

“Ecological democracy is government by the people emphasizing direct, hands-on involvement. Actions are guided by understanding natural processes and social relationships within our locality and the larger environmental context. This causes us to creatively reassess individual needs, happiness, and long-term community goods in the places we inhabit. Ecological democracy can change the form that our cities take creating a new urban ecology. In turn, the form of our cities, from the shape of regional watersheds to a bench at a post office, can help build ecological democracy.”

–Randolph Hester, *Design for Ecological Democracy*

**Instructors:**

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Image: Friendship Court, Charlottesville, VA

**Course Description**

Welcome to the [Friendship Court](#) Redevelopment Team! Planning Applications Courses (PLAC) are problem-solving courses that expose you to the type of challenges you will encounter in practice, and help you hone your skills in applied settings with real life partners. This semester we will serve as part of the team of resource allies helping to create an infrastructure for resident leadership throughout the Friendship Court redevelopment process, specifically serving as support to the Youth Leadership in Land Use program.

Ecological Democracy is a theory positing that community resilience can be built through direct contact with the social and ecological processes that impact the built world, and that communities are stronger when co-powered to drive decision-making processes themselves. These values of learning by doing, of co-design, and of mutual respect also shape the content of this course. We will work collaboratively, and often directly with our community partner, while also reading theoretical texts that connect what we are doing back to larger conceptual frameworks that inform our activities as professionals and as community members. Although the specifics of the final project(s) will emerge collaboratively through our partnership, **the overarching goal for the course is for you to develop an awareness of the roles planning and design can play in supporting communities to increase their own social and ecological resilience.** You will be expected to spend a fair amount of time

outside of class working on-site at Friendship Court with the Youth to support their projects.

Learning objectives include:

1. Understand the linkages between environmental and social challenges in the built world
2. Conduct self-directed research that informs local planning issues
3. Collaborate in community partnerships based on mutual respect
4. Co-create platforms for communities to increase their social and ecological resilience
5. Reflect critically on your role as a practitioner and community member

Learning Materials:

Readings will be drawn from a variety of sources and all materials will be made available on Collab.

### **Assessment of Learning**

Class participation (20%): A major goal of this class is to help you connect seemingly disparate concepts and apply them to your local context in a meaningful and respectful way. To that end, our class discussions will be an important time for you to demonstrate your understanding of concepts from the reading, to apply them to this local project context, and translate these lessons into relevant and useful actionable points of learning with your community partner. Your participation grade will be assessed through a series of in-class activities, contribution to out-of-class collaborations with the community partner, and your role as a constructive, but not dominating contributor in class discussions. *If you attend class on a regular basis, deeply engage in class discussions, collaborate respectfully and often with our community partner, and successfully apply content from our readings to our project context you will be successful in this course.*

Weekly Reflections/Dialogue (30%): Developing the habits that lead to reflective practice in your future professional and personal realms is an important, but rarely applied skill in school. In this course you will all contribute weekly journal-style reflections to our Collab site, which will function as a space for you to express any concerns, revelations, or challenges you face along this collaborative journey with our community partner. You will not be prompted to speak about something in particular, but instead will be empowered to use this forum as a venue to consider yourself in relationship to your own limitations/assumptions/biases, to think about how you do/could process them, to decompress after a particularly interesting or challenging exchange in the field, and to reflect on your own needs/skills to move toward mindful, empathetic practice. You will be assigned a “Critical Friend” with which you will be expected to engage weekly—read their reflection posts and ask them questions for clarity, challenge them kindly when they might be missing something, support them when they are struggling with something, and celebrate their moments of deep learning or personal growth. **Please post your reflections on collab by Wednesday each week, and then engage online with your critical friend by Saturday.** Each week of online discourse in the class will count as two percentage points of contribution. You will also write a final reflection piece that helps you process the experiences of community-engagement and of learning at the end of the semester.

Community-Engaged Project (40%): You will be contributing in discrete, but meaningful ways to the ongoing effort to craft a community-engaged vision for redevelopment of Friendship Court. A master planning process from December 2015 to July 2016 drew up a vision for the redevelopment of the Friendship Court Apartments that identifies several important concepts that need further development in tandem with resident-leadership, as well as a set of immediate concerns upon which action should be taken prior to development to improve resident quality of life. In this course you will develop a series of “quick win” tactical urbanism projects in consultation with resident youth leaders and implement these in collaboration with the resident youth leaders. In this case, our primary partner will be the Friendship Court Youth Leadership Team, who is serving as a cohort of internal critics, citizen scientists, and resident-developers in the Friendship Court Redevelopment

project.

In order to prepare ourselves for this partnership, we will first conduct a series of human centered design research tasks that help you hone your empathetic research skills (5%), gather relevant local knowledge (5%), and nurture your budding partnership with the Youth Leaders (10%). By the latter part of the course, we will be more purely focused on refining and implementing collaboratively developed quick win projects clearly and respectfully (10%), responding to the needs of our partner, evaluating project success with their feedback and interests in mind, and completing a reflective final report (10%).

