Urban Greening Lab

Washington, DC

ANTH-UA 9495 / ENVST-UA 9495 / SCA-UA 9650

Instruction Mode: Blended/Remote/In-person

Fall 2021

If you are enrolled in this course 100% remotely and are not a Go Local/Study Away student for NYU Washington, DC, please make sure that you have completed the online academic orientation via Brightspace so that you are aware of site-specific support structure, policies and procedures. Please contact dc.academics@nyu.edu if you have trouble accessing the Brightspace site.

Syllabus last updated on August 12, 2021

Lecturer Contact Information

- Victoria Kiechel, Architect and LEED AP; Faculty, Global Environmental Politics Program, School of International Service, American University
- Email: vk37@nyu.edu
- Office hours: by Zoom by appointment on Fridays and at other times upon request
- Please call me Vicky

Units earned
4 credits

Course Details

- Class meets on Tuesdays, 9:15 am to 12:15 pm.
- All times are Eastern (ET) - US Time Zone (for calculating time zone conversions, please note that Eastern-US Daylight Savings Time ends on November 7, 2021).
- Location: Room 307, NYU DC.
- Remote Participants: Please access the Zoom link via NYU Brightspace.
- COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Washington, DC community, we are closely following CDC and Washington, DC-specific guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. Your health and well-being are our top priorities.
  - If you are attending in person, you will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol. Please note that you are expected to attend every class meeting in-person; however, this may change during the drop/add period if in-person student registration increases significantly or at any point during the semester if local COVID-19 regulations require additional physical distancing.
Course Description
This course explores the concept of urban “greening” by seeking to understand how built form, environment, culture, and politics intersect in cities, and how to activate this understanding to achieve the social and ecological change we need. The primary outcome of our learning will be collaboratively-developed proposals for green projects for local implementation in four NYU-present cities: Washington, DC, New York City, Shanghai, and/or Abu Dhabi. Our emphasis is on practice and activism, and secondarily, theory as it serves practice and activism.

Several questions are at the heart of our work. As we look at comparative global case studies, we will ask, “What does it mean to green a city? How can greening be defined and applied broadly as a universal practice, and not just as an activity for the privileged few?” In the course of our local field work, we will ask, “What does it mean to green our NYU cities? How can we respond effectively to the changing ecology, culture, and politics of these places and this time, and address the issues of the socio-political, gendered, and racialized past, in order to achieve a more equitable future?”

Course Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Know and practice principles and theories of urban greening.
- Create and implement research, policy, and actions for improving urban ecological and social health, broadly conceived.
- Apply skills learned to the problems of cities and their inhabitants (of all species).

Assessment Components
You are expected to attend class in person or remote synchronously. Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments. Your grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments/Activities</th>
<th>% of Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation and in-class exercises</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short assignments (as listed in the Course Schedule)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual case study creation and presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greening project final “deliverable”</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final presentation to guest reviewers</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Vicky’s Teaching and Learning Philosophy
- Every class is a conversation and every colleague a valuable contributor.
- Take time truly to observe and understand before rushing to solutions.
- Practice systems thinking (Meadows) to be able to recognize and address the root causes of our problems.
- Question everything.
- Understand that changing the world starts with audacious ideas.
- Analysis is not enough – we must act. Learning should result in informed action.

Required Text(s)
**Electronic Resources** (available via our Brightspace site or NYU Library Course Reserves):
- All resources will be available as PDFs or as hyperlinks. **You will not need to**
purchase any books.

- Some key assigned readings will be from the following PDF housed on our Brightspace site and **abbreviated as City Reader** in the Course Schedule:

**Supplemental Text(s) (not required to purchase)**


**Course Schedule**

Our class themes are cross-cutting ones which bridge natural and built environment topics such as water, food, energy, waste, land, mobility, politics, power, equity, and more – topics which we will interrelate throughout our semester together. **Please note that assigned readings may change in order to be relevant to the interests and NYU locations of participants (New York, DC, Shanghai, Abu Dhabi, or other).**

**Session 1 – 7 September 2021.**

**A Grounding for Greening: The Influence of Urban Form and Other Forces**

Five brief readings with diverse takes on the city – four short classics and a troubling two-page fact sheet from the August 2021 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change -- will give us a common vocabulary for our first week’s discussion on how urban form, policy, behavior, and ecology are “co-produced” – in other words, how each force shapes the others.

- David Harvey, “The Right to the City” (2008), *City Reader*, pages 270-278.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Sixth Assessment Report, August 9, 2021, two-page Regional fact sheet – Urban Areas.

