

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

CRP F390/LAR F388

Summer 2020

MWF 11:00 am-1:30 pm

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“Who is not a *utopian* today?”

—Henri Lefebvre, *The Right to the City*

Course Description

In 1967 French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre wrote a small book, *Le Droit à La Ville*, to mark the centenary of Marx’s *Capital*. Since then, “The Right to the City” has been invoked by activists, academics, and policymakers around the world, proliferating its meanings. It has been used to describe and validate a variety of social justice movements in contemporary cities, from housing & homelessness to digital rights to the city, from access to public space to gentrification & displacement, from environmental/climate justice to transit justice, from economic justice to food security. Academics often use it to raise questions about who the city belongs to, who it is for, who controls urban development, how the benefits of urbanization are and should be distributed, and who participates in planning and decision making. The concept has even been codified in local, national, and international declarations about best practices in urban planning, development and governance, some of which have the force of law.

This graduate seminar will engage with the variety of interpretations of The Right to the City, starting with Lefebvre’s own and drawing on planning and urban studies literature to consider the different claims of The Right to the City, how they are worked out in particular contexts, applied to different issues in different cities, and what implications this suggests for planning. The goal of the course is not to come to some definitive, “correct”, or original meaning of The Right to the City, but to understand the potential utility of the concept in cities today; that is, for students to develop their own interpretations of The Right to the City, theoretically rooted in the literature, that can be useful for their work.

Course Requirements

Participation

Since this class is a seminar, your engagement and participation is crucial! Because this is a “web-based” course, “participation” means not just actively taking part in synchronous video-

chat discussions (via Zoom), but also contributing to online, asynchronous activities, such as online discussion threads (see below), and uploading a video introduction of yourself (see schedule below).

Since we will be looking at The Right to the City from multiple vantage points, it is important to share our own experiences and openly engage with others' perspectives. This will help each of us to develop an understanding of what "The Right to the City" is all about. It's also important to make sure that the virtual space of this class is a safe one in which to explore potentially controversial issues, ideas, and arguments. To keep this class a safe place for exploring multiple perspectives, respect for fellow students is mandatory, especially if you disagree. A best practice for synchronous discussion in general is the "step up/step back" approach, which encourages everyone to "step up" and contribute, but also asks those who contribute often to "step back" sometimes to allow other, quieter students to "step up".

Discussion Facilitation

As part of a group of three, you will be responsible for taking the lead in facilitating discussion on one group of readings this semester. This entails two main components, one asynchronous and one synchronous:

- 1) Preparing a "Discussion Paper" that will be posted to a discussion thread in Canvas Discussions, intended to elicit responses from fellow students and spark online discussion. The online discussion will then be a jumping off point for our synchronous video-chat discussions via Zoom.

The Discussion Paper should do several things. First, it should outline key points and issues from the individual readings and from the readings taken together as a group. Second, it should raise questions that arise from the readings: these can be interpretive questions (how a particular author interprets the Right to the City; how we should interpret the author's points, etc.), practical questions (what are the implications of a reading for the practices of planning; how might this apply in different contexts*, etc.), points of connection with other readings, points of disagreement (things you disagree with or where someone might), problems you see in the readings, etc. Remember, the goal here is to prompt responses from fellow students and spark engagement with the texts.

Discussion Papers should be posted to Canvas by 11 am on the scheduled class meeting day before our video-chat discussion (for example, if the video-chat meeting is Friday, then the Discussion Paper should be posted by 11 am on the preceding Wednesday).

The other students will then respond to the Discussion Paper online. Responses should be posted by 11 am the following day. Everyone should also return to the discussion thread and read all of the responses prior to our video-chat meeting.

*You may link your Discussion Paper to short online material, such as a case or example that raises an interesting point in relation to the readings that you wish the rest of the class to consult.

- 2) Facilitate Video-chat discussion. Your group will then facilitate our video-chat discussion for about 45 minutes. The intention is that the online discussion prompted by your Discussion Paper will be a jumping off point for our synchronous video-chat discussion, but you should feel free to experiment with different approaches to group facilitation and try out “in-class” activities/exercises to engage the class in meaningful and lively interaction (as much as we can with Zoom).

