A possible starting definition suggests that planning and policy-making entail attempts “to transform reality according to the ideas and images of what we think reality ought to be” (Sack, 2003, p. 4).* Much of planning and policy education takes something like this definition as given and offers instruction in how to carry out such transformation. Typical questions involve how to prepare better plans, design better or more affordable housing, engineer more efficient transportation systems, or create healthier or more aesthetically pleasing environments; how to select among alternative transformation strategies and options; how to implement the chosen transformations; and (sometimes) how to evaluate the results.

Hidden within this definition are complex and contentious assumptions and premises that pose substantial challenges to the conduct of planning and public policy. This seminar works backward from the above definition to deconstruct some of the theoretical building-blocks underlying the idea and practice of planning and policy formation. How does theory affect our understanding of reality and our vision of what reality ought to be? Is there a universally recognizable reality or does reality depend on our individually unique vantage points? If the latter, whose reality are we to transform, and whose “ideas and images” define the goals of such transformation? How do technology and expertise alter our intentions, perceptions, understandings, and methods? How do power relations channel and deflect the transformative process? Through what institutional structure, including the state, is the transformation of reality accomplished, and with what consequences? Who is the “we” that decides “what we think reality ought to be?” How are class, race, ethnicity, gender and other vectors of difference and identity accommodated in decision-making, and is this process compatible with the democratic ideal? How do ethics, morality, and values enter the decision-making process? And finally, what are the implications of these questions for theory-building, for social science inquiry, and for the practice of planning and public policy?

Fortunately, we can draw from an extensive literature broadly characterized as “social theory” in attempting to answer these questions. Broadly speaking, this literature is “social” because it situates the transformative act as a collective project and it is “theoretical” because it offers a framework or approach to guide understanding. This seminar will read selectively within the “social theory” literature to help us define issues and assemble tools necessary to address these fundamental questions for the production and use of knowledge in planning, public policy, and the social sciences more generally.

REQUIREMENTS

1. **Reading and active participation in seminar discussions (40%).** At the beginning of each weekly meeting, each seminar participant will identify (a) question(s) or issue(s) pertaining to the week’s readings, which will be listed on the board as our discussion agenda for the week.

2. **Completion of four written essays (6 -10 pages each) discussing and evaluating the weekly readings (40%).** You may select readings for any four weeks during the semester as the subject of your review essays but you must submit four essays prior to the last class meeting. Guidelines for preparing these essays will be distributed at the first class meeting. Your essays should not merely summarize the readings; rather, they should offer a critical assessment of, and engagement with, ideas or issues in the readings. Papers are due at the beginning of the class session when the reading is discussed. Essays should be typed, double-spaced, and must conform to acceptable standards of grammar, punctuation, and citation format.

3. **Take-home final exam (due date to be announced) (20%).**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in a grade of ‘F’ or zero (0) for the assignment in question. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policy on academic integrity at [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/)

REQUIRED READINGS

The following books are available at the Rutgers Bookstore and used copies are widely available. I may distribute additional readings from time to time to augment (or disrupt) our discussions.


**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Sept. 8**  **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW**  
*Aims – definitions – ground rules – essay guidelines – readings – knowledge and power – theory and method – theory or Theory?*

*Additional reading:*  

**Sept. 15**  **KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY, POWER, AND POLICY**  
*Read: Timothy Mitchell, Rule of Experts, pages 1 – 119.*  

*Additional reading:*  

**Sept. 22**  **CONSTRUCTING THE SUBJECT**  
*Read: Timothy Mitchell, Rule of Experts, pages 123 – 303.*  

*Additional reading:*  
Sept. 29  POWER, POLITICS, POLICY, AND PLANNING  
Read: Bent Flyvbjerg, Rationality and Power.  

Additional reading:  

Oct. 6  STATES AND MARKETS  

Additional reading:  

Oct. 13  STATE REGULATION  
Laissez-faire – (neo)liberalism – regulation – planning – nationhood – freedom  

Additional reading:  
Oct. 20  THE STATE–1

State as a social relation – the capitalist state – state crisis – governance and metagovernance – welfare state to competition state – globalization

Additional reading:

Oct. 27  THE STATE–2

Social welfare policy – spatial scale, globalization, and the national state – governance systems – future form(s) of the state – state and capital

Additional reading:

Nov. 3  THE PUBLIC INTEREST


Additional reading:
Nov. 10  
IDENTITY, DIFFERENCE, AND DEMOCRACY
Read: Iris Young, Inclusion and Democracy.

Additional reading:

Nov. 17  
POLITICS, POLICY-MAKING, AND THE POLICY PROCESS
Read: Alice O'Connor, Poverty Knowledge.
Social science – politics of knowledge – politics of policy-making – agenda-setting – traditions and paradigms – poverty knowledge and social policy – the knowledge industry

Additional reading:

Nov. 24  
DEMOCRATIZING PLANNING AND POLICYMAKING
Read: Barbara Cruikshank, The Will to Empower.

Additional reading:


**Dec. 1**

**THEORY, THINKING, AND KNOWING**

*Read: Bent Flyvbjerg, Making Social Science Matter.*

*Forms of inquiry – the possibility of theory – expertise, again – science, ethics, and common sense – voice – theory and method – research – “social” science*

*Additional reading:*


**Dec. 8**

**SUMMARY**

*Theory and metatheory – theory/method – knowledge and understanding – politics of calculability – categorical thinking – processual thinking – reflexive thinking – provisionality vs. expertise – theory as thoughtlessness – theory as liberation – on not knowing the answer*

*Additional reading:*


