Course # SES 5374  
**Instructor:** Song, Lily  
**Course Title:** Community Development: Past, Present, and Future  

### Non-Studio Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content/Subject Matter</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Dept. Mean</th>
<th>GSD Mean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the instructor meet the stated objectives of the course?</td>
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<th>Dept. Mean</th>
<th>GSD Mean</th>
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<td>Were assignments well-chosen and helpful to the course?</td>
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# Instructor

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<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Dept. Mean</th>
<th>GSD Mean</th>
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<td>Did the instructor give clear, well-structured presentations?</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>4.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did the instructor foster quality discussion in class?</td>
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<td>Was the instructor's verbal and written feedback helpful?</td>
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<td>Was the instructor accessible during office hours or otherwise?</td>
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<td>Did the instructor help you to develop relevant skills and abilities?</td>
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<td>4.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Was the role of T.A./T.F's appropriate and helpful to the course?</td>
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<td>Did the instructor seem committed to teaching?</td>
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<td>Did the instructor inspire your interest and curiosity?</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>4.32</td>
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# Overall Ratings

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<th></th>
<th>Very Satisfied</th>
<th>Satisfied</th>
<th>Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Very Dissatisfied</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Dept. Mean</th>
<th>GSD Mean</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I would describe my level of satisfaction with course as:</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.98</td>
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<td>Overall, I would describe my level of satisfaction with instructor as:</td>
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<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.09</td>
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What were the greatest strengths/weaknesses of the course/studio?

Strengths: Lily evidently cares so much about her students. She fosters an inclusive learning environment where a critical discussion is encouraged. So many of the guest speakers who were brought in were inspiring and thought-provoking. Lastly, many of the readings in this course should be required readings for planners (especially the readings for the first few classes).

Weaknesses: Sometimes the speakers were so interesting that we didn't have as much time as a class to debrief and discuss the many layers of information that the speakers brought forth.

Lily is great at encouraging active discussion around the weekly topics. I wish there was a bit more time dedicated to lecturing though.

Lily is a fantastic instructor and this is one of the best classes I have ever taken. Discussion was always stimulating and the speaker series was one of the most well-considered, high-impact pedagogical tools I have ever experienced.

Strengths: provides a space for conversations about urban planning not happening in any other course. Other required courses should rely on this syllabus as a guide for a comprehensive approach towards community development. I wish more discussions like this were happening and opportunities to hear from Lily Song. Great balance in establishing theoretical foundations during part 1 and part 2 bringing in practitioners was invaluable.

Weaknesses: self-selected group, the individuals who probably needed to read this material the most were not present, sometimes felt like an echo chamber.

This course challenged my preconceptions of what community development is and how as a planner I can work towards equity. I believe the class discussions and assignments will inform the values I bring forward during my time at the GSD and into my career.
Hearing from professionals in the field was incredibly helpful and inspiring. More so than in any class I have taken at the GSD, I feel excited to be both learning here and to entering the work. I feel more independent and able to formulate my own theory of practice and change.

Lily was terrific. She was one of the most dedicated and passionate professors I've had. There needs to be more professors like her at the GSD, who are 100% present during class, really interested in students' growth and interests and want to help empower students in and outside of the classroom.

The course was a good size to allow for real discussion. The guests were great additions to the class and provided examples of what people in community development broadly are doing. The diversity of the guests underscored how broad the field really is and was great to see as someone interested in community development but not exactly sure how they want to incorporate it into their work.

The opportunity to explore topics of community development through an interdisciplinary lens. Connecting with classmates with very unique perspectives and experiences in the planning and development field. Lily is a phenomenal professor who really pushes everyone to think critically and stretch our thinking.

This course benefited from an extraordinary instructor, exciting guest speakers who gave their perspectives from the field, and frank discussions of inequality.

I particularly enjoyed the first three weeks of the course when we were able to have discussions as a class for the entire course meeting time. The guest speakers were also great, but there were times when the speakers seemed like they did not have a sense of what was expected of them. Greater preparation in terms of what the presenters are expected to bring to the course meeting would be a good improvement moving forward.

