This course is intended to promote an interdisciplinary learning environment to examine the relationship between the built environment and public health issues/outcomes using the social ecological model. Despite the long history and daily interplay these areas have with one another, they are traditionally taught and practiced with little coordination. Issues related to transportation, land use, urban design, architecture, community development, environmental policy, health promotion and disease prevention are discussed, with examples covering how and why these elements should be considered part of the process and the outcome of public decision-making.

**COURSE GOALS**

**Content:**

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- identify examples of the interaction of the built environment and public health at the local, regional, state and national level
- construct critical arguments both for and against a public decision based on topical examples given in class

Students should also:

- be conscious of the trade-offs that must be made in decision-making (all actions have consequences)
- be able to think outside their disciplinary box

**STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE**

The course is conducted as a seminar, with emphasis placed on participation, critical thinking and communication. Class sessions are typically structured to include lecture, discussion time and learning activities, with guest speakers participating throughout the semester. Readings are assigned for each class session. Students are expected to have completed the reading before class in order to participate in class discussions.

**REQUIRED READINGS/EQUIPMENT**


Non-textbook readings will be posted on e-reserves. The password is beph.

Each student is asked to purchase a pedometer to wear for a portion of the semester to track daily/weekly activity. More details will be provided on the first day of class.

*Blackboard* will be used throughout the class to post announcements, have discussions on the readings or continue in-class discussions, and to exchange information on readings, websites and other class-relevant information. Students can also use *Blackboard* as an organization/communication tool for the group project.

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GRADING
The course grade is made up of the following components:

- Class participation/attendance 10%
- Activity diary 10%
- Class facilitation/critique 10%
- Policy memos (2) 30%
- Group project & presentation 40%

TOTAL: 100%

All assignments should be submitted as hard copies: typed, single- or 1.5-spaced, single- or double-sided documents (unless otherwise noted). Please use appropriate citations for all data sources and references.

Class participation/attendance
The size of this class has been kept small to facilitate discussions both in and out of the classroom. Therefore, a heavy emphasis in the grading is put on participation. Attendance in class is expected, as is participation in class discussions.

Activity diaries
Students are asked to keep a brief activity diary to record their daily/weekly pedometer readings and notes on where and how they traveled. Students are asked to reflect on how their travel is affected by the built environment and how the travel choices affect the “steps” they take each day.

Class facilitation
Each student will be assigned one week to act as facilitator. Each facilitator is expected to choose 1-2 of the week’s readings to critique. The facilitators will each write a brief (2-3 pages) critique of the readings. This summary can highlight major themes found across the readings, the student’s interpretation and critique of the readings, any continuing thoughts generated by the readings and any unresolved issues from the readings that are good topics of discussion. NOTE: these summaries are not meant to be reiterations of the material but rather critical examinations of the issue(s) discussed in the reading. The facilitator will post the summary on Blackboard 48 hours before class is held (i.e., Saturday by 5:30pm) and will notify the instructor and fellow students via email that the critique is posted. Students are expected to have read their classmate’s critique before class and be ready to discuss.

The facilitator will be responsible for leading class discussion on their topic. The entire class will be responsible for participating in class discussion. Thirty minutes of each class period will contain a discussion of the week’s readings facilitated by the student responsible for the critique that week.

Policy memos/issue briefs
Students will prepare two policy memos for government decision-makers throughout the semester that assess the current state of affairs of one of the topics covered in weeks 7-15. You may choose the topics you wish to cover in the policy memo. One memo should be directed to a local decision-maker (e.g., Austin City Commission, City Manager or Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department), while the second memo should be directed to a state-level decision-maker in the area of interest (e.g., Secretary of Transportation, Secretary of Health and Environment). For example, you may choose to write a memo to Michael M. Behrens, Executive Director of TXDOT, highlighting the public health impact of motor vehicle crashes, or you can direct a memo to the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services on access to healthcare or childhood lead poisoning. Different topics should be selected for each memo. Examples of past student policy memos are posted on Blackboard, as are the policy memo guidelines.

