

URBAN STUDIES

713 Milstein Learning Center
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Department Assistant: Valerie Coates

Mission

The Barnard–Columbia Urban Studies program enables students to explore and understand the urban experience in all of its richness and complexity. It recognizes the city as an amalgam of diverse peoples and their social, political, economic, and cultural interactions within a distinctive built environment. Students study the evolution and variety of urban forms and governance structures, which create opportunities for, as well as constrain, the exercise of human agency, individual and collective. They explore the place of the city in different historical and comparative contexts, as well as in the human imagination.

Majors build an intellectual foundation that combines interdisciplinary coursework and a concentration of study within a single field. Through the two-semester junior colloquium, students study urban history and contemporary issues, and at the same time hone their interdisciplinary, analytical and research skills. This shared experience prepares them for their independent research project in their senior year. We encourage our majors to use New York City as a laboratory, and many courses draw on the vast resources of the city and include an off-campus experience.

Student Learning Outcomes

Having successfully completed the major in Urban Studies, the student will be able to:

- Apply concepts or methods from more than one social science or adjacent discipline to analyze an urban issue or problem.
- Describe the distinctive social, cultural, and spatial features of cities and illustrate their impacts on the urban experience.
- Apply basic skills of empirical reasoning to an urban problem.
- Explain how the idea of the city varies in different historical and comparative contexts.
- Demonstrate familiarity with a particular disciplinary approach to the city as an object of study.
- Demonstrate understanding of the history and variety of urban forms and governance structures.
- Articulate a well-defined research question, conduct independent research using primary sources and a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, and write a substantive research paper.
- Communicate ideas effectively in written or oral form.
- Organize and present group research projects.

Director: Gergely Baics (History and Urban Studies)

Associate Director: Aaron Passell (Urban Studies)

Columbia College Advisor: Amy Chazkel, Bernard Hirschhorn Associate Professor of Urban Studies

General Studies Advisor: Aaron Passell, Associate Director (Urban Studies)

Urban Studies Faculty

Assistant Professors: Gergely Baics (History and Urban Studies), Deborah Becher (Sociology), Angela Simms (Sociology and Urban Studies), Nick R. Smith (Architecture and Urban Studies)

Associate Professors: Mary Rocco (Term, Urban Studies), Christian Siener (Term, Urban Studies), Chandler Miranda (Term, Urban Studies)

The Urban Studies **Advisory Committee** consults on matters of curriculum and program direction. For more information, please consult the **Advisory Committee** web page on the program website

Major in Urban Studies

The major in urban studies is comprised of seven curricular requirements:

Requirement U: Introduction to Urban Studies (1 course)

URBS UN1515 Introduction to Urban Studies

Requirement A: Urban-Related Social Sciences (3 courses)

One course dealing primarily with urban subject matter from *each of three* of the following disciplines: Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Sociology. For students declaring a major in Urban Studies after Spring 2018, one of the three courses *must* be History.

Many courses offered through Urban Studies may count towards Requirement A. For example, URBS UN3420 Introduction to Urban Sociology Introduction to Urban Sociology counts as a Sociology course, URBS UN3450 Neighborhood and Community Development counts as a Political Science course, etc. Student should try to complete at least two of the Requirement A courses before taking the Junior Seminar (see Requirement E, below). It is recommended that majors fulfill this requirement before their junior year.

Requirement B: Urban-Related Non-Social Science (1 course)

One course dealing primarily with urban subject matter from a discipline not listed above (such as Architecture, Art History, English, Environmental Science, etc.)

Requirement C: Methods of Analysis (1 course)

One course in methods of analysis, such as URBS UN2200 INTRODUCTION TO GIS METHODS. Methods courses in related disciplines will also be considered for the requirement. Please consult the program website (<https://urban.barnard.edu/>) or the Associate Director

Requirement D: Specialization (5 courses)

Five or more courses in a specialization from one of the participating departments. Barnard College students can double-count one A, B, or C course toward this requirement (only one of five), with the approval of the Director; Columbia College and General Studies students cannot double-count courses. Barnard majors also have specific requirements for each specialization, which are outlined in detail on the program website, urban.barnard.edu (<http://urban.barnard.edu/>).

Requirement E: Junior Seminar (1 course)

URBS UN3545 Junior Seminar: The Shaping of the Modern City Multiple sections of this course are taught each semester by various faculty on different topics. For more information, please consult the program website (<https://urban.barnard.edu/>) or the Associate Director.