Peer evaluation (10%): Because group work is such an important aspect of this course, you will be asked to conduct two peer assessments of your fellow group members and yourself throughout the class that detail: 1) the letter grade you would assign each group member, and 2) the reasoning for this grade— which might include a description of each persons role and/or the noteworthy contributions they made.

### **Class Calendar**

A schedule of readings and assignment deadlines is available on Collab, but you will be expected to regularly check this as working with a community partner requires flexibility and openness to changing our collective plans if need be.

### **Class Policies**

**Technology Policy:** The use of electronic devices can really affect our classroom dynamic and hinder our learning. In this class, use of electronic devices—laptops, tablets, and iphones—will not be permitted in unless explicitly requested by the instructor on specific days when they are needed for in-class work. Otherwise, such devices should not be in use during class time. Recording devices are exempt from this policy. Please see the following links: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html> and <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/30/this-year-im-resolving-to-ban-laptops-from-my-classroom/>.

**Accessibility:** This course is designed to be welcoming to, accessible to, and usable by everyone, including students who are English-language learners, have a variety of learning styles, have disabilities, or are new to online learning. Be sure to let me know immediately if you encounter a required element or resource in the course that is not accessible to you. Also, let me know of changes I can make to the course so that it is more welcoming to, accessible to, or usable by students who take this course in the future.

**Violence Prevention:** I am committed to reducing incidents of violence, harassment, bias, and hazing at UVA and in the broader community. I also believe that every person can play a part in reducing these incidents. If you are interested in becoming a more active bystander, there is training available through the Green Dot program and other organized prevention efforts underway at UVA.

**Honor:** By enrolling in this course, you have agreed to abide by and uphold the Honor System of the University of Virginia. For more information, go to: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/>

WEEK OF:	MILESTONES	THEME	REFLECTIONS	OBJECTIVES	COURSE GOALS INFORMED	DELIVERABLES	READINGS
Jan 24	Meet Community	SELF & COMMUNITY	What do I believe/value?	FC Project Overview &	1, 3, 4, and 5	Form Teams; Make data	White Savior Industrial

	Partner		What is my role? How can I help?	Community Context; Identify Personal Values/Aesthetics & Compare with Peers?		collection plan; Reflective research exercise	Complex; FC Booklet; Blackwell
Jan 31	L. Ogbu Human Centered Design Workshop; first visit to FC 5:30-7pm		What are my biases and how did I come to them? Which strategies empower communities? Which don't?	Evaluate different engagement strategies for effectiveness & appropriateness; consider eval strategies	2, 3, and 4	Review baseline data; Develop MOU; Analysis of engagement options	Implicit Bias Test/Reading; Critical Friend; Freire (Chapter 1)
Feb 7		FACILITATING & LISTENING	How can I be a resource ally? How can I listen well?	Select, prototype, and analyze engagement approach	2, 3, and 4	Ethnographic assignment; Outline of engagement activity concept	Activist Research; Ferman & Hill; Performative Listening
Feb 14	G. Cadogan hosts ethnographic walk from 5:30-7pm		What do my partners value? How does that translate spatially and aesthetically and why?	Workshop: Continue development of and populate engagement approach	1, 2, 3, and 4	Draft engagement activity	Hester; Civic Ecology; Cadogan
Feb 21	Youth engagement		What did they say? What did I hear? What does that mean?	Meet with FC Youth, debrief, and analyze results	3, 4, and 5	Host engagement activity	Aygeman; Wilson and Ogbu; Williams; Dalton
Feb 27	Ogbu Public Lecture: 5pm						
Feb 28	L. Ogbu in town	TRANSLATING	How can I develop a shared vocabulary with my partner?	Workshop opportunity areas, timelines, and scoping	1 and 2	Draft Alternatives	Street Science; Fullilove;
	SPRING BREAK						
March 14	Youth engagement		What did they say? What did I hear? What does that mean?	Develop options with FC Youth, debrief, and map out strategies for remainder of semester	3, 4, and 5	Refine approach, set timelines, evaluation criteria	Youth Empowerment Evaluation
March 21		DESIGNING		Develop projects	1 and 2	Begin Project Development, Workshop	

						training	
March 28	Desk crit		Are we headed in the right direction?	Internal review, Reflection	1, 2 and 5	Reflect on concepts, review action items	
April 4	Youth engagement			Begin testing concepts	1 and 2	Prototype concepts	
April 11			What did they say? What did I hear? What does that mean?	Refine concepts with FC Youth, debrief, identify revisions needed	3 and 5	Finalize concepts, refine action items	
April 18	L. Ogbu in town	REFINING		Final test of project concepts; eval set up	1 and 2	2nd iteration of project concepts	
April 25	Youth engagement		What did they say? What did I hear? What does that mean?	Realize project with Youth, debrief, identify revisions needed	3 and 5	Deploy Projects! Begin eval	
May 2	Last Class	REFLECTING	What were the outcomes? Did we succeed? What could we do better next time? Were we good partners?	Course debrief	1 and 5	Finish Eval; Complete Report	
Final Event	Community Celebration!						