

Reading Tips and Study Questions: For Session 25
Course Review + Your Future—December 12th

Required reading:

RPT (Chapter 9), **Susan Fainstein**, "New directions in planning theory."

Tips and questions

I'll be reviewing the major questions we've worked on and making connections to your planning education and career as best I can. I'll end at about 3:40PM to give you plenty of time to fill out the course evaluation, which one of the instructors will administer once I've left the room.

Fainstein's article reviews and critically discusses many of the planning theories we have discussed, and she goes beyond them.

1. What are Fainstein's main criticisms of the *communicative action* model of planning, and do they seem fair?
2. Why does she claim that a "substantive" agenda, such as that of the New Urbanism or other idealized versions of city form, is important to a model of planning?
3. Finally, what gap does she claim the "just city" perspective fills, and how persuasive do you find her argument?

Final thoughts

None of you began the course as mere technicians, but the aim of Gateway: Planning Action has been 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 retains.

The hope, too, is that the work we've done prepares you to think more boldly and creatively about **course choices** while here at MIT, to set priorities and explore new things in areas as varied as: political participation and democratic decisionmaking, institutional analysis and management, negotiation and dispute resolution, ethics and public life, personal effectiveness and leadership, communication, ambitious policy areas that cross sectors and involve complex conflicts and many kinds of potentially useful knowledge, and practicum courses

wherein the conceptual dilemmas and practical problems come together in rich ways.

Finally, about the **course evaluation** you'll complete: 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 it carefully in hopes of making Gateway as effective as possible. Part of that is preserving *what works to help you learn*—which is not always the same as “what you like best”—and part of it is trying new things or different things, so your input is crucial to both.

Thanks very much - Xav