

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.

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

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 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.

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 UN3545 JUNIOR SEMINAR IN URBAN STUDIES Multiple sections of this course are taught each semester by various faculty on different

topics. For more information, please consult the [program website](#) or the Associate Director.

Requirement F: Senior Seminar (2 courses)

An original senior thesis written in conjunction with a two-semester research seminar on a topic of your choice. Please consult with your Urban Studies advisor and choose from among:

URBS UN3992 Senior Seminar: The Built Environment URBS UN3993 Senior Seminar: The Built Environment

URBS UN3994 Senior Seminar: New York Field Research URBS UN3995 Senior Seminar: New York Field Research

URBS UN3996 Senior Seminar: International Topics in Urban Studies
URBS UN3997 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.

A complete list and courses that fulfill requirements A–E can be found on the program's website, 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. 3.00 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 2022: URBS UN2200

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 2200	001/00161	T Th 10:10am - 11:25am 102 Milstein Center	Christian Siener	3.00	24/25

Spring 2023: URBS UN2200

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 2200	001/00088	T Th 10:10am - 11:25am 102 Milstein Center	Christian Siener	3.00	27/24

URBS UN1515 Introduction to Urban Studies. 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.

Fall 2022: URBS UN1515

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 1515	001/00160	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm 304 Barnard Hall	Aaron Passell	3	137/150

Spring 2023: URBS UN1515

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 1515	001/00087	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm 323 Milbank Hall	Claire Panetta	3	41/40

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 2022: URBS UN3440

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3440	001/00163	M W 11:40am - 12:55pm 903 Altschul Hall	Claire Panetta	3	27/35

URBS UN3545 JUNIOR SEMINAR IN URBAN STUDIES. 4.00 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.

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

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

Fall 2022: URBS UN3545

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3545	001/00165	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm 318 Milbank Hall	Nick Smith	4.00	6/16
URBS 3545	002/00166	T 4:10pm - 6:00pm 403 Barnard Hall	Mary Rocco	4.00	14/16
URBS 3545	003/00167	W 12:10pm - 2:00pm 227 Milbank Hall	Deborah Becher	4.00	8/16

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 2022: URBS UN3992

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3992	001/00169	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm 113 Milstein Center	Aaron Passell	4	11/12
URBS 3992	002/00170	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm 318 Milbank Hall	Claire Panetta	4	12/12
URBS 3992	003/00171	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm 323 Milbank Hall	Christian Siener	4	11/12

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.

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.

Spring 2023: URBS UN3420

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3420	001/00090	T Th 11:40am - 12:55pm LI104 Diana Center	Aaron Passell	3	31/30

URBS UN3351 URBAN ELSEWHERE: EXPLORING A WORLD OF CITIES.**4.00 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 Elsewhere 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

Fall 2022: URBS UN3351

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3351	001/00164	M W 2:40pm - 3:55pm L1103 Diana Center	Nick Smith	4.00	53/60

URBS UN3308 INTRO TO URBAN ETHNOGRAPHIES. 3.00 points.

Prerequisites: Students must attend first class.

What is ethnography and what makes 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. As we read other scholars’ work, we will ask how the author uses ethnographic tools to explore issues that are suitable for intensive fieldwork. We will assess which kinds of research problems and theoretical perspectives are a good fit with ethnography and the roles that ethnography can play in transdisciplinary research projects. You will apply what you have learned about research to design your own pilot fieldwork. The ethnographies that we read together will examine intersections of housing, race, and class in urban communities. You are welcome to extend this focus to your own fieldwork, but it’s not required to do so. This is a writing-intensive course, and we will devote a considerable portion of class time to workshop your individual projects.

Fall 2022: URBS UN3308

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3308	001/00798	W 4:10pm - 6:00pm 111 Milstein Center	Chandler Miranda	3.00	17/16

Spring 2023: URBS UN3308

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
URBS 3308	001/00089	M 2:10pm - 4:00pm 113 Milstein Center	Fawziah Qadir	3.00	24/22

Cross-listed Courses**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.

ARCH GU4300 The Just City: Global Debates in Urban Planning and Policy. 4.00 points.

Urbanization is inherently unequal, inscribing social, economic, environmental, and political unevenness into the spatial fabric of the city. But the distribution of such inequality is not inevitable. Urbanization is a product of the collective decisions we make (or choose not to make) in response to the shared challenges we face in our cities. And, thus, the patterns of urbanization can be changed. This is the task of urban planning and the starting point for this advanced seminar, which asks how we can reshape our cities to be more just—to alleviate inequality rather than compound it. In embarking on this effort, we face numerous “wicked” problems without clear-cut solutions. The approaches one takes in addressing urban inequality are therefore fundamentally normative—they are shaped by one’s place in the world and one’s view of it. The central challenge in addressing inequality is thus establishing a basis for collective action amongst diverse actors with differing—and sometimes conflicting—values and views. In other words, planning the just city a matter of both empathy and debate. In this course, we will endeavor to develop informed positions that can help us engage with others as a basis for taking collective action. The course is organized into four 3-week modules, each of which addresses a dimension of the just city: equity, democracy, diversity, and sustainability. In the first week of each module, we will discuss how the issue has been understood in history and theory (with an emphasis on tradeoffs between different priorities and values); in the second week, we will apply this discussion to a global case study prepared and presented by a team of students; and in the third week, we will hold an in-class debate to determine what should be done. Specific case studies vary each year

Fall 2022: ARCH GU4300

Course Number	Section/Call Number	Times/Location	Instructor	Points	Enrollment
ARCH 4300	001/00373	Th 2:10pm - 4:00pm 501 Diana Center	Nick Smith	4.00	14/16

HIST UN1786 History of the City in Latin America. 4 points.

This course covers the historical development of cities in Latin America. Readings, lectures, and discussion sections will examine the concentration of people in commercial and political centers from the beginnings of European colonization in the fifteenth 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; 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; planned versus unplanned cities and the rise of informal economies; the way changing legal and political rights regimes have affected urban life; and the constant tension between tradition and progress through which urban society was formed. There are no prerequisites for this course. Attendance at weekly Discussion Sections required.

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.

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

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 BC3842 Subaltern Urbanism: South Asia. 3.00 points.

This course asks how spatial politics intersect with economic inequality and social difference. The course draws on the convergent yet distinct urban trajectories of cities in the global South (Bangalore; Bombay/Mumbai; Lahore; New Delhi; Dhaka) as an enabling location for exploring broader questions of comparative and global urbanism from an explicitly South-South perspective. That is, we ask how distinct yet connected urban forms might force us to alter our approaches to the city; approaches that are largely drawn from modular Euro-American paradigms for understanding urbanization as coeval with modernity, as well as industrialization. We do so in this seminar by focusing on people and practices—subaltern urbanity (and on those whose labor produced the modern city), as well as on spatial orders—the informal or unintended city—to ask the question: "what makes and unmakes a city?" How might questions about built form, industrialization, capital flows, and social life and inhabitation that takes the perspective of "city theory from the Global South" shed new understanding on the history of the city, the extranational frames of colonial modernity, and the ongoing impact of neoliberalism? How can we rethink critical concepts in urban studies (precarity, spatial segregation, subalternity, economies of eviction, urban dispossession) through embedded studies of locality and lifemaking?

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