

Housing Rights and the Right to the City

URST 3500 (3 credits)

Spain: Sustainable Urban Development and Social Justice

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

Since the crisis of 2008 cities all around Spain face an ongoing housing crisis due to high rent prices, gentrification, and stringent laws against squatting, etc. This crisis has recently been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In this course students will be introduced to issues related to housing rights in Spain with a focus on ongoing legal debates for, and against, gentrification. Students will also learn about contemporary activist movements, in Spain, for the right to a decent housing. The course will be taught from the perspective of social justice and grass roots movements in light of the contemporary social crisis in Spain.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the current theoretical and empirical implications of the rights to the city movement;
- Critique institutional policies being carried out in Spanish cities to address issues such as gentrification, migration, housing rights, climate change and other issues affecting cities;
- Analyze the ways in which social movements in Spain and the Basque Country engage with the contemporary housing crisis in the country.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to issues concerning policy, law, sustainable development, human rights and social movements in Spain and the EU.

Instructional Methods

SIT's teaching and learning philosophy is grounded in the experiential learning theory developed by Kolb (1984; 2015). Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning is an active process that is not confined to the formal curriculum; "knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 49). Learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being. Learning involves a community and is a lifelong

endeavor. Learning is transformational. When thinking about the production of knowledge, realize the existence of a system of power relationships that imply the obliteration of knowledge, experiences, and even traditional ways of living, of which are not part of the colonial power. This process implies, first that there is a relegation of this noncolonial knowledge with the power produced by the colonized and dominate groups pushing this knowledge to the periphery of the intellectual creation, and second, the imposition of other forms of interpretation, understanding and living in the world (Fernández y Sepúlveda, 2014). The critical approach to the naturalization of these social hierarchies is at the core of the way we intend to teach not only in our classes but making it part of our program as a whole. This is to develop some kind of counter power or counter epistemology.

Required Texts

Barbero, I. (2015). When rights need to be (re)claimed: austerity measures, neoliberal housing policies and anti-eviction activism in Spain. *Critical Social Policy*, 35:2.

Flesher, C. (2020). Democracy Reloaded : Inside Spain's Political Laboratory from 15-M to Podemos, *Oxford Studies in Culture and Politics*, Chao. 12 and 13.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Text Analysis (20%)

Students choose two texts from the list of their course required readings and engage with the main argument in each text. The text analysis should demonstrate the student's capacity to synthesize arguments, integrate data collected through class lectures and field visits, and provide critical insights into how issues dealt with in the two texts are related to the program theme. The paper should be 3-5 pages long and should also demonstrate the student's familiarity with urban development in the EU and Bilbao.

2) Oral Presentation (30%)

Students will be required to present orally and creatively at the end of the seminar highlighting the most relevant and important issues discussed in class and on the different excursions. Students choose one of the topics discussed during the seminar that can illustrate the challenges in sustainable urban development in the Basque Country. Here students can elaborate on how course lectures, readings, and field visits have helped (or not) map viable approaches to the issue at hand.

3) Podcast or other (40%)

During the seminar students will be studying different issues related to sustainable urban development in Spain and the Basque Country. This exercise is designed for students to apply simple research methods and ethics in country. The outcome of this exercise should be the elaboration of a Podcast (or other creative expression) where they should creatively show the use and understanding of an issue that they choose related to what they have learned during the program.

4) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and excursions using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.
- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field excursions and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

- Text Analysis – 20%
- Oral Presentation – 30%
- Podcast or other – 40%
- Participation – 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program excursions is required. Criteria for evaluation of student performance include attendance and participation in program activities. Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination. It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program.

Students may request a justified extension for one paper/assignment during the program. Requests must be made in writing and at least 12 hours before the posted due date and time. If reason for request is accepted, an extension of up to one week may be granted at that time. Any further requests for extensions will not be granted. Students who fail to submit the assignment within the extension period will receive an 'F' for the assignment.

Grading Scale

- 94-100% A
- 90-93% A-

87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+
64-66%	D
below 64	F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics can be used for taking notes and other class activities. Off-task usage is not acceptable. You may be marked as absent for habitually using them for something other than classroom activities.
- Course Communication: Course documents and assignments will be posted on the learning management system, Canvas. Although the course calendar provides a broad overview and the general sequence of work and assignments for the course, what we accomplish in class will vary, and revisions to the calendar will be posted at the course site. You will need to check the course site regularly. You are responsible for letting me know about any network-related problems that prevent you from accessing or submitting assignments.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or

participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.

- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: The City as a Right

This module will be dedicated to understanding, from a theoretical and empirical viewpoint, the different dimensions of the discussion around the right to the city. Classes will revolve around this main issue, and we will visit local organizations and practitioners that are working, implicitly and explicitly, from the perspective of the concept of the right of the city.

Site Visits: TBD

Readings:

Diaz-Parra, I., & Jover, J. (2020): Overtourism, place alienation and the right to the city: insights from the historic centre of Seville, Spain, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2020.1717504

Harvey, D. (2008). The right to the city, *New Left Review* 53 sept oct 2008.

Module 2: Social movements, and the Rights in 21st Century Cities

This module examines current human rights issues in Spain. The focus is on the way city's, social movements and organized civil society, face the challenges of the twenty-first century. We will particularly focus on the ways in which mainly, gentrification, migration, housing rights,

and climate change, etc., affect cities. We will also look at the ways this situation is addressed by activist groups in different parts of Spain since the last economic crisis in 2008.

Site Visits:

Catalonia (Girona and Barcelona to visit la PAH, Barcelona town hall, and other social organizations)

Readings:

Santos, F.G. (2020). Social movements and the politics of care: empathy, solidarity and eviction blockades, *Social Movement Studies*, 19:2, 125-143, DOI:10.1080/14742837.2019.1665504

Porta, D.D., & Portos, M. (2020). Social movements in times of inequalities: Struggling against austerity in Europe, *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* Volume 53, June 2020, Pages 116-126.

Module 3: Bilbao and the Basque Country Housing State

This final module will focus on the Basque country as a micro case study. We will look into some of the issues that have been discussed during the program from a more empirical perspective. We will particularly attempt to understand the questions of human rights in the city from an institutional and grassroots point of view.

Site Visits: TBD

Readings:

Dol, K., Mazo, E.C., Llop, N.L., et al. (2017). Regionalization of housing policies? An exploratory study of Andalusia, Catalonia and the Basque Country. *J Hous and the Built Environ* 32, 581–598. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-016-9528-z>

Uranga, M.G., & Etxebarria, G. (2000). Panorama of the Basque Country and its Competence for Self-Government, *European Planning Studies*, 8:4, 521-535, DOI: 10.1080/713666417