Requirement F: Senior Seminar (2 courses)

A senior thesis written in conjunction with a two-semester research seminar, chosen from the following four options:

URBS UN3992 Senior Seminar: The Built Environment

URBS UN3994 Senior Seminar: New York Field Research

URBS UN3996 Senior Seminar: International Topics in Urban Studies

A research seminar in the department of specialization. This option must be approved by the Associate Director.

A complete list and courses that fulfill requirements A–E can be found on the program's website, urban.barnard.edu (<http://urban.barnard.edu/>).

Appropriate substitutions may be made for courses listed above with the approval of the Associate Director.

There is no minor in Urban Studies.

There is no concentration in Urban Studies.

URBS UN2200 INTRODUCTION TO GIS METHODS. 3 points.

Prerequisites: Must attend first class for instructor permission.
Prerequisites: Must attend first class for instructor permission. Students create maps using ArcGIS software, analyze the physical and social processes presented in the digital model, and use the data to solve specific spatial analysis problems. Note: this course fulfills the C requirement in Urban Studies.

Fall 2020: URBS UN2200

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 2200	001/00001	T Th 10:10am - 11:25am Room TBA	Christian Siener	3	20/24

URBS S1517 INTRODUCTION TO URBAN STUDIES. 3.00 points.

This course is intended to be both an interdisciplinary introduction to the city and to the field of Urban Studies. As an introduction to the city, the course will address a variety of questions: What is a city? How did cities develop? How do cities function socially, politically, and economically? Why do people live in cities? What are some of the major issues facing cities in the early twenty-first century, and how can cities address these issues? As an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of Urban Studies, the course will present models of how scholars approach cities from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints, including architecture, planning, law, sociology, history, archaeology, anthropology, political science, public policy, and geography. Students will learn some of the major concepts in the field of Urban Studies, and will study the works of leading scholars in the field. Students in the course will approach cities from a number of disciplines, not only through the reading, but also through assignments that take place in different locations throughout New York City

URBS S3309 INTRODUCTION TO URBAN ETHNOGRAPHIES. 3 points.

What is an ethnography and what makes an ethnography “urban”? This course explores how social scientists use ethnography to analyze questions and dilemmas often associated with urban settings. We will combine close readings of ethnographies with field-based inquiry, including our own studies of urban public space. Through both our readings and our field exercises, we will focus on the methods at the heart of ethnography: observation and participant-observation.

URBS UN1515 Introduction to Urban Studies. 3 points.

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Fall 2020: URBS UN1515

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 1515	001/00002	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm Room TBA	Aaron Passell	3	33/35

URBS UN3440 Shrinking Cities. 3 points.

While some cities thrive and struggle to house the global majority, others struggle with the effects of urban shrinkage—population loss, disinvestment and abandonment. The path to urban decline is paved by social, economic and spatial forces that result in shrinking cities. This class explores how to understand and engage with urban decline. It includes a consideration of sundry efforts to reverse, live with, and rethink urban decline in a variety of locales. The hope is that this exercise will shed light not only on iconic declining places like Detroit, but also on the nature of uneven development and how it is the rule rather than the anomalous exception within capitalist urbanization.

Course materials draw on disciplines such as planning, economics, architecture, history and sociology to help understand urban decline and its outcomes from a variety of perspectives. Over the course of the semester, we will investigate larger processes—globalization, deindustrialization and socioeconomic change—to understand how cities and communities responded to the consequences of these forces.

We will engage with the global literature on shrinking cities but will be focused primarily on exploring the dynamics of shrinkage in US cities. To that end, following a wide-reaching examination of nation-wide phenomena, we will study in-depth a sample of cities to understand local and regional variations and responses. How do we treat cities that do not grow? Given the constrained or complete lack of resources in these places, to what extent should some cities be allowed to “die”? What is the impact on the residents that remain in these places?

Fall 2020: URBS UN3440

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3440	001/00003	M W 11:40am - 2:55pm Room TBA	Mary Rocco	3	24/30

URBS UN3545 Junior Seminar: The Shaping of the Modern City. 4 points.

Prerequisites: Non-majors admitted by permission of instructor. Students must attend first class. Enrollment limited to 16 students per section.

General Education Requirement: Historical Studies.

Introduction to the historical process and social consequences of urban growth, from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present.

Fall 2020: URBS UN3545

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3545	001/00005	T Th 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Mary Rocco	4	16/15
URBS 3545	002/00006	T Th 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Nicholas Smith	4	8/15
URBS 3545	003/00009	M W 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Deborah Becher	4	18/15

URBS UN3480 From Homelessness to Foreclosure: NYC Geographies of Shelter and Home. 4 points.