Case Study Project

As a final project for this class, we'll be developing a collection of case studies highlighting examples of the Right to the City happening here in Austin that we'll publish on the web using the Scalar platform. Each student will write a short “article” that describes and analyzes an initiative, event, group, movement, program, organization, etc. that can be understood through the concept of the Right to the City. The article should show how the case illuminates the RTTC concept and how the concept helps illuminate the case. The idea is to create a kind of online special-issue journal or magazine that helps articulate and explain different interpretations of the RTTC and how the concept might be useful in understanding urban development in Austin today. You'll have to do some research into your case, gather appropriate images and links, and write about 1,000 words. (The model for this project is one that Professor Sletto uses in his International Planning class, <https://sites.utexas.edu/internationalplanning/>.)

Final Reflection/Position Paper

The other “final” product for the course will be a short (about 1,500 words) paper in which you outline your own understanding/interpretation of Lefebvre and the Right to the City and what is useful (or not) about the concept for your own work. The goal here is for you, after having read and thought about the concept for five weeks, to develop your own “position” on the Right to the City, situated in the literature; that is, for you to exit the course with a statement that sums up your personal take on it.

A Note About Summer 2020 Class

Although summer classes are only five weeks long, they are supposed to approximate the same amount of work and learning as a full, 15-week semester and, therefore, carry the same number of credits. This means that the class will feel compressed and accelerated, like a five-week sprint, rather than the usual 15-week run. At the graduate level, this will be probably be felt most acutely in the available time for reading between meetings. Additionally, this class is being run as a “web-based” course, which means that our “class meetings” will be happening over video chat (Zoom), which can be more cumbersome and tiring than meeting in person. Given these circumstances, I have decided to organize the class around an every-other-day schedule, where we “meet” via video chat on one day (say, on a Wednesday), engage in asynchronous activity the next scheduled class day (say, a Friday), and then “meet” again synchronously the following scheduled class day (say, a Monday). This will give us a little more

time to complete the readings between “meetings” and break up the week, so that we aren’t on Zoom all the time.

Policies

Academic Integrity

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Student Honor Code.

University of Texas Student Honor Code

"As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community."

Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. It constitutes a serious breach of academic integrity and a violation of the UT Student Honor Code. Penalties for violating the Honor Code may include failure of this course and University disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to be aware of university policies on academic integrity (http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php).

Students with Disabilities or Accommodation Needs

One of the goals of this course is to create an environment which encourages and allows all students to participate in and benefit from course activities. Students with disabilities will be reasonably accommodated in this regard, in accordance with university policy. If you have a disability or special need, contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (<http://ddce.utexas.edu/disability/>) and notify me as soon as possible to arrange accommodation.

A Note

Please communicate with me if you are having any problems or issues with the class, such as dealing with technology/online format, negative interactions with other students, or keeping up with the schedule. It is better to talk through problems early than to ignore them or try to “fix” something after the fact. I am open to modifying elements of the course that aren’t working, if there is consensus on this.

Schedule

- Fri 6/5** **Zoom meeting.** Course introduction.
- Before class:** Record and post a video introduction of yourself in Canvas Discussions, telling us about your background, current academic/professional interests and goals, and how you think this class fits in to those.
- Mon 6/8** By 11 am post your response to reading Lefebvre's The Right to the City.
- Wed 6/10** **Zoom meeting: Lefebvre, interpretations, and context.**
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- Fri 6/12** **Online Canvas Discussion: Rights and The Right to the City**
Facilitators' Discussion Paper due by 11 am.
Responses due by 11 am on Sat 6/13.
- Mon 6/15** **Zoom meeting: Rights and The Right to the City**
- Matt Russell, from the Faculty Innovation Center, joins us to talk about Scalar, the platform we'll be using for our case study project.
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- Wed 6/17** **Online Canvas Discussion: The Institutionalization of RTTC**
Facilitators' Discussion Paper due by 11 am.
Responses due by 11 am on Thurs 6/18.
- Fri 6/19** **Zoom meeting: The Institutionalization of RTTC**
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- Mon 6/22** **Online Canvas Discussion: Applications of RTTC I**
Facilitators' Discussion Paper due by 11 am.
Responses due by 11 am on Tues 6/23.
- Wed 6/24** **Zoom meeting: Applications of RTTC I**
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- Fri 6/26** **Online Canvas Discussion: Applications of RTTC II**
Facilitators' Discussion Paper due by 11 am.
Responses due by 11 am on Sat 6/27.
- Mon 6/29** **Zoom meeting. Applications of RTTC II**
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- Wed 7/1** **Online Canvas Discussion: RTTC and Planning**

Facilitators' Discussion Paper due by 11 am.
Responses due by 11 am on Thurs 7/2.

