URBAN STUDIES

713 Milstein Learning Center
212-854-4073
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)

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
A minimum of 42 credits is required to complete the Urban Studies major. 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 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.

Each course should be chosen from the following disciplines: Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Public Health, Sociology, or Urban Studies and be focused on urban issues. The three courses must be selected from three separate disciplines and they must appear on the Urban Studies approved list to fulfill the ‘A’ requirement for the major (if a course does not appear on the list that you believe should, please contact the Associate Director). Each course should also be taken with a different professor (i.e. you may not use two courses with the same professor to fulfill two of your A requirements). We recommend that you complete at least two of your three ‘A’ courses before taking the Junior Seminar, but this is not a hard requirement.

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 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.
Requirement E: Junior Seminar (1 course)
We recommend that you complete at least two of your three 'A' courses before taking the Junior Seminar, but this is not a hard requirement.

**URBS UN3440 Shrinking Cities. 3 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.

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**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.

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.

A complete list and courses that fulfill requirements A–E can be found on the program’s website, urban.barnard.edu.

**URBS UN3994 Senior Seminar: New York Field Research**
URBS UN3996 Senior Seminar: International Topics in Urban Studies

Students who, for some reason, will not be able to complete the Fall-Spring Senior Seminar sequence should consult with the Associate Director about alternatives.

Spring 2021: URBS UN2200
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**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?
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.

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.
URBS UN3315 Metropolitics of Race and Place. 3 points.
Prerequisites: Students must attend first class.
This class explores how racism and racialized capitalism and politics shape the distribution of material resources among cities and suburbs in metropolitan areas and the racial and ethnic groups residing in them. Readings and discussion focus on the history of metropolitan area expansion and economic development, as well as contemporary social processes shaping racial and ethnic groups’ access to high-quality public goods and private amenities. We address racial and ethnic groups’ evolving political agendas in today’s increasingly market-driven socio-political context, noting the roles of residents; federal, state, and local governments; market institutions and actors; urban planners, activist organizations, foundations, and social scientists, among others. Here is a sample of specific topics: race/ethnicity and who “belongs” in what “place;” inequitable government and market investment across racial and ethnic communities over time and “sedimentation effects” (for example, the “redlining” of Black communities leading to their inability to access loan and credit markets and the resulting wealth gap between Blacks and Whites); gentrification processes; creating sufficient, sustainable tax bases; and suburban sprawl. Assignments will include two short response papers, mid-term and final exams, and another project to be determined.

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).

URBS 3351 URBS 3351 Urban Elsewheres: Exploring a World of Cities. 3.00 points.
We live in an increasingly urbanized world. But what does it mean to be “urban”? As urbanization reaches more corners of the globe, its forms and processes become increasingly diverse. Urban Elsewheres is dedicated to investigating this diversity and to exploring the implications that unfamiliar urban phenomena might have for how we understand urbanization—both elsewhere in the world and in our own backyards. Through a comparative engagement with case studies drawn from around the world, this course will challenge some of our most deeply held, common sense assumptions about urbanization. Students will be asked to stretch the conceptual limits of urbanization and explore the social and political possibilities of an expanded urbanism. In doing so, the course will engage with the many of the most heated theoretical debates about urbanization, equipping students with a set of comparative analytical tools with which to explore the wider field of urban studies.
URBS UN3352 URBAN ELSEWHERES - DISCUSSION. 0.00 points.

Cross-listed Courses
ARCH UN3502 URBANIZING CHINA. 4 points.

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.
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.

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URBS S1517 INTRODUCTION TO URBAN STUDIES. 3.00 points.
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