The city sustains philosophy, and philosophy sustains the city. In this course, we will explore the interrelationship between philosophy and the city by focusing on the questions: how would the ideal city relate to the natural environment? How best can human beings arrange to live together in sustainable relationships with one another and with the natural environment? How can/does philosophy contribute to such understandings by generating critical ideals of the city and city life?

Although Western philosophers have, over time, focused on some aspects of urban life more than others, a study of the history of Western philosophy in relation to the city provides a way of integrating economic, political, social and environmental issues. The sustainability of cities depends on such an integrated outlook, and therefore philosophy is relevant to cities now more than ever.

In the past I have organized the course around several issues that have been addressed historically by philosophers, moving from early philosophical questions to those that tend to dominate current philosophical discussions: What is a city? What is citizenship? How do we grapple with community and diversity? Whose city? (social justice issues) What is the relationship between the natural and built environments? In past versions of the course, it was only in the last unit of the course that I raised issues of sustainability, and I had not used that vocabulary. The revised course infuses the concepts of sustainability throughout the entire course by making an explicit connection between the “good life” and a sustainable life--a “good” city is one that sustains citizens, social justice, gender equality, and environmentally sustainable practices. I found that this shift in language better connects to students’ contemporary concerns and allows us to develop a sophisticated conversation about philosophy and the city.

Sustainability is the key concept that drives the course. I have integrated case studies and assignments in each section of the course (continuing to maintain the basic questions that organize each unit) in ways that encourage philosophical reflection on sustainability. Earlier versions of the course included two philosophical walking tours of the city—one in the hill section and one downtown. In both of those tours I’ll now integrate questions and case studies that concern sustainability explicitly. Students were asked to keep sustainable city indices in mind when making observations during our walking tours and to reflect on the philosophical foundations of those sustainability indicators. One inventory of attributes of sustainable cities that we used is available through the University of Louisville’s Center for Sustainable Neighborhoods. Their list can be found at http://www.louisville.edu/org/sun/environment/workshop.html. We also read case studies on the impacts of “nearby nature” in urban environments (the work of Kuo and Sullivan) as a factor to consider and observe during walking tours of the Hill neighborhood. Those resources are available at http://www.lpb.org/programs/forest/chicago.html
and http://www.herl.uiuc.edu/. We also compare and contrast urban policies that shape decisions in how neighborhoods are sustained or imperiled, comparing the fates of the local upper and lower hill neighborhoods adjacent to the University of Scranton campus. In the most recent version of the course we also engaged in tours of Nay Aug Park and the Roaring Brook gorge followed by a trip to the site of the Iron Furnaces, allowing us to think both about the importance of preserving nature in cities and ways in which natural resources give rise to cities.

So that students make not only local but global connections, we also use a case study, “Women and Urban Crises: Gender Sensitive Strategies for Managing Critical Urban Environments in the South and in Eastern Europe,” A UNESCO-Most project that I found on the UNESCO website for us to read as well as a UNESCO web-based curricular unit on sustainable citizenship http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/theme_b/uncofrm_b.htm. In future courses we will engage in other walking tours and field trips, possibly one that compares and contrasts city life and efforts to rehabilitate Nay Aug Park and policies with a nearby community that has sufficient wealth and resources to contain sprawl and preserve nature. We may also incorporate a visit to Old Forge/Taylor and the Alliance Landfill as well as do a coal mine tour.

The social justice and built environment units are connected by a philosophical analysis of environmental racism, using the resources of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta, the National Black Environmental Justice Network, and the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Xavier University New Orleans. I include links to the resources on my course website on blackboard; the sites are helpful because they include not only critical assessments of environmental injustices but also offer empowering examples of citizens organizing to improve their environment and strengthen their communities. Such cases are important if we want to achieve our goals in sustainability education initiatives of moving beyond mere student awareness to empowering students to think more about their own roles as citizens. Indeed, it is for this very reason that most sustainability resources emphasize the importance of social sustainability initiatives and sustainable citizenship, and why I think that sustainability education needs to include courses such as Philosophy and the City that focus explicitly on these issues.

I am in the process of editing a book to be used for my course and others like it, and am now going to integrate web links on sustainability into the text, and am rewriting the book’s introduction to make intentional and explicit links between philosophy, the city, and issues of sustainability.
Philosophy and the City (PHIL 314)

Instructor: Dr. Sharon Meagher,
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Course information:
The city sustains philosophy, and philosophy sustains the city. In this course, we will explore the interrelationship between philosophy and the city by focusing on the questions: how would the ideal city relate to the natural environment? How best can human beings arrange to live together in sustainable relationships with one another and with the natural environment? How can/does philosophy contribute to such understandings by generating critical ideals of the city and city life and through critical reflection on cities?

