**Livable and Sustainable Cities**

We begin with an overview of the historical and social roots of the problem in James Kunstler's *Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-made Landscapes*. Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*, the main text of the course, provides us with a toolkit of over 100 patterns with which we can analyze any city landscape and design a better one. With this new language, each of you will be able to begin designing and complete several design exercises.

After several weeks a clear picture of the problems and possibilities of each urban space will become evident. We will add to our pattern recognition by incorporating the latest thinking of the leading theorist of sustainable places, William McDonough, in *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things*. He shows how to effectively integrate the economic necessities of life with the surrounding environment.

We continue our study of patterns of sustainability in Timothy Beatley's *The Ecology of Place: Planning for Environment, Economy and Community* and a website that follows C. Alexander's Pattern Language, [www.conservationeconomy.net](http://www.conservationeconomy.net). You'll learn how to integrate all three areas of sustainability: social, economic, and ecological, and complete a final design exercise.

These will be used for the Group Design Project in which groups of 4–5 students will join together and redesign a particular site within their city of choice.

**Your grade** will be determined as follows:

- Writing and posting responses in the Discussion Forum 50%
- Design Exercises and Final Project 50%
- Total 100%

**Books**

*Geography of Nowhere* (Simon and Schuster), James H. Kunstler ($11)

*A Pattern Language* (Oxford) Christopher Alexander ($60) or membership in [www.patternlanguage.com](http://www.patternlanguage.com) @$5 per month for 4 months (You may do both: a portable book and an online book and archive)

*Cradle to Cradle* (North Point) William McDonough ($25)

*The Ecology of Place* (Island) Timothy Beatley ($28)
Films

**Note:** You will be expected to watch several commercial films as part of the course content. These should be easily available at local video rentals or can be purchases for a modest fee online.

*Brazil*
- Individual rental
*Cinema Paradiso*
- Individual rental
*Koyaanisqatsi*
- Individual rental
*Amarcord*
- Individual rental

With these ideas, examples, and patterns, you can study your own neighborhood and city, locate what works and what doesn't, and devise new patterns of sustainability. That is, you can become intelligent advocates and designers of living and sustainable cities.

In this online course, we will make full use of discussion forums, interactive web sites, short lectures and video presentations, and online presentations of student projects and papers. There is a vast amount of related and posted studies and projects currently under way. One of the exciting features of this topic is that many of the ideas and experiments are in their infancy and you as students can get in on ground-level discussion.

**Groups/Discussion Forum**

Much of the work through this course will be done through the Discussion Forum. You will be divided into three groups of ten or so members and will discuss issues within your group. Keeping the discussion groups small will allow everyone an opportunity to participate extensively.

In addition, you will also post your design exercises and your final project in your small group. In essence, this means that you will be participating in a class of ten.