Strengths:
- This is truly truly one of my all-time favorite class since undergraduate. Lily knows and reads a lot, and pushes us to question the status quo, to identify blind spots in ideologies and practices, and to be disruptive. In stating these objects up-front in the first class, Lily gave us the OK to think, share, and learn freely, to self-regulate and unlearn as needed.
- the guest lecture line-up were amazing! I loved that the speakers were encouraged to dig deep in their sharing and also to connect their professional work with personal upbringings and experiences.
- The selected readings were also very relevant and accompanied the lectures well.

Weaknesses:
- it would be helpful to get a grading rubric for the assignments

This was absolutely the best course I have taken at the GSD! Lily is an exceptional instructor, pushes her students to think critically about exactly the kinds of topics we need to be talking WAY more about in planning school. She fostered an incredibly collaborative and creative classroom setting where we were all able to contribute and learn and build off the readings, the class presentations, and our own personal experiences/identities. By far the best part of the course was the practitioner series that allowed us to really engage with the topics at hand in a real world context and gain a much better understanding of how community development unfolds in real time from many different perspectives. I was so incredibly thankful for the opportunity to take this class and honestly would take it again if I could! I feel like a better student and planner for having taken it.

Lily--and her ability to stimulate insightful, nuanced, and inspiring conversations about difficult topics--was the greatest strength of this course. The practitioner series was expertly curated and deeply useful.

A minor weakness: the syllabus could be more detailed, especially regarding the description of the assignments.

Professor Song made herself very available to students and was incredibly helpful in office hours. She fostered such enthusiasm in class discussion, yet also pushed an intellectually rigorous course. The speakers she brought in were fantastic. She has become very helpful to me outside of class, connecting me to other students with similar interests. She has attended events I have led at the university. I'd say she is the best professor I have had yet at Harvard -- supportive but also pushing us to be better. Her feedback on assignments is the most thorough I have received and incredibly helpful.

Comment on the content/subject matter of the course.

So relevant and necessary! I think that this should be required for planning students who have never worked in community development before but also even for those that have.

This class should be offer every year!

More classes need these readings embedded in them. Wish there were more offerings like this. Smaller, discussion based theory + practice combined courses outside the Kennedy school, which themselves are limited in their relevance for future practitioners. Great course to remind students about to enter workforce about the power of planning.
The readings and weekly class discussions were incredibly informative. I felt encouraged and comfortable to actively participate in the discussions and to use them to work through ideas and formulate my opinions on subjects. I learnt an immense amount from my peers, the speakers and the professor. Moreover, the class discussions and readings have informed the way I approach my daily life and I am finding myself further discussion the issues with the wider GSD community outside of the classroom.

This course covered very important subject matter that is otherwise not really taught at the GSD or elsewhere. It covered community development from so many angles - from transportation and mobility to food. It was a really nice introduction to all these different areas.

The course content was really powerful and wide-ranging. From issues of food and transit justice to criminal justice reform, new models of economic cooperation, black radical traditions, international best practices in housing, we really covered a lot of interesting and important topics. One of the best aspects of the course was the opportunity to engage leading practitioners working on these issues in the field.

We absolutely need more courses like this. It is a shame that there are not many courses like this at the GSD. This course should absolutely be offered every single year. It could be considered a gateway into the Housing and Neighborhood Development concentration. I liked that different sessions revolved around different topics such as food, transportation, and criminal justice. I am not aware of many other courses at the GSD tackling racial issues so head-on.

I greatly enjoyed the course. The guest speakers were fantastic, but I thought there was more of an opportunity to discuss the readings that were assigned. Each week varied quite a bit, and I would have preferred more dedicated time to debrief and discuss readings.

Very important and relevant content and subject matter to community development. Understandably due to limited weeks, not all topics that may be related to community development could be covered. I think it may be interesting to include a session on environmental contaminants via water, airborne, ingestion, and dermal pathways — with case studies such as Flint, MI's lead crises, superfund and toxic waste sites in cites, etc.

The topics covered in this course are absolutely critical to understand for anyone hoping to work in the realm of community development and equity.

Incredibly intriguing, thought provoking, rooted in real world challenges. I was able to see immediate application of the things were were learning.

**Comment on the quality and selection of the projects/assignments.**

The assignments were interesting and fun to do.