**Session 2 – 14 September 2021.**

**Policy, Politics, and Responses to Sea Level Rise and Urban Flooding**

● Ann Scott Tyson (2021), “To curb urban flooding, China is building ‘sponge cities.’ Do they work?” Christian Science Monitor, July 29, 2021. [Note that this reading ties in with next week’s theme of green infrastructure.]

● **Short (2-page) assignment:** Using NOAA or other resources, find the flood maps for either your NYU home campus or your hometown. Answer three questions: (1) where are the areas of greatest vulnerability to flooding? (2) in terms of income, race, age, and other relevant demographic factors, who lives in these areas? (3) does your city have a policy or plan to address flooding? If yes, please summarize.

**Session 3 – 21 September 2021. Urban Heat Islands and the Need for Green Infrastructure.**
Although it presents a realistically troubling scenario, please note that our first reading for heat week is science fiction.

- Rachel Morello Frosch et. al. (2009). *The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans & How to Close the Gap*, University of Southern California.

● **Short (2-page) assignment:** based on the list of green infrastructural practices in CNT, above, within a kilometer radius of your NYU campus, identify (1) an example of green infrastructure and why it is particularly beneficial to the specific needs of your urban place, and (2) another nearby site that you believe would most benefit from the incorporation of this form of green infrastructure, and describe the future outcome. Come to class prepared to explain your thinking.

**Session 4 – 28 September 2021. Waste Places and Environmental Justice.**


● **Short (2-page) assignment:** Go to the global Environmental Justice Atlas [here](#) or the US EPA’s EJScreen Tool [here](#) and explore their mapping capabilities. By filtering by risk variable or hazard, choose and document an example of an environmental injustice close to where you now live or where you grew up and come to class prepared to describe it and its future impacts in the short, medium, and long terms.

**Session 5 – 5 October 2021. Critical Infrastructure, Vulnerability, Disruption, and Resilience**


12 October 2021. NO CLASS: NYU LEGISLATIVE DAY (Monday classes meet).

Session 6 – 19 October 2021. Unseen or Unintended Consequences of Development
- In-class exercise in design for urban greening and preparation for collaborative projects.

Session 7 – 26 October 2021. The Urban Commons: Green Space and Urban Agriculture
- In-class film and discussion of case study presentations.

Session 8 – 2 November 2021. Public Space, Placemaking, and DIY Urbanism
- Project for Public Spaces, “What is Placemaking,” City Reader, pages 558-562.
- Jan Gehl (2012). Excerpts from How to Study Public Life, as posted to Brightspace.
- Short (2-page) assignment: Based on the readings on tactical/DIY urbanism, and in consulting (if you wish), the guide here, create a short proposal for a temporary intervention near you, and explain why you believe it is needed.

Session 9 – 9 November 2021. Green Governance, Social Infrastructure, and Networks
• C40 Cities report (2019): "Understanding Infrastructure Interdependencies in Cities"

Session 10 – 16 November 2021.
The State of Our Cities: Washington, DC, New York City, Shanghai, and Abu Dhabi
- New York City’s Lower Manhattan Climate Resilience Study, March 2019. (Skim this.)
- Susan S. Fainstein (2018) Resilience and justice: planning for New York City, Urban Geography, 39:8, 1268-1275
- Sustainable DC 2021 progress report. (Skim this.)
- Climate Ready DC progress report.

Case Study Presentations.

Session 12 – 30 November 2021.
Case Study Presentations.

Session 13 – 7 December 2021.
Collaborative Working Session, Final Assignment.

Session 14 – 14 December 2021. Zoom presentation to guest reviewers.
FINAL COLLABORATIVE ASSIGNMENT DUE December 17.

Classroom Etiquette
To optimize the experience in a blended learning environment, please consider the following:
- Please be mindful of your microphone and video display during synchronous class meetings. Ambient noise and some visual images may disrupt class time for you and your peers.
- Please do not eat during class and minimize any other distracting noises (e.g. rustling of papers and leaving the classroom before the break, unless absolutely necessary).
- If you are not using your cell phone to follow the lesson, cell phones should be turned off or in silent mode during class time.
- Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
- If deemed necessary by the study away site (i.e. COVID related need), synchronous class sessions may be recorded and archived for other students to view. This will be announced at the beginning of class time.
- Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class.
Suggested Co-Curricular Activities
For those of you at NYU DC this semester, feel free to join my Tuesday afternoon Washington, DC urban walkabouts, in various neighborhoods, by contacting me at vk37@nyu.edu.

