OVERVIEW
This seminar introduces students to the design, management, and maintenance of parks and public spaces. The course is particularly focused on how issues of race, class, culture and design interact to shape access to, inclusion in, and exclusion from, public spaces. We will focus on multiple layers of public space, from parks to plazas to sidewalks to streets.

We will examine the foundations of public space theory with a particular emphasis on how space is more than just a neutral container but is instead deeply revealing of how we think about notions of democracy, diversity, and equity. In this way, public spaces are mirrors of society, reflecting our biases and beliefs about who “belongs” and who does not, as well as notions of what urban life should be. Throughout the course, we will alternate between issues and methods. So, one week we will discuss issues relevant to public space planning in the 21st century such as environmental justice or the privatization of public space, and the next we’ll discuss design techniques or participant observation methods.

Each week in this discussion-based, hands-on, interactive course, students will examine key case studies, hear from guest lecturers, or conduct site visits to public spaces throughout the city.

FORMAT
This graduate-level seminar course relies heavily on your participation, which should be professional at all times. Our class sessions are equivalent to a professional meeting. This means that each student should attend every class, arrive on time, be prepared to engage the topic and other members of the
class, respect fellow members of the class, and use professional and inclusive language. We will go over some discussion norms in weeks 1 and 2.

COMMUNICATION
Unless otherwise noted, we will use Canvas for all official course communication and it is the responsibility of each student to use Canvas settings that enable reliable communication. For example, this may mean selecting a personal e-mail address as the default in Canvas or setting up email forwarding from your University account. I will use Canvas for weekly readings, course announcements, changes to the schedule, turning in assignments, personal communication, and other course-related business. All assignments, unless otherwise noted, must be submitted on Canvas, so each student should be familiar with Canvas’s assignment submission procedures.

ASSIGNMENTS
Students must properly cite text and materials authored by others in all assignments and reports, using the APA documentation style. Here is a free and easy-to-use APA guide.

Attendance and participation
Student grades for participation are based on in-class participation and will account for attendance and participation as evidenced by the student’s readiness to summarize the materials, critique them, and engage effectively in class discussions and exercises. Students are expected to attend all class sessions, and absence is excused only in cases of emergency or illness. I will take attendance each week, and all students must arrive on time to class to avoid disrupting other students’ attention and learning. Arriving 1-15 minutes late to class reduces attendance points for the class session by 50%. Students who arrive more than 15 minutes to class do not receive attendance credit for that session.

Your consistent participation is very important. This does not mean you can just “show up” and sit quietly, nor should you simply respond to every question posed; effective participation is not measured by amount. Active participation means involving yourself in the discussion by showing up on time, completing readings before class (note: I would rather have you read most of the assigned pieces in depth than all of the articles at a very surface level), listening intently to whomever is speaking, asking pertinent/pointed questions, offering opinions respectfully, and otherwise being deeply present in class. Discussing honest questions and true struggles within you is often the best way to contribute.

Listening is also participating. If you do not actively listen and share your questions and ideas with everyone, they can’t benefit from what you have to offer. Each of you has important questions and ideas to share that we can all learn from, and I believe you have a responsibility to contribute them. If you have a question that you do not already have an answer for, you will genuinely want to hear what your classmates have to say. The worst thing for discussion is a series of unrelated monologues. What we are shooting for are true dialogues in which you engage the comments and questions of others rather than following them up with unrelated comments and questions. Be curious about what others have to say. If you share your thoughts and questions in an effort to explore the material in the spirit of intellectual curiosity, you will receive a good participation grade.

To ensure you are learning outside the classroom, at times I will take volunteers or randomly call on one or two of you at the start of class to discuss a planning or design current event that relates to public space in the city. Make it a habit to do a daily scan of websites that you like, such as citylab.com, planetizen.com, shelterforce.org, streetsblog.org, nextcity.org and others. Finally, during class, use of laptops, smartphones, or tablets is not permitted. This is because it can compromise your and your peers’ learning. We are constantly tied to our devices; think about this is a special and increasingly rare opportunity to disconnect from the virtual world and retrain our brains to connect with each other and
with big ideas. If you wish to take notes during a discussion, please take them by hand – you will retain
the information much more clearly! Check out this link.

