged major professional associations, such as the American Institute of Architects. The movement has grown from the recognition that buildings consume 40% of the world’s materials, 14% of all freshwater, 40% of U.S. energy, 73% of U.S. electricity; they produce 40% of U.S. nonindustrial waste, and create 39% of the carbon emissions that cause climate change. Studies also show myriad benefits to health, learning, and productivity, as well as reduced costs. As Winston Churchill once said, “We shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.” In short, we construct our identities and relationships as we construct our built environment.
**Required Readings:**

**March 29:**


**April 3:**


**April 5:**
Harrison Fraker, *The Hidden Potential of Sustainable Neighborhoods: Lessons from Low-Carbon Communities* (Island Press 2013), chapter 5: "Vauban (Freiburg, Germany)."
Fraker, "Hammarby Sjostad (Stockholm, Sweden).

**Spring Break: April 10, 12, 17**

**April 19-26: City Climate Action Planning**

Cities have been increasingly developing and implementing “climate action plans” to integrate a broad array of responses to mitigate and adapt to climate change. These plans are often developed with public input and in partnership with various civic and environmental groups, and build upon previous efforts at sustainability planning. National and international nonprofit intermediaries, such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Urban Sustainability Directors Network, and ICLEI, provide assistance to diffuse innovations and institutional templates. State and regional initiatives.

**Required Readings:**

**April 19:**
ICLEI: Local Governments for Sustainability: http://www.iclei.org/

April 24:
Seattle Climate Action Plan (2013):
Roggema, “The Spread-Out Charrette.”

April 26:

May 1:

May 3: Concluding discussion. Final essays due in class: double-spaced, paginated, stapled, 12-point font (Times New Roman or similar).