Your Lecturer
The goal of my practice as an architect, professor, and researcher is to activate social change to improve the well-being of all. I pursue this goal by creating programs, policies, architectural and urban form, and forums for student engagement and experiential learning.

In addition to being an academic fellow and instructor at NYU DC, I teach sustainable design and urbanism at American University’s (AU) School of International Service in Washington, DC (https://www.american.edu/sis/faculty/kiechel.cfm). The inaugural recipient of AU’s Most Innovative Green Teacher of the Year award, I created and lead the hands-on, local-scale sustainable design practicum for AU's graduate students, an alternate to writing the Master of Arts thesis.

I serve as architect to people and institutions in need of affordable sustainable design. For the Washington, DC Capitol Hill School Libraries Project, I designed the library for Maury Elementary School and I am the architect for the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund’s Washington, DC offices near 16th and K Streets, NW. Recent work includes an affordable Living Building Challenge house for a dense urban site in Washington, DC, a Biophilic home created to meet onsite all of its energy and potable water, and a measure of its food supply, needs.

In my work for the Cadmus Group, an environmental consultancy, I enable the creation of high-performing new and existing buildings, cities, and the policies that support them. As project manager, my clients have included the U.S. Green Building Council, U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR program, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Smithsonian Institution, the States of Wisconsin and Arkansas, Arlington County, Virginia, and TripAdvisor, the world’s largest travel website.

I gratefully acknowledge the people and institutions that have helped and continue to help me on my path: the universities from which I graduated (Yale College, Oxford University, and the Harvard University Graduate School of Design), the Rhodes Scholarship and the Rhodes Trust for funding and other support, three personal mentors of abiding influence (Rafael Moneo, architect; David Broder, journalist; and Eric Stanley, Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford), my dear family (parents Walter and Mary Kiechel, brothers Walter and Conrad Kiechel, and children Laura Kiechel Reston and James Kiechel Reston), my friends and neighbors, my institutional colleagues, and my beloved students. Eternal thanks and love to you all.

Academic Policies

Grade Conversion
Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

A = 94-100 or 4.0
A- = 90-93 or 3.7
B+ = 87-89 or 3.3
B = 84-86 or 3.0  
B- = 80-83 or 2.7  
C+ = 77-79 or 2.3  
C = 74-76 or 2.0  
C- = 70-73 or 1.7  
D+ = 67-69 or 1.3  
D = 65-66 or 1.0  
F = below 65 or 0

Attendance Policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers, or online through NYU Brightspace if the course is remote synchronous/blended, is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to write to dc.academics@nyu.edu to see if you can take your remote class at the Academic Center.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academics team by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, significant mental or physical discomfort, Moses Center accommodations, religious observance, or emergencies. Your professor or site staff may ask you to present a doctor's note, a Wellness Counselor's note, or permission from an NYU-DC staff member or an onsite Residence Life Administrator as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to staff. Doctor's or other notes must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academics team, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed, and may negatively affect your class participation grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being more than 15 minutes late counts as an unexcused absence. Furthermore, your professor is entitled to deduct points for frequently joining the class late.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to site staff; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

Final exams

Final exams must be taken at their designated times. Should there be a conflict between your final exams, please bring this to the attention of the Academics team. Final exams may not be taken early, and students should not plan to leave the site before the end of the finals period.
Late Submission of Work

(1) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor’s note or by approval of NYU-DC site staff), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.

(2) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (including weekends and public holidays) following the submission date receives an F.

(3) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days late (including weekends and public holidays) without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be discussed with the Washington, DC Site Director.

(4) Students who are late for a written exam have no automatic right to take extra time or to write the exam on another day.

(5) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

Academic Honesty/Plagiarism

As the University’s policy on "Academic Integrity for Students at NYU" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you MUST inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines

NYU Library Guides
Inclusivity Policies and Priorities

NYU’s Office of Global Programs and NYU’s global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

Attendance Rules on Religious Holidays

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer and NYU DC’s Academics Office in writing via email one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the instructor will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments and can use the Academics Office for support as needed. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays.

Pronouns and Name Pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, NYU Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website.

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the Personalizing Zoom Display Names website.

Moses Accommodations Statement

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through dc.academics@nyu.edu.

Bias Response

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University’s existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.
The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, you may do so in one of three ways:
- Online using the Web Form (link)
- Email: bias.response@nyu.edu
- Phone: 212-998-2277