This course will examine the social, political, and economic elements that have aligned in New York City to produce the most expansive infrastructure of homeless shelters in the United States, as well as ongoing changes in the city's homeless policy since the housing foreclosure crisis. While we will focus primarily on the past 30 to 40 years in New York City, we will consider the history of homelessness and housing in the United States since the Great Depression. Major themes will include criminalization, origin myths, and representations of people who are experiencing homelessness. Key questions will include: In what ways is the current geography of homelessness the result of historical patterns of racism and discrimination? How does studying homelessness provide insight into the ways urban spaces are made? Why have shelters become the primary public response to homelessness in New York? How are race and gender central to the project of building a shelter infrastructure in New York? How are shelters experienced by those living in them? What are some of the ways people living in shelters organize to advocate for their rights and to resist mainstream representations?

URBS UN3992 Senior Seminar: The Built Environment. 4 points.

(year-long course, 4 points per term)

Prerequisites: Senior standing. Year-long course; participation is for two consecutive terms. No new students admitted for spring.

Emphasizes the study of the built environment of cities and suburbs, and the related debates. Readings, class presentations, and written work culminate in major individual projects, under the supervision of faculty trained in architecture, urban design, or urban planning.

Fall 2020: URBS UN3992

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3992	001/00007	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Aaron Passell	4	11/12
URBS 3992	002/00011	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Mary Rocco	4	11/12
URBS 3992	003/00012	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Christian Siener	4	10/12

URBS UN3994 Senior Seminar: New York Field Research. 4 points.

(year-long course, 4 points per term)

Prerequisites: Senior standing. Year-long course; participation is for two consecutive terms. No new students admitted for spring.

Using New York City as a research laboratory, under the guidance of the faculty coordinator, students clarify basic theoretical issues related to their chosen research problem; find ways of making a series of empirical questions operational; collect evidence to test hypotheses; analyze the data using a variety of social science techniques; and produce reports of basic findings.

Fall 2020: URBS UN3994

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3994	001/00013	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Chandler Miranda	4	7/12

URBS UN3310 Race, Space, and Urban Schools. 3 points.

Many people don't think of themselves as having attended segregated schools. And yet, most of us went to schools attended primarily by people who looked very much like us. In fact, schools have become more segregated over the past 30 years, even as the country becomes increasingly multiracial. In this class, we will use public schools as an example to examine the role race plays in shaping urban spaces and institutions. We will begin by unpacking the concept of racialization, or the process by which a person, place, phenomenon, or characteristic becomes associated with a certain race. Then, we will explore the following questions: What are the connections between city schools and their local contexts? What does it mean to be a "neighborhood school"? How do changes in neighborhoods change schools? We will use ethnographies, narrative non-fiction, and educational research to explore these questions from a variety of perspectives. You will apply what you have learned to your own experiences and to current debates over urban policies and public schools. This course will extend your understanding of key anthropological and sociological perspectives on urban inequality in the United States, as well as introduce you to critical theory.

URBS UN3420 Introduction to Urban Sociology. 3 points.

Prerequisites: Students must attend first class.

Examines the diverse ways in which sociology has defined and studied cities, focusing on the people who live and work in the city, and the transformations U.S. cities are undergoing today. Sociological methods, including ethnography, survey research, quantitative studies, and participant observation will provide perspectives on key urban questions such as street life, race, immigration, globalization, conflict, and redevelopment.

URBS UN3450 Neighborhood and Community Development. 3 points.

New York City is made up of more than 400 neighborhoods. The concept of neighborhoods in cities has had many meanings and understandings over time. Equally complex is the concept of community used to describe the people attached to or defined by neighborhood. While neighborhood can be interpreted as a spatial, social, political, racial, ethnic, or even, economic unit; community often refers to the group of stakeholders (i.e. residents, workers, investors) whose interests directly align with the conditions of their environment. Community development is “a process where these community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems” that result from the changing contexts in their neighborhoods. Using a variety of theories and approaches, residents organize themselves or work with community development practitioners on the ground to obtain safe, affordable housing, improve the public realm, build wealth, get heard politically, develop human capital, and connect to metropolitan labor and housing markets. To address the ever-changing contexts of neighborhoods, community development organizations are taking on new roles and adapting (in various cases) to larger forces within the city, region and nation such as disinvestment, reinvestment, increased cultural diversity, an uncertain macroeconomic environment, and changes in federal policy.

For more than a century, city-dwellers—and especially New Yorkers—have been tackling these challenges. This course will examine both historic and contemporary community building and development efforts, paying special attention to approaches which were shaped by New York City. This urban center, often described as a “city of neighborhoods,” has long been a seedbed for community-based problem-solving inventions. The course will focus on the theories (why?), tools (how?), and actors (who?) within the field of community development practice and is organized around important sectors (housing, economic development, food systems, arts), case studies, and contested concepts (public participation, social capital, public space).

