



AG2108 Urban Theory, Advanced Course 7.5 credits

Urban Theory, Advanced Course

This is a translation of the Swedish, legally binding, course syllabus.

If the course is discontinued, students may request to be examined during the following two academic years

Establishment

Course syllabus for AG2108 valid from Autumn 2007

Grading scale

A, B, C, D, E, FX, F

Education cycle

Second cycle

Main field of study

Specific prerequisites

3 years of university studies within the field of Planning, Architecture, Engineering or Social Science.

Language of instruction

The language of instruction is specified in the course offering information in the course catalogue.

Intended learning outcomes

In order to pass the course, the student shall:

- Analyse and reflect upon the interplay of economic, social, political and cultural forces shaping the city and its planning in different geographical contexts
- Compare and analyse different theories of contemporary urban development
- Apply a set of theories in a specific urban area and analyse the implications in terms of preconditions for planning and what direction planning ought to take
- For a specific urban area, develop an own future oriented perspective of urban development and its implications for planning, through referring to previous theories and motivating in what ways this perspective is more accurate

Course contents

The course, that will have a worldwide outlook, deals with urban theory in the sense of different ways of understanding cities the forces shaping cities, the physical patterns in the urban landscape and the consequences on life and planning. There are different theories of contemporary urban development, e.g. cities being understood as generators of economic growth, as spaces of mobility, as places for cultural and public life, as spaces of environmental degradation and/or green living, as places for reproduction and everyday life, as spaces where ethnic, socio-economic and/or gender divisions manifest themselves, as spaces driven by desire or fear, etc. These varying perspectives on urban development and views on what the problems are, give rise to different implications and tasks for planning.

Disposition

Cultural traditions and economic and political forces shape cities, which in turn have social implications. Planning is embedded in this and could be looked upon as enabling what is needed for a smooth functioning of the system. Among the pioneers in planning for the industrial city were Ebenezer Howard, Patric Geddes, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and Lewis Mumford. These planners and the societies they were working in are used as a formative background for the whole modernist tradition in planning, which the students are assumed to have knowledge about from previous studies.

From the 1970s on the industrial society with its welfare institutions and modernistic approach to planning and architecture was criticised for a series of mainly economic reasons. One was that the Fordistic way of production was transformed into a more flexible way of accumulation of capital including a more global competition among enterprises, another that knowledge base production took over from mechanistic industrial production. There was also a more civic society oriented criticism of the modernistic way of living.

All this is mirrored in the literature from the last decades on town planning and design, where new ways of looking at cities adapted to a post-industrial era are presented. Among the well-known analysts are Henry Lefebvre, Jane Jacobs, Rem Koolhaas, David Harvey, Leonie Sandercock, Saskia Sassen and Manuell Castells.

The main part of the course is appropriated to that the latter kind of literature. Lectures will be given about the societal context of planning at different periods and about the city concept. Most of the time though is devoted to reading, ending up in four literature seminars. At each seminar two or more texts of the kinds mentioned shall be critically examined and discussed.

The students are to be prepared by writing and handing in texts where the literature is commented and comparisons made between the different texts. In a final task, the theoretical perspectives studied in the course are to be related to a specific urban area and developed in relation to future actions in planning and design.

Course literature

Books and chapters to be read will be presented before the course starts

Examination

- ÖVN1 - Literature seminars, 6.0 credits, grading scale: A, B, C, D, E, FX, F
- ÖVN2 - Project Illustration, 1.5 credits, grading scale: A, B, C, D, E, FX, F

Based on recommendation from KTH's coordinator for disabilities, the examiner will decide how to adapt an examination for students with documented disability.

The examiner may apply another examination format when re-examining individual students.

Other requirements for final grade

Four approved papers handed in before the literature seminars and participation in the seminars (PRO1; 6 cr)

One exercise in practical application of theory (PRO2; 1,5 cr)

Ethical approach

- All members of a group are responsible for the group's work.
- In any assessment, every student shall honestly disclose any help received and sources used.
- In an oral assessment, every student shall be able to present and answer questions about the entire assignment and solution.