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Each memo should be **no longer than** 2-3 pages in length single- or 1.5-spaced, not including references. *Students will be penalized if substantive text exceeds this page recommendation.* The memos will require some outside research to gather statistics, much of which can be done on the internet. Please use appropriate citations for all data sources and references.

Memos are due **one week** after the given topic is covered in class.

**Group project & presentation**
Details will be given as the semester begins.

**Policy on Late Assignments**
1. All assignments must be turned in at their designated time.
2. All assignments turned in within one week after the designated time will receive a grade reduced by one full letter.
3. All assignments turned in more than one week after the designated time will be given the grade of “F.” No credit will be given for the assignment.
4. Exemptions will be given only under the most unusual and extreme circumstances.

**Graduate student grading scale (UT now offers +/- grading for graduate students)**
100 - 94 = A  
93 - 90 = A-  
89 - 87 = B+  
86 - 84 = B  
83 - 80 = B-  
79 - 77 = C+  
76 - 74 = C  
73 - 70 = C-  
69 - 67 = D+  
66 - 64 = D  
63 - 60 = D-  
59 and below = F

**Academic Integrity**
Students should be aware of the University rules regarding academic integrity, which can be found at the Student Judicial Services website: [http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html](http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/academicintegrity.html).

**Students with Disabilities**
Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent the fullest expression of abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate the educational opportunity.

**Religious Holidays**
If any scheduled assignment or exam conflicts with a mandated religious observance, a student should contact me immediately to arrange a make-up assignment or exam on a mutually acceptable date.

**Disclaimer**
The schedule and requirements for the course presented in this syllabus are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

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SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS

I. FOUNDATIONS

WEEK 1, January 23rd—
NO CLASS DUE TO INSTRUCTOR ATTENDING TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD MEETING IN WASHINGTON, DC

WEEK 2, January 30th—Course introduction: what are we talking about?


WEEK 3, February 6th—History of disciplinary interaction and the social ecological model
Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 2—The origins of sprawl
Chapter 3—The evolution of urban health


WEEK 4, February 13th—Understanding the built environment: a planning perspective

WEEK 5, February 20th—Methods and measurement: a health and sociology perspective
½ half of class period


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2nd half of class period

**Guest lecture: Lisa Groesz, Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate**

“A conceptual evaluation of a school-based utilitarian exercise model.”


**WEEK 6, February 27th—Health Impact Assessment**

**Guest lecture: Candace Rutt, Ph.D., Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

Readings TBA

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**II. PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES**

**WEEK 7, March 6th—Physical activity and nutrition**

Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 5—Physical activity, sprawl, and health


**WEEK 8, March 13th—Spring break: NO CLASS**

**WEEK 9, March 20th—Health Disparities and vulnerable populations**

Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 10—Health concerns of special populations


WEEK 10, March 27th—Access to care and services

Additional readings TBA

WEEK 11, April 3rd—— Social Capital and Mental Health
Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 9—Social capital, sprawl and health.
Chapter 8—Mental Health


Rybczynski, W. (1999). A clearing in the distance: Frederick Law Olmstead and America in the Nineteenth Century. Chapters 1 (pp.19-22), 28 (pp.199-205), 37 (pp.269-277), 46 (pp.326-331).


WEEK 12, April 10th—Traffic safety
Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 6—Injuries and deaths from traffic


**WEEK 13, April 17th—Outdoor air and water quality**

Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 4—Air Quality  
Chapter 7—Water Quality & Quantity


**WEEK 14, April 24th—Indoor air quality**  
**Guest speaker: Richard Corsi**


[http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/cdc/mm4950a3_BLLinChild.pdf](http://www.hud.gov/offices/lead/cdc/mm4950a3_BLLinChild.pdf)


Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Lead Fact Sheet:  

**WEEK 15, May 1st—Wrap up:**

- What does the future hold?
- Class presentations
- Final report due

Frumkin, Frank and Jackson: Chapter 11—From Urban sprawl to health for all