Discussion lead
For this assignment you will lead a group discussion on that week’s readings. Depending on the final
number of students enrolled you may or may not sign up for discussion lead with a partner. If necessary,
we will choose partners and assign weeks during class on January 23. You will prepare a slide show
presentation that provides a summary of the main point(s) of all of the readings, both required and
recommended. Also post this file online to Canvas before class begins on the day you present. Your
summary should outline the main thesis, i.e., the crux, of each of the readings as well as summarize the
key supporting arguments and assumptions the authors make. Be sure to discuss how the readings are
relevant to our broader discussions of public space, why they are helpful, and what they leave out. Feel
free to use photos or videos to enhance your discussion. During class, you will be asked to go through
your summary with the class, and then facilitate a discussion, which should last about an hour.

The idea is for you to inspire everyone to explore the reading in insightful ways, so please feel free to be
creative with this assignment. You might want to include some broad but pointed discussion questions
to guide us. Good discussion questions are usually “open-ended,” and have a complex answer and/or a
range of possible answers. They are also genuine, meaning you have not already made up your mind
what the answer is. A descriptive question might be: “Does the author mean to say…?” A normative
question might be: “Is the U.S. right to intervene in world affairs?” The latter type opens up the issue of
values, of what people think the world should be like. You can ask either descriptive or normative
questions when facilitating discussion, or a combination of both.

Because many of the readings in this class expose the problems with public space, it’s important to also
see that there are truly wonderful public spaces and placemaking endeavors that have the promise to
bring people together around common issues. Therefore, as part of your presentation, spend a few
minutes discussing an example of, say, a public space redesign or placemaking action that resulted in
positive outcomes for local communities. Make sure this example relates somehow to the central topic
for that week. Again, you should feel free to include short films or images in your presentation that show
us your space and illustrate your main points.

Field notebook
Learning to observe public space and public life is an acquired skill. Throughout the semester, you will
be exposed to a number of different methodologies for better understanding and assessing public
space. For this assignment, you are asked to keep a field notebook that includes sketches, diagrams,
 writings, reflections, cut-outs and any other techniques that help you record your everyday experiences
of public space. Ideally, your observations should seek to address the weekly themes that we cover. I
will have you submit your field notebooks to me every two weeks, starting on Week 3, and I will review
these and then get them back to you in the following class. Your last submission will be on April 16, and I
will review the entire notebook at that time, tracking your progress throughout the semester. You must
use a specifically-designated paper notebook for this assignment. Moleskine notebooks are nice for this,
but there are so many other options. When grading you on this assignment, I will not assess your work
after each submission, but instead will look at how seriously you’ve taken this assignment and how your
reflections have developed over the semester.

Denver Post op-ed
For this assignment, you will write an op-ed/commentary to the Denver Post in 650 words or fewer. The op-ed should address an issue that is relevant to the city and that touches on something we have discussed in class. In addition to working with the Writing Center on this assignment – they are a fantastic resource and can help with this exact kind of assignment – here are two short guides for writing an op-ed from Duke University and the New York Times. Both of these documents are very clear that it is imperative to connect your commentary to current events and issues of concern in a certain time and place; in addition, most publications will seek answers, or ways to address the problems you expose or critiques you raise. As such, you should be tracking news throughout the semester in order to identify key issues that connect with contemporary concerns to readers of the Denver Post, i.e., mostly residents of the Denver metro area.

To help you prepare for this assignment, I will have you share your topic and central argument in one paragraph maximum to the Canvas Discussion Board by February 27. Each student will be required to comment and offer constructive feedback on at least two other proposals by March 5. An “almost-final” draft of the op-ed is then due to me by March 12. Once the final op-ed is submitted on April 2 via another Discussion Board, I will ask you to read all the other op-eds turned in by your peers. Then you will complete this form by April 11 where you will select your favorite three op-eds. I will work with the top three vote-getters to submit their op-eds to the Denver Post for potential publication. Find the Denver Post’s submission guidelines here under “How to submit a guest commentary.”

