

Reading Tips and Study Questions: For Session 19

Required reading:

None.

Session overview

I'll be reviewing the major questions we've worked on and making connections to our cases and the most recent material (negotiation and stakeholder analysis, diversity).

Please feel free to bring questions that relate to the final exam. I see this session as an opportunity to review main ideas about "planning action" that are covered in the exam, though I won't limit myself to it.

By way of session preview and **taking stock** on your learning through Gateway, you should, by the time you submit your final work for the course, be able to:

- Explain to someone the origins of modern planning—its intellectual hopes and political implications, its faith in science as the key to human progress.
- Outline key dilemmas embedded in that early modernist or rational planning model, including dilemmas about whose expertise counts, how legitimate decisions are to be made in the face of conflict, and what to do when expert knowledge turns out to be insufficient.
- Explain the main ideas in several proposals for reforming modernist planning, including *advocacy planning*, expanded *citizen participation*, the negotiation model, and the role of dialogue and deliberation. Have a sense of the promise and limits of each.
- In a related vein, outline how distinct traditions through which rational planning—once mapped onto unequal and competitive political environments—was shaped into social reform, social mobilization (another form of "planning from below"), and policy analysis.
- Identify some core opportunities and challenges for planning in the context of social diversity, whether in terms of reforming larger systems (that reflect historical biases) or improving decisionmaking processes (in ways that reflect an understanding of differences).

- Consider how specific problems in specific contexts—contexts such as the Gateway cases but also the many cases that lie ahead in your graduate education and your careers—reflect these larger questions, for example: by illustrating institutional failures and deeper histories of inequality that make the original rational planning conception incredibly limited, if not downright dangerous when applied (Boston, Narmada); by confronting planners with problems that demand culturally competent application of an array of tools, not simple policy analysis and prescription (all three cases); and by entangling the “overall” public interest, varied citizen group interests, and private interests (market mechanisms) in ways that make *equitable development*—a core value of our Department and a challenging goal in practice—challenging to pursue (all three cases).
- Deliver your ideas, and develop those of teammates or other colleagues with whom you work, through *professional workproducts*, such as memoranda and briefings for decisionmakers.

None of you began the course as technicians, but the aim was to generate learning about how one should approach the use of knowledge and technique to make a systematic difference in the world—“planning,” in that admittedly broad sense—and this is something that doesn’t happen automatically in a field with the strong technical origins and orientation that planning has. The hope is that the broad insights outlined above prepare you to think differently about course choices while here at MIT, to set priorities and explore new things in areas as varied as: politics and democratic decisionmaking, institutional analysis and management, negotiation and dispute resolution, ethics and public life, leadership, ambitious “substantive” policy areas that cross sectors and involve complex conflicts and many kinds of potentially useful knowledge, and practica where the conceptual dilemmas and practical problems come together in rich ways, and more.

Finally, the course evaluation: My one plea is that you be as specific as possible in your open-ended comments on the evaluation form, because we’ll read each comment and think about them carefully in hopes of making Gateway stronger. Part of that is preserving what works, and part of it is trying new things or different things, so your input is crucial to both.

Thanks very much - Xav