

How To Find A Good Basic Housing Textbook

(or The Case of the Reluctant “AUTHOR”)

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Deep in the Colorado State University catalog is buried the following tantalizing course/description:

HD 330: Family Housing (3 credits)

Forces affecting the housing consumer and housing supply; financial, legal, social, and esthetic guides to choice of dwelling.

The students lucky enough to find this a required portion of their curriculum include our Housing and Design, Consumer Sciences and Home Economics Education majors. Now and again an interested, non-obligatory individual even wanders in for enlightenment into the mysteries of “Shelter and Why I Can’t Find It.”

The course objectives are as follows (in a barely recognizable attempt at the “new” method of writing educational objectives):

1. To identify the housing needs of individuals, families, and society in general.
2. To list various “shelter alternatives” available to man today *and* yesterday.
3. To identify the several interrelated forces/constraints/influences affecting both the human housing “problem” and progress toward “solutions”.
4. To be able to establish a value hierarchy for rational consumer judgements and decision-making in the selection of a “suitable living environment” (by applying the appropriate and necessary weight to each of the items in objectives 1-3 in a given situation).

Since beginning to teach this course two years ago, I (and more so my students) have

struggled with a number of texts. *Decent Home* was too heavy with statistics and repetition, and generally too detailed; *American Skyline* had too many post office murals and statues; *Personal Space* was “far-out”; *House Form and Culture* was far-removed — we don’t have time in 10 weeks to go back that far, much less “leave the country.” The preceding comments are slightly facetious, but none of the aforementioned books or combinations of same seemed to provide the necessary information. Outside readings presented logistic difficulties in getting sufficient numbers of copies on reserve in our library, not to mention the old axiom, “If they have their own book, they take the class more seriously.” Given the short term and the wealth of material I wish to cover, I began to ditto off entire lectures so that I could avoid the straight lecture, yet provide the students with sufficient background upon which to base lively (?) discussions. Although the ditto was a great idea (to allow constant revisions), they do wear out! (And I “wear out” about 150 students per year in HD 330).

I was fortunate to have the aid of a fourth-time graduate assistant last fall, so we began to search for short, comprehensive, up-to-date, readable sources to cover the course content. After screening them, I started requesting copyright permissions in my spare time. Those of you who have been this route before know it’s an experience. Those of you who haven’t, my advice is: Don’t try! To force the issue, I did not order any “big” texts for summer school. I did, however, order two small ones that serve as adjuncts to my final product: *We, The Americans, Our Homes* (Bureau of Census) and *Your Housing Dollar* (Household Finance Corporation). By the time we made a hasty dash to our Printing and Publications Department, I had only a few copyright permissions still missing, so I deleted those

articles. Additionally, some of my requests were refused or expensive reprints were offered instead. These were added to the course outline as outside readings, which the students will seek out; but they now have a *Family Housing Workbook* covering the majority of the course topics. (The terribly imaginative title required 5 seconds of deep thought and is probably a misnomer.)

The table of contents includes the following copyrighted articles, chapters, or portions:

1. “Residential Construction Industry — An Overview of National Problems,” (Denver Metro) *Home Builder*, Sept. 1973.
2. “The New American Land Rush,” *Time*, Oct. 1, 1973.
3. “The Case For New Towns,” *Consulting Engineer*, May 1973.
4. “Exclusionary Land-Use Controls: The Case of Northeastern New Jersey,” American Society of Planning Officials, 1970.
5. “Building Codes,” from Douglas Commission, *Building The American City*, 1968.
6. “Introduction,” from Grad, Frank P., *Legal Remedies for Housing Code Violations*, Research Report No. 14, USGPO, Washington, DC, 1968.
7. Corbett, Judith, “Man and His Living Environment,” speech.
8. Hanna, Sherman, “Predicting Family Housing Expenditure,” *American Association of Housing Educators Newsletter*, April 1, 1973.
9. “A Man’s Home is His Capital,” *Money*, Dec. 1972.
10. HUD, “HUD-FHA Comparison of Cooperative and Condominium Housing.”
11. HUD, “Buying A Home? Don’t Forget Those Closing Costs!”

12. Weaver, Robert, "Housing and Associated Problems of Minorities," from *Modernizing Urban Land Policy*, edited by Marion Clawson. (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press)

The remaining items are the material previously used to obtain my title, "CSU Handout Queen", including the following titles:

1. (Urban) Planning
2. Things to Consider When Selecting a Home in a Residential Environment
3. Subdivision Regulations and Design
4. The Residential Cycle (Foote, as revised by White)
5. Space and Occupancy Standards
6. A Simple Primer on Housing in Our Economy
7. To Rent or to Buy, That is the Question
8. National Association of Home Builders' Voluntary Insured Home Warranty Program
9. Municipal Finance
10. Key Dates in the History of Federal Intervention in Housing

I owe more than a small debt of gratitude to Stanford Lembeck, of Penn State, upon whose notes many of these were built.

The articles not included in the workbook, but assigned as outside readings are:

1. "Epilogue: Suburbia in the 70's and Beyond," in *Urbanization of the Suburbs*, edit. Masotti and Hadden, 1973, pp. 533-542.
2. Chapter 3: "Characteristics of the Housing Stock and Housing Standards", from Agan and Luchsinger, *The House* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1965).

3. Barrington, "Urban Growth: The Use of Land," *Consulting Engineer*, March-April 1974, unpagged.
4. "Homebuilding Boom Hits Snag in Suburbs," *U.S. News and World Report*, Oct. 16, 1972. pp. 39ff.
5. "Apartment Boom: Still Going, But Running Into Trouble," *U.S. News & World Report*, Aug. 2, 1971, pp. 38-40.
6. "A Trek Back Toward the Cities," *U.S. News & World Report*, April 8, 1974, pp. 52-53.
7. Chapter 4: "The Environs of the Dwelling," from Agan and Luchsinger, *The House* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1965).
8. Bruce-Briggs, "The Cost of Housing," *The Public Interest*, Summer 1973, pp. 34-41.

To reinforce the class work and readings, I require current housing news analyses, as well as attendance at City Council and Planning of Zoning Board Meetings. I hope to add selected movies and the *Community Land Use Game* when we have more time in the future — we go to the semester system in Fall, 1975. The titles of the various selections indicate most of the specifics of the course content. I make no claim that each choice is the best resource on its subject, but I have aimed for a mixture of basics and research, of popular and scholarly, of abstract and real, with some thought provocation and a little humor. Comments, criticisms, and suggestions are welcome.