Plan 740
Advanced Research Seminar
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Saunders Hall 116, Wednesday 1:30-4:15
Spring 2011 CRN 89591

The *ADVANCED RESEARCH SEMINAR* is intended for all Ph.D. students and advanced MURP/MA students who wish to make progress on their dissertations or MURP/MA Plan A/B. It consists of two major activities. One is lectures by the instructor that draw from contemporary planning issues and themes to illustrate key aspects of thinking through, organizing, doing research and writing dissertations and theses. The second is student-led seminars on each student’s research topic.

**LECTURES:** For Spring 2011 the theme will be *THE FUTURE CITY*, which will consider how we think about, image, present arguments for and conduct research on connecting the past and present with concerns and hopes for the future of an urban world. This will be linked with advanced research in the following ways:

- **Critical thinking:** how to carry out research in an open manner that considers alternative ways of knowing
- **Research methods:** the quantitative-qualitative divide and beyond to thick description, story telling, art, visual media, film.
- **Normative position:** what is at stake in your research?
  - Utopian visions as critiques of the present
  - Contemporary concepts: livable cities, sustainable cities, creative cities, socially just cities, the “right to the city”, the Cosmopolis ideal.
- **Locating yourself among theories and explanations of the world**
  - Theory as paradigm: alternative explanations of the same phenomena
  - The epistemology of research: the sociology of knowledge and how we know what we know
  - The image as a filter in knowing the world.
  - Theory as paradigm: alternative explanations of the same phenomena; theory as social power.
- **Knowledge to action**
  - Policy agenda, policy tools
  - Implementation: Who and what are the incentives?
- **How to conclude:** synthesis, contribution to the field, future directions.

**SEMINARS:** In addition to lectures, students will take turns presenting and discussing their progress in research and writing. The class will engage in mutual help in assisting each other in thinking through ideas and getting through bottlenecks at various stages of research and writing. A small class atmosphere with mutual support will help build the camaraderie that is important in sustaining dissertation and thesis writing momentum.

**COURSE ASSESSMENT** consists of two components: (1) short papers (10 pages maximum) based on each person’s seminar presentations [40%], and (2) a final paper tailored to the needs of each student (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), preparation for comprehensive exam, dissertation proposal, dissertation/Plan A/B chapter) [60%].

**EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES:** (1) to make significant progress in dissertation proposal, dissertation/Plan A/B research, (2) to enhance the ability to critically assess research in planning and related disciplines, (3) to be able to contribute knowledge to chosen areas of research, (4) to deepen knowledge about the field of urban planning through discussions on the course theme and (5) to enhance the ability to link knowledge to action by working through debates on issues, concepts and explanations of problems.