Cross-listed Courses

HIST UN2689 COLONIAL CITIES OF THE AMERICAS, c. 1500-1800. 4 points.

This course examines the history of cities in the Americas in the colonial era, c. 1500-1800, organized around three large themes. First, we study the precolonial origins of American urban systems, focusing especially on Mesoamerica and the Andes, and exploring questions of urban continuity, disruption and change, and the forms of indigenous cities. Second, we study various patterns of city foundations and city types across the Americas, examining Spanish, Portuguese, British, Dutch and French colonial urban systems. Third, we focus on the cities more closely by looking at key issues such as urban form, built environment, social structure. Specific themes include a critical analysis of the Spanish colonial grid, the baroque city, and 18th-century urban reforms, as well as race and class, urban slavery, and urban disease environments.

Fall 2020: HIST UN2689

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HIST 2689	001/20761	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm Online Only	Caterina Pizzigoni, Gergely Baics	4	39/40

ARCH UN3502 URBANIZING CHINA. 4 points.

This course investigates the dramatic urban transformation that has taken place in mainland China over the last four decades. The speed and scale of this transformation have produced emergent new lifeways, settlement patterns, and land uses that increasingly blur the distinction between urban and rural areas. At the same time, Chinese society is still characterized by rigid, administrative divisions between the nation's urban and rural sectors, with profound consequences for people's lives and livelihoods. The course therefore examines the intersection between the rapid transformation of China's built environment and the glacial transformation of its administrative categories. We will take an interdisciplinary approach to this investigation, using perspectives from architecture, history, geography, political science, anthropology, urban planning, and cultural studies, among other disciplines.

The course is divided into two parts: Over the first five weeks, we will consider the historical context of China's urbanization and its urban-rural relations, including the imperial, colonial, and socialist periods, as well as the current period of reform. In the remainder of the semester, we will turn our focus to contemporary processes of urbanization, with a particular emphasis on the complex interrelationship between urban and rural China. This portion of the semester is organized into three two-week units on land and planning, housing and demolition, and citizenship and personhood.

Fall 2020: ARCH UN3502

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ARCH 3502	001/00684	M T W Th 1:10pm - 2:25pm Room TBA	Nicholas Smith	4	44/60

HIST GU4012 HISTORY OF THE CITY IN LATIN AMERICA. 4.00 points.

This course covers the historical development of cities in Latin America. Readings examine the concentration of people in commercial and political centers from the beginnings of European colonization in the sixteenth century to the present day and will introduce contrasting approaches to the study of urban culture, politics, society, and the built environment. Central themes include the reciprocal relationships between growing urban areas and the countryside; cities as sites of imperial power and their post-colonial role in nation-building; changing power dynamics in modern Latin America, especially as they impacted the lives of cities' nonelite majority populations; the legalities and politics of urban space; the complexity and historical development of urban segregation; the rise of informal economies; and the constant tension between tradition and progress through which urban societies have formed. Reading knowledge of Spanish and/or Portuguese will be helpful but is not required. Open to both undergraduate and graduate students; graduate students will be given additional reading and writing assignments

Spring 2021: HIST GU4012

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
HIST 4012	001/10081	M 4:10pm - 6:00pm Room TBA	Amy Chazkel	4.00	0/18

HIST UN3277 History of Urban Crime and Policing in Latin America in Global Perspective. 4 points.

This seminar will examine the social construction of criminality and the institutions that developed to impose and enforce the criminal law as reflections of Latin American society throughout the region's history, with a particular emphasis on the rise of police forces as the principal means of day-to-day urban governance. Topics include policing and urban slavery; policing the urban "underworld"; the changing cultural importance of police in urban popular culture; the growth of scientific policing methods, along with modern criminology and eugenics; policing and the enforcement of gender norms in urban public spaces; the role of urban policing in the rise of military governments in the twentieth century; organized crime; transitional justice and the contemporary question of the rule of law; and the transnational movement of ideas about and innovations in policing practice. In our readings and class discussions over the course of the semester, we will trace how professionalized, modern police forces took shape in cities across the region over time. This course actually begins, however, in the colonial period before there was anything that we would recognize as a modern, uniformed, state-run police force. We will thus have a broad perspective from which to analyze critically the role of police in the development of Latin American urban societies—in other words, to see the police in the contemporary era as contingent on complex historical processes, which we will seek to understand.