Although Western philosophers have, over time, focused on some aspects of urban life more than others, a study of the history of Western philosophy in relation to the city provides a way of integrating economic, political, social and environmental issues. The sustainability of cities depends on such an integrated outlook, and therefore philosophy is relevant to cities now more than ever.

This course fulfills GE philosophy, GE Diversity and GE Writing Intensive requirements. Students enrolled in the Women’s Studies Concentration may petition to count this course towards fulfillment of a course for the concentration if they choose women’s studies topics for their major graded assignments.

Objectives:
1. Students will understand and evaluate philosophical debates relevant to urban theory and the sustainability of cities
2. Students will recognize and articulate various philosophical and historical ideals of the city, and understand how those ideals function in political theory and urban political practice
3. Students will reflect on the complexity of relations between place and identity formation, including issues of class, race and gender as well as issues of environmental justice
4. Students will appreciate a diversity of experiences and perspectives on the city, with a particular emphasis placed on issues concerning the sustainability of cities and of citizenship
5. Students will improve their writing abilities through writing, critique, and re-writing
6. Students will use course materials to reflect on their own lives in the city, whether as students, residents, workers or some combination thereof, and think about how they can become better citizens

Texts: There are no books to purchase; we will be using a version of a book that I am editing that will be provided as a photocopied reader. Other readings are available on-line via links available on the course’s blackboard site. Unless otherwise noted, readings are required.
**Blackboard course website:** This course has a website using the courseware Blackboard. The site features class news, syllabus updates, some class handouts, a discussion section, and some short assignments on-line. The site can be accessed by any computer with a web browser. See instructions on separate sheet.

**Grades and Requirements:**

**a) class participation—10%**

Class participation includes attendance and an indication that one has read and thought about the assigned texts. Asking good questions, as well as answering questions and making comments are all valuable class contributions. Taking careful reading and class notes is also a good measure. We’ll begin most classes with a short introductory lecture and class discussion to review the readings. The second half of most classes will be structured as “participatory workshops” in which we’ll apply and analyze what we’ve read by looking at specific urban issues. There will be opportunities to improve your participation grade by participating in these workshops and in on-line discussions via blackboard; conversely, students who have unexcused absences and/or who are unprepared to participate in class writing and discussion exercises will lose class participation grade points. *At the end of the semester, students may submit a self-evaluation of their class participation and/or a portfolio of their reading notes and class writings. These will be taken into account when calculating this grade.*

**Attendance policy:** students are responsible for all material covered in class, whether in attendance or not. I will not assist a student with an unexcused absence in making up class material. An unexcused absence is any absence other than documented illness or death in the immediate family. Students with prolonged or frequent absences because of illness or other difficulty should get in contact with me as soon as possible. Given the short summer term, students with long-term illnesses usually will have to withdraw from the class. Because of the intensity of the coursework, *students with more than 1 absence will lose 30 points off their class participation grade for each additional absence.* Students who arrive late or leave class early will also lose points from their class participation grade. *It will be difficult, if not impossible, to pass this course without regular attendance, participation, and reading.*

**b) Reading quizzes—15%:** Students will take a short quiz at the beginning of each class. Most quizzes will be written in open-ended question format where students will be expected to write a 1-2 paragraph answer to the question asked. Quiz questions may cover any required reading or case study assigned for that day. Students will be allowed to use their notes but not the readings themselves. This assignment provides students with the opportunity to practice writing about authors prior to submitting formal paper assignments. But it also gives us discussion points for class. The lowest two grades will be dropped; the balance averaged.

**c) Field exercise or case presentation—10%:** Students will be expected to lead a discussion on one of the case studies or lead a reflection session after one of our field studies that will assist us in our efforts to think about how to apply philosophical views on the city to one or more issues of sustainable cities. Students will be expected to bring in at least two quality external research sources when developing their presentation. External research sources might include secondary literature (commentary) on assigned readings, additional case study materials, or additional reading by authors assigned so that one can put the case study or field trip in a larger context. The aim of the project is to bring philosophy to bear on some particular aspect of city life that interests you. *Students must submit a written outline of their discussion*
points as well as a bibliography and/or copies of their outside resources. Sign-ups for topics will be distributed, although field exercise due dates may be changed due to bad weather.