Lily made the projects relevant to our interests. This was extremely helpful in being able to delve deeper in issues we found interesting rather than spread thinly across multiple obligations.

The assignments were challenging and thoughtful. Lily was very accessible in her office hours, and flexible out of them, to meet and talk through the assignments. I feel that the work pushed me to beyond my gut-reaction responses to issues and questions to really deeply engage with subjects. Lily was flexible with the assignments and that allowed me to engage with topics that I feel passionate about. I feel extremely grateful for this and was able to work on a project that I hope to continue with.

Overall, good. I enjoyed the interview assignment and the final paper. I might rethink the blog post assignment.

The projects really allowed us to connect with leading organizations in our fields of interests and explore topics that we deeply care about and propose new policy solutions to pressing public problems.

The assignments and projects highly encouraged development of our own professional and academic interests, helping us develop networks and skills and knowledge that will come in handy inside and outside Gund Hall.

The final project was worthwhile, and I enjoyed the blog post as well. I did not think the practitioner interview was as relevant, but it was still enjoyable. The readings were great!

I liked that a variety of readings were assigned (e.g. blogs, newspaper articles, book chapters). The projects and assignments were useful.

I really appreciated the flexibility to pursue projects/assignments that helped give us space to explore topics that we cared about and that felt additive to my experience as a student and learner. I think there was a good balance and timing to the assignments throughout the semester. Lily's feedback on each assignment was thoughtful and made me feel like I was able to grow and learn from the experience.

The assignments were a great way for us to process and coalesce all the things we have been learning. Her feedback on
assignments has been fantastic - thorough response and pushing us to be better. I found all the prompts for the assignments to be interesting and challenging.

**Comment on instructor strengths/weaknesses.**

Strengths: Lily is not only so smart, but she cares so deeply about her students - such a welcome perspective at the GSD! She keeps conversations highly relevant and is not afraid to shy away from controversial or difficult topics. As a young woman, Lily is so inspiring to have as an instructor. I wish we had more Lily Songs out there!

Lily brings a very refreshing perspective to the GSD. She challenges the status quo and gets you to think about topics in a new way.

**Strengths:** amazing curator of individual speakers and revolutionary texts. Supportive and aware of timely discussions and willing to incorporate the topics into the course and discussions.

Weaknesses: don't feel like I heard enough of her thoughts/opinions/work. When she did lecture on her work, it felt rushed and brief.

As mentioned, Lily was incredibly accessible and supported us throughout the course. We were encouraged to bring our own interests and expertise into the class. As such, I learnt a tremendous amount from my peers. Lily cultivated a welcoming and challenging class culture.

As mentioned in a previous response, Lily was terrific.

Lily is a great instructor and facilitator that makes everyone feel comfortable and inspires us to bring our A game to class. She is deeply committed to issues of social justice and really pushes everyone to think about how we can work towards equity and inclusion in the planning and design traditions. She has a remarkable versatility to think about cities across numerous dimensions and fields. One of the best professors at Harvard.

The instructor—not just the curriculum she crafted—made this course strong.

- Dr. Song moderates discussions with ease, asking tough questions of both guest speakers who are professionals and students who she knows has expertise in a subject area.
- Dr. Song is always more than available outside of class time, allowing us to make appointments to see her in person beyond office hours. During these appointments, she is generous with her time. She listens attentively and gives excellent guidance on how to pursue our goals for learning and practice. Her creativity and knowledge base about where we should consider looking for information is impressive.
- This should not be so unique, but Dr. Song treats her students with respect. She acknowledges that this is not the first step in most of our careers and that we bring backgrounds—professional and identity-based—to the table. This respect is a refreshing change as the school reels from the Shitty Architecture Men list.

Lily is a fantastic instructor. She doesn't pull punches, and she asks difficult questions. I have grown and learned a lot from her, and the GSD is lucky to have her.

Lily is great and very articulate. She really cares about the topic and her students. She's also very responsive and makes herself available to meet with students.

Lily is incredibly knowledgeable, compassionate, inspiring, and pushes her students to broaden their ways of thinking. I felt supported and encouraged by her instruction and felt motivated to do my best work. She planned the course in such a way that was very thoughtful and respectful of the guest lecturers while also providing exceptional readings and assignments that helped students get the most out of each topic covered.

