

URP 580: METROPOLITAN STRUCTURE

Winter 2024

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This class explores the political, economic, and social forces shaping cities around the world at the present moment. Students will become familiar with the material underpinnings of city building and urban economic growth. They will learn about a variety of urban governance structures and will discuss emerging trends in innovative governing. Students will read and discuss political economic theories of urban growth. They will explore the opportunities for local political decision-making within the constraints of international political economic systems. Students will explore the tensions between planning for economic growth and planning for social justice, diversity, and inclusion. They will also explore cities and pieces of cities as nodes within international networks of global urban infrastructure. These themes explain why cities are the way they are. Exploring these themes prepares students to engage with the broad forces shaping cities. Through this understanding, students will gain the foundation of knowledge needed in other courses to craft meaningful, effective planning interventions responding to the constraints and leveraging the opportunities inherent within urban structuring processes.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the term, students will be able to:

- Conceptualize the city as a set of interconnected material, economic, and political systems in motion shaping potential patterns of economic development
- Explain several approaches to urban governing and assess their relative capacities, strengths, and weakness as it relates to economic growth, infrastructure provisioning, and social justice.
- Understand the market dynamics shaping urban growth, redevelopment, uneven development, and neighborhood decline.
- Critically assess emerging trends regarding the changing role of government and non-government entities, as well as local and nonlocal actors, in city planning and development processes.
- Evaluate the practical and political effect globalization trends have on the underlying systems shaping urban development.

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to show up to class having done the assigned readings in advance, as well as participate in classroom discussions and exercises. Student grades are assigned based on participation, assignments, and exams.