d) Position papers--2 essays, (each approximately 3 pages or 750 words), 15% each. Philosophy develops normative ideals (i.e., theorizes about what should be the case) and also critically analyzes arguments and assumptions. In this course, you are being asked to take on one of these two philosophical stances primarily (although they are both linked): philosopher as normative theorist or philosopher as critic. You may choose from two topics, “The Good City” OR “Critical Thinking about the City.” You will then write three essays on the topic, each of which will focus on that topic from the perspective of the unit we just studied. The essays must engage in critical dialogue with the assigned readings and course work. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date assigned. No late papers accepted. Students will have the option to do a paper after each course unit except for the last unit on environmental issues, as that topic must be addressed in the final paper for the course. The best two paper grades will count. Students are encouraged, but not required, to submit drafts to one another for critique and then re-write.

d) Critique of classmate’s final paper--5% Students are expected to provide one classmate a critique of their final paper draft; only those students who come prepared with a draft of their own are eligible to engage in the critique process

f) Final comprehensive paper—30% Students have two options for the final paper; either they may develop their own thesis statement and defend it or they may use the questions listed under option 2 to guide them in developing a thesis. Regardless of the option elected, all papers must discuss at least 5 of the philosophers whom we have read and must discuss issues raised in the built environment unit and at least one other unit in some detail. Be sure to define and/or clarify any key ideas or concepts that you discuss. Students should submit their rough draft, classmate’s critique and final paper to obtain full credit. Late papers will be accepted, but will be penalized 5 points for each day or partial day late.

Option 1: Develop your own thesis and defend it in a 7-10 page paper. Your thesis must in some way tie built environment issues to other philosophical concerns about the city.

Option 2: Students will write a paper that addresses one of the following questions, both of which depend on a reading of a list of attributes of sustainable cities available at http://www.louisville.edu/org/sun/environment/workshop.html Alternatively, review the elements of sustainable cities and towns: http://www.iscvt.org/Faqscele.htm. The point is to use these lists to help you think about the wide range of different aspects of sustainable cities.

Question 1: Reflect philosophically on the elements of a sustainable city. Which philosophers whom we’ve studied would endorse which criteria and why? Who would be critical and why? Based on your study of philosophy and the city, would you add any criteria? How would you prioritize them. In your essay, develop a philosophically informed and defended vision of a sustainable city that discusses what you take to be the three most important elements of a sustainable city.

OR

Question 2: Reflect philosophically on this list. Which philosophers whom we’ve studied would endorse which criteria and why? Who would be critical and why? Use that list and your philosophical discussion of it to engage in a philosophical critique of Scranton (with particular focus on the Hill neighborhood) or on the city or urban neighborhood with which
you are most familiar. In short, develop a philosophically informed critique of a city or city neighborhood that you know, with suggestions on how citizens might act to make it a more sustainable city.

**Course Plan**

**Readings are due on the day listed.**

Below you will find a list of assignments. This schedule is subject to change, depending on class pace. *Students are responsible for noting all changes announced in class whether in attendance or not.* If you lose your syllabus, be sure to obtain a new one—you can download the syllabus from the course’s site on blackboard!

**Purpose and structure of the course**

**July 5** read and review syllabus and handouts; introductions; what is a city? definitions of sustainability

**What is a City?**

*(the nature, character, and function of cities; sustainable cities)*

**July 6** reading: Conlon; recommended: Dewey. Also required: explore course website on blackboard and read definitions of sustainability.

Viewing of video, *The Trial of Socrates*

**July 7** Plato; Augustine

**July 11** Machiavelli; St. Thomas More. Case: Engels and lower/upper hill.

**July 12** Weber; Mumford. Case: Ginsberg.

**Citizenship**

**July 13** Pericles; Aristotle. Case Kemmis.

**July 14** Hobbes; Rousseau

*Position Papers: What is a City? Due at class time*

**July 18** Sustainable citizenship—readings on-line

**Whose City? Urban Identity, Diversity and Social Justice Issues**

**June 19** Simmel; Jefferson. Case: Whose City forum (on-line)

**July 20** hooks; West; case: Feder

*Position Papers: on citizenship-- Due at class time*

**July 21** Addams; Young; on-line reading: “Women and Urban Crises”

**July 25** environmental justice—readings to be posted on bboard
Natural and Built Environments

July 26 Norberg-Schulz; Case: Mugerauer; recommended: Heidegger.

July 27 Foucault; Case: “nearby nature” (on-line); recommended: Lefebvre

Position Papers: on whose city?-- Due at class time

July 28 Bickford

Aug 1 Review and final paper writing workshop; rough drafts of final papers are due.

Aug 2-3: FINALS; no class; no final exam—work on final paper.

Final papers due no later than 3 p.m. on August 4th. Late papers will be penalized 7 points for each day or partial day late except in cases of documented excused absences. Optional class participation self-evaluation and/or portfolios due at the same time.