Final project
In this project, you will work in groups of two. Please take some time in weeks 1 and 2 to decide on your partner. You will pretend you are a consultant team that has been asked by the City and County of Denver (CCD), DRCOG, and a coalition of community-based organizations and local non-profits, to create a public space redevelopment plan for an existing park, plaza or other public space in the Denver metro area. These groups are responding to a (hypothetical) national-level parks audit that ranked Denver in the bottom 10% of all major U.S. cities in terms of the “inclusiveness” of its public spaces, measured predominantly by assessments of use by diverse parties, access for park-dependent populations, and the prevalence of universal design features. The coalition decided that the first order of business was to create a statement park, one that could be considered a “space for all,” and a model of inclusion for all other parks in the city. The coalition does not want to lose sight of their other goals for public spaces in the city related to economic vitality and environmental performance; nevertheless, they want to foreground the aspect of inclusion in the redesign.

By February 6 you will submit to me by email a ranked list of three potential parks that you would like to redesign and why. These can be downtown parks, such as Civic Center Park, Commons Park, Skyline Park, or Wynkoop Plaza; neighborhood parks, such as Cheesman Park, Congress Park, Platt Park, or Washington Park; or regional or suburban parks. You may not use one of Denver’s mountain parks for this assignment. The only other requirement in selecting your space is that you can complete this assignment and adequately respond to all the prompts. Once you submit your choices, I will see if there are any overlaps and assign spaces accordingly.

The first deliverable is a written proposal, no longer than 25 pages (single-spaced, 12 pt. font), that presents your case for how you would make your chosen space a “space for all.” In addition to a written narrative, this document should include maps, diagrams and anything else you’d like to make your case. I am not prescribing a specific outline for you to follow for this, or the second deliverable, but I will share some design proposal examples in class for reference. I do encourage you to look at examples of similar reports; doing this kind of research is always very instructive and I will leave that task to you. But at a minimum, your proposal should include a detailed but concise history of your space, including recent changes and any significant broader forces that may have shaped the space; an assessment of the
space’s existing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and a brief discussion of the methodology or methodologies you used to make your assessment; at least one precedent/case study that has some similarities to your chosen space; a list of goals and strategies for making your space a model of inclusiveness; a graphic project timeline illustrating the phases you outline in your proposal and a corresponding public process (I will show examples in class); and, finally, a vision for your space that includes a short narrative, a diagrammatic program, an illustrative plan, perspective renderings as needed and some precedent images for the different elements and design features you wish to include. Your total physical construction budget (not inclusive of design) is $500,000 and the redevelopment project will take place over 12 months. Be sure to consult project management guides and best practice case studies of other redevelopment/redesign projects in order to get a general sense of what things cost. Include a very brief budget in your final report and/or your presentation.

The second deliverable is a multimedia presentation lasting no longer than 15 minutes (no exceptions) that outlines your main arguments. You will make this presentation on May 7 to your classmates and potentially some invited guests. This presentation should assume your team was short-listed for the project and should function as your “interview” with the client. The presentation should summarize your written proposal (above) and be creative and convincing and hold your audience’s attention. Each group member must speak in this presentation. The presentation should include images, maps, diagrams, sketches and renderings, videos and/or other media. As part of your final project, each student must also submit a brief partner evaluation form on Canvas.

The purpose of this exercise is to provide the opportunity to explore the inner workings of one particular public space. Design can play a role in whether a space is inclusive, but so can the regulation of the space, or its location or proximity or access to other destinations. Make multiple visits to your space on different times of the day, days of the week, during events and non-events, and during different kinds of weather. Spend a good amount of time in your space and conduct some site reconnaissance as well as some participant observation. If there are any community planning meetings happening in the area, even if they are not related to your chosen public space, you should attend those to listen and hear what is being discussed. Learn to look at these spaces analytically and empathetically. Observe behaviors, uses, users, physical features, and even your own perceptions of how you feel in the space. Who is using the space currently, and how might that be a function of the location, rules, or the sociocultural norms and expectations of the site? Why are certain areas of the space likely used by some people, but other areas are used by different people? How does the design of the space seem to shape how the space is used, and in turn, by whom? Try to engage as deeply as possible with some of the controversies, challenges, and difficult questions we discuss in class this semester. There are many resources in our readings as well as from groups such as Project for Public Spaces.

I understand that you all have different skills and backgrounds, and that you will approach this assignment (and the others) very differently. What is important to me is that you engage with the material we have covered throughout the semester and take it to the next level by thinking deeply about the “ideal” conditions for public space and how you might go about making them a reality.

