

Spring 2016

EES 79903, [30524] Prof. Setha Low

Thursdays 4:15-6:15

Politics of Public Space

This course begins with an exploration of what it means for space to be public particularly in the urban environment. Course readings cover the economic, social, political and cultural ideas of what public and publicness means and the ways that this "publicness" is worked out spatially. A variety of public spaces—parks, plazas, libraries, streets, sidewalks, and beaches—where publicness is produced and contested are examined, and students will select public spaces to study as part of the learning process.

This course also reviews the ways in which political expression and negotiation among constituencies occur in the public space. It considers the concepts of the "right to the city" and social justice as political ideals for public space and current trends such as privatization, surveillance, and securitization as expressions of conflict.

The course organization is based on the major concepts and processes evident in public space with a focus on how they have been understood theoretically and ethnographically. Students will be asked to direct the discussion for the individual weeks and to bring their research questions and findings to class each week for ongoing discussion.