Lily is a phenomenal instructor who cares tremendously about helping her students thrive. She pushes students to dig deeper and more effectively into complex topics. Professors like Lily make the GSD a better, more grounded, and more ethical place. Lily's scholarship, teaching abilities, and dedication warrant a permanent spot for her on the Harvard UPD faculty.

If you have a chance to take a class with Lily, especially this community development course, you won't regret it!

Incredible feedback on assignments
Encouraging attitude but still really pushes students
Makes personal connections to students
Deeply committed to growing individualized interests/strengths of each student
Great speaker and lecturer - thorough, passionate, and great with words. Refreshing use of language.
Curated great reading list that was unique and challenging
What preparation/background is necessary for this course?

None.

there was a deep knowledge of progressive urban planning, which may have influenced the presence of newcomers to the field.
A desire to learn!

None needed

Some prior experience in community development.

Backgrounds in community-based work are certainly helpful, but not absolutely required. Dr. Song does an excellent job of keeping track of our backgrounds and drawing them in as they are relevant to the course material.

No background is necessary.

Being a good writer, able to share/communicate ideas.

None

Helpful to have some knowledge of spatial students, but not required

How would you improve this course?

Provide some more time to discuss/debrief after guest speakers. I would also perhaps change the topics in future years to some more unique community development topics that are not as often discussed in other classes (e.g. equity and technology, art and community development, etc.) or which bring more controversial/opposing perspectives.

Some of the assignment instructions were a bit unclear at times. Also, the open-ended nature of the assignments worked better for some students, particularly those working on theses or those with specific professional interests, than it did for others. Perhaps there could be a bit more structure and guidance with the assignments. This was the only (minor) negative aspect of the course.

was a great capstone course that brought together many different degree programs, which is unlike any other course of that size. At the risk of diluting thoughtful discussion, having a more diverse opinion among students may have enriched the discussions even more. At times felt like echo-chamber.

I would have wanted more time for class discussions - but I also loved the speakers so I am torn. In a way, I would have wanted more than 3 hours a week.

Rethink the blog post assignment.

Some weeks the readings were too lengthy and historical and theoretical in the beginning. More contemporary readings are always nice and exciting (there isn't enough of that in other classes and this material lends itself to that).

Perhaps adding content on issues related to civic engagement and design.

I would offer it annually.

More standardized guidance to what is expected of speakers would be great moving forward.

Really enjoyed this course and have learned a lot! The only thing I can think is to provide a grading rubric.

I think there are just more opportunities to engage with the visitors to the class that could have helped us develop closer relationships with them.

We started with dialogue sessions and then moved into speakers the 2nd half of the course. I'd prefer to have a class of dialogue, a class of speakers, dialogue, then speakers -- alternate each week. This would spread out discussion and speakers evenly throughout course.

Was the role of the studio T.A./T.F.s appropriate and helpful to the course?

very helpful in uploading readings, responding to requests via email.

The TA was helpful for keeping things organized and answering questions.

Syed did a fabulous job!
Additional Comments.

By far one of the best classes I've taken at the GSD.

overall, this is a necessary course that **needs to be offered at least once a year**. without this course I do not think I would have left the GSD feeling as inspired, connected, or aware of progressive work being done on the ground. the structure this year was obviously preferred to previous offerings and able to attract sufficient numbers of students. the role of Lily Song whose deep knowledge and ability to provide proactive texts and encourage a rich discussion should not be dismissed.

I would recommend this course to any GSD student and really hope it is taught again.

Lily is incredible and everyone should take this course. A true gem, not just within the GSD but across the entire Harvard graduate community.

This was a unique course that I hope continues to be offered.

This was one of the best courses I've taken at Harvard and I highly recommend offering this every year. I've told many other fellow students about it who are intrigued and want to take it. Our discussion series was open to the Uni community and we had high attendance at a lot of our speaker sessions, a clear sign that this subject matter is of interest not just to GSD, but to students, fellows and professors even outside of GSD. --- Professor Song is one of the strongest professors I have had a GSD and she offers a perspective and research background that is unique at the school. I really value her perspective, her support of students, and her interests in strengthening the field.