GRADING
Grading for assignments will be based primarily on the quality and depth of the work presented, but I will also consider organization, composition, and presentation (i.e., editing, spell checking). Any work submitted after the assignment deadline but within one week of the due date will receive 75% of the points earned. Assignments submitted between one and two weeks late will receive 50% of the points earned. Assignments submitted more than two weeks late will receive no credit.

**Grading scale**
- **A range**: Exceptional scholarship and superior work products that significantly exceed stated requirements in scope and/or quality
- **B range**: Commendable scholarship and accomplished work products that somewhat exceed stated requirements in scope and/or quality
- **C range**: Satisfactory scholarship and work products that meet or almost meet stated requirements in scope and/or quality
- **D range**: Inadequate scholarship and inferior work products that clearly fail to meet stated requirements in scope and/or quality
- **F grade**: Unacceptable scholarship and work product

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**
Education at the University of Colorado Denver and in the College of Architecture and Planning (CAP) depends on honesty and integrity, as well as appropriate conduct. CAP students are required to follow the Student Code of Conduct and the Honor Code. All University and College policy, as well as common sense, regarding academic honesty applies in this course. Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated and will be handled through the University’s official process. When working in a group, it is the responsibility of everyone in the group to maintain the norms of academic integrity. Students may do joint work with other courses only with permission of the instructor and when the work is suitable for the topic and the course.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**
Any student who needs, or who may need, accommodations due to a disability should speak with the instructors as soon as possible, and should contact the Disability Resources and Services Office on campus to arrange accommodations. See [here](#) for more details.

**SCHEDULE**
All required readings are drawn from peer-reviewed research and popular media. All can be accessed on Canvas except those that are hyperlinked below, which can be found online.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due date</th>
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<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Every class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion lead</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Varies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field notebook</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Every other week starting in Week 3</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Denver Post</em> op-ed</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>April 2</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>Public space regulation and management</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>Spatial analysis, ethnography, observation</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>Homelessness, disorder, “broken windows”</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mar 26</td>
<td>NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Apr 2</td>
<td>Culture, alternative uses of marginal space</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Apr 9</td>
<td>Protest, democracy, conflict, and insurgency</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Apr 16</td>
<td>Design and placemaking</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Apr 23</td>
<td>Visibility, representation, and encounter</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Apr 30</td>
<td>Environmental justice, privilege, gentrification*</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>Final presentations</td>
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**Important dates and deadlines**

Week 1 | January 23 - Discussion lead sign-up due
Week 2 | January 30 - Syllabus questions due
- Field trip waiver due
Week 3 | February 6 - Submit ranked list of three potential spaces for final project
- Field notebook submission 1
Week 5 | February 20 - Field notebook submission 2
Week 6 | February 27 - Op-ed proposal paragraph due
Week 7 | March 5 - Comments due on at least two other students op-ed proposals
- Field notebook submission 3
Week 8 | March 12 - “Almost-final” op-ed due
Week 9 | March 19 - Field notebook submission 4
Week 11 | April 2 - Final op-ed due
- Field notebook submission 5
Week 12 | April 9 - Voting due on top three op-eds
Week 13 | April 16 - Field notebook submission 6
Week 16 | May 7 - Final project report due
- Final presentations in class
Week 17 | May 14 - Final project partner evaluation form due

**READINGS**

Note: readings should be completed by the week under which they are listed.

**Week 1**

**Required:**
Finley, B. (2019a). As development eats away at Denver’s green space, the “city within a park” is becoming a concrete metropolis. *Denver Post*, 13 January.


**Week 2**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 3**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 4**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**

**Week 5**  
**Required:**  


**Recommended:**  


**Week 6**  
**Required:**  


**Recommended:**  


**Week 7**  
**Required:**  


**Recommended:**


**Week 8**
**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 9**
**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 10**
None – Spring Break

**Week 11**
**Required:**


Recommended: Correal, A. (2018). In deepest cold, a subway car becomes the shelter of last resort. <i>New York Times</i>, 8 January.


**Week 12**


Recommended: Dovey, R. (2017). Winning S.F. plaza design creates a public space for protest. <i>Next City</i>, 1 November.


**Week 13**


Recommended: Bausells, M. (2016). Superblocks to the rescue: Barcelona’s plan to give streets back to residents. <i>The Guardian</i>, 17 May.

**Week 14**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 15**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**