Fri 7/3 Zoom meeting. RTTC and Planning

Mon 7/6 Drafts of Case Studies Due

Wed 7/8 Final Zoom meeting: Reflections on Lefebvre and RTTC

Fri 7/10 Case Studies Due, Final Reflection/Position Paper Due

Readings

Lefebvre, interpretations, and context

Lefebvre, Henri. 1996. [1968] The Right to the City. In *Writings on Cities*. Blackwell. 63-181.

Schmid, Christian. 2012. Henri Lefebvre, the right to the city, and the new metropolitan mainstream. In *Cities for People Not Profit*. Edited by Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer. Routledge. 42-62.

Marcuse, Peter. 2009. From critical urban theory to the right to the city. *City* 13:2-3. 185-197.

Mayer, Margit. 2009. The 'Right to the City' in the context of shifting mottos of urban social movements. *City* 13:2-3. 362-374.

Purcell, Mark. 2014. Possible Worlds: Henri Lefebvre and the Right to the City. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36:1. 141-154.

Marcuse, Peter. 2014. Reading the Right to the City. *City* 18:1. 4-9.

Rights

Attoh, Kafui. 2019. Introduction, Chapter 2, and Conclusion from *Rights in Transit: Public Transportation and the Right to the City in California's East Bay*. University of Georgia Press.

Villanueva, Joaquin. 2017. Rights. In *Urban Theory: New Critical Perspectives*. Edited by Mark Jayne and Kevin Ward. Routledge. 254-263.

Karyotis, Theodoros. 2019. Moving Beyond the Right to the City: Urban Commoning in Greece. In *Social Ecology and the Right to the City*. Edited by Federico Venturini, Emet Değirmenci, and Inés Morales. Black Rose Books. 71-85.

Institutionalization

Fricaudet, Magali. 2019. Is the Right to the City a Right or a Revolution? In *Social Ecology and the Right to the City*. Edited by Federico Venturini, Emet Değirmenci, and Inés Morales. Black Rose Books. 58-70.

Zárata, Lorena. 2011. Mexico City Charter: The Right to Build the City We Dream Of. In *Cities for All: Proposals and Experiences towards the Right to the City*. Edited by Ana Sugranyes and Charlotte Mathivet. Habitat International Coalition. 263-270.

- Homes for All. 2014. *Rise of the Renter Nation*. The Right to the City Alliance.
http://homesforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/RISE-OF-THE-RENTER-NATION_FULL-REPORT_web.pdf
- United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. 2017. *Habitat III Policy Papers: Policy Paper 1 The Right to the City and Cities for All*. United Nations.
www.habitat3.org
- Habitat International Coalition. 2005. *World Charter for the Right to the City*. <http://hic-gs.org/document.php?pid=2422>
- Global Campaign on Urban Governance. 2005. *Urban Policies and the Right to the City*. UN-HABITAT (United Nations Human Settlements Programme).
<http://www.unhabitat.org/governance>
- Brown, Alison and Kristiansen, Annali. 2009. *Urban policies and the right to the city: rights, responsibilities and citizenship*. Management of Social Transformations Programme, UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000178090>
- Global Platform for the Right to the City. <https://www.right2city.org/>
- Adler, David. 2015. Do We Have a Right to the City? *Jacobin*. Oct 6, 2015.
<https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/10/mexico-city-df-right-to-the-city-harvey-gentrification-real-estate-corruption/>
- Freitas, Clarissa F. Sampaio. 2019. Insurgent planning? *City* 23:3. 285-305.

Applications I

- Vasudevan, Alexander. 2015. The autonomous city: Towards a critical geography of occupation. *Progress in Human Geography* 39:3. 316–337.
- Varsanyi, Monica W. 2017. Immigration Policing Through the Backdoor: City Ordinances, The "Right to the City," and the Exclusion of Undocumented Day Laborers. UC San Diego: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies. Retrieved from
<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/88g7g2r6>
- Rolnik, Raquel. 2014. Afterward. Place, inhabitation and citizenship: the right to housing and the right to the city in the contemporary urban world. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 14:3. 293-300.
- Campbell, Linda, Newman, Andrew, Safransky, Sara and Stallmann, Tim. Eds. 2020. *A People's Atlas of Detroit*. Wayne State University Press.

- Iveson, Kurt. 2013. Cities within the City: Do-It-Yourself Urbanism and the Right to the City. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37.3. 941–56.
- Merker, Blaine. 2010. Taking place: Rebar's absurd tactics in generous urbanism In *Insurgent public space : Guerrilla urbanism and the remaking of contemporary cities*. Edited by Jeffrey Hou. Routledge. 45-58.
- Falú, Ana. 2014. Inclusion and right to the city. Exercising women's citizen rights: The women's agenda for Rosario, Argentina. *City, Social Inclusion and Education*. International Association of Educating Cities. 59-67. <https://www.edcities.org/pt/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2014/11/Monograph-City-Social-Inclusion-and-Education.pdf>
- Nelischer, Kate. Nd. Women's Right to the City. *The Site Magazine*.
<https://www.thesitemagazine.com/read/womens-right-to-the-city>

Application II

- Anastasiu, Irina. 2019. Unpacking the Smart City Through the Lens of the Right to the City: A Taxonomy as a Way Forward in Participatory City-Making. In *The Hackable City*. Edited by Michel de Lange and Martijn de Waal. Springer. 239-260.
- Shaw, Joe and Graham, Mark. 2017. An Informational Right to the City? Code, Content, Control, and the Urbanization of Information *Antipode* 49:4. 907–927.
- Purcell, Mark and Tyman, Shannon K. 2015. Cultivating food as a right to the city. *Local Environment* 20: 10. 1132–1147.
- Becker, Sören, Angel, James, and Naumann, Matthias. 2019. Energy democracy as the right to the city: Urban energy struggles in Berlin and London. *Environment and Planning A*. doi:10.1177/0308518X19881164.
- Cohen, Daniel Aldana. 2018. *Climate Justice And The Right To The City*. Penn: Current Research On Sustainable Urban Development.
<https://pennur.upenn.edu/uploads/media/Cohen.pdf>
- Johnson, Kristen. 2013. Hacking: The Informal Transportation System in Baltimore. *Berkeley Planning Journal*.
<https://berkeleyplanningjournal.com/urbanfringe/2013/03/hacking-the-informal-transportation-system-in-baltimore>

Fernandez, Lynne, and MacKinnon, Shauna. 2019. The right to the city as a foundation for social justice: A view from the streets of Winnipeg. *The Monitor*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/right-city-foundation-social-justice>

Lin, Jan. 2019. Protesting Displacement and the Right to the City: Anti-Gentrification Activism in Northeast Los Angeles. *Boom California*.
<https://boomcalifornia.com/2019/01/16/protesting-displacement-and-the-right-to-the-city/>

Marcuse, Peter. 2014. Reading the right to the city. Part two: Organisational Realities. *City* 18:2. 101-103.

Planning

McCann, Eugene J. 2002. Space, citizenship, and the right to the city: A brief overview. *GeoJournal* 58: 2/3. Social Transformation, Citizenship, and the Right to the City. 77-79.

Miraftab, Faranak. 2012. Planning and Citizenship. In *Oxford Handbook of Urban Planning*. Edited by Rachel Weber and Randall Crane. Oxford University Press. 1180-1204.

Zieleniec, Andrzej. 2018. Lefebvre's Politics of Space: Planning the Urban as Oeuvre *Urban Planning* 3: 3. 5–15.

Beebeejaun, Yasminah. 2017. Gender, urban space, and the right to everyday life. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 39:3. 323-334.

Women's Design Service. <http://www.wds.org.uk/>

Spatial Agency. Women's Design Service.
<https://www.spatialagency.net/database/why/political/womens.design.service>

Reflections

Merrifield, Andy. 2011. The right to the city and beyond. *City* 15:3-4. 473-481.

Lefebvre, Henri. 2014 [1989]. Dissolving city, planetary metamorphosis. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 32. 203 – 205.

Harvey, David. 2012. Preface: Henri Lefebvre's Vision. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso. ix-xvii.