Hunter College, ECO 335: Urban Economics

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Office: HW 1532B
Office Hours: MoWe 2:30PM to 3:30PM
Course Time/Place: MoWe 11:30AM to 12:45PM

Course Description

Urban economics studies how cities work and why they take the forms they do. We will use economic models and evidence to understand the spatial organization of households and firms, land and housing markets, transportation and commuting, neighborhood change, segregation and inequality, and the role of local public policy. The course emphasizes clear economic reasoning, graphical and algebraic analysis, and connecting theory to real-world urban issues.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain why cities exist, and how agglomeration forces and congestion costs shape city size and productivity.
2. Use urban models to analyze land rents, housing prices, density, and commuting patterns.
3. Evaluate how transportation costs and infrastructure affect where people live and work.
4. Analyze housing supply, zoning, and local land-use regulation, including intended and unintended effects.
5. Use data and evidence to study urban outcomes such as neighborhood change, segregation, and inequality.
6. Assess local public finance issues, including local public goods, property taxation, and fiscal competition.
7. Apply economic reasoning to contemporary urban policy debates, and communicate results clearly in writing and presentations.

Texts and Course Platforms

This class is based around three books:

- *Lectures in Urban Economics* (Jan K. Brueckner)
- *Urban Economics* (Arthur O'Sullivan)
- *Triumph of the City* (Edward Glaeser)

Note on *Triumph of the City*: This is not a textbook. It is an accessible and engaging book with interesting insights into cities. It is highly recommended.

Attendance and Lecture Format

Attendance is **mandatory**, but it **does not directly affect your grade**. I will not keep formal attendance records, though I do tend to notice patterns of attendance and participation.

Lectures will **not** be recorded. Class time is intended to be an efficient use of your time, and it is the best way to stay on track.

Our meetings will use a mixture of slide decks and in-class examples worked out on the board. Slide decks will be posted to the course page sometime after lecture.

Grading

There are **500 points** total. Your grade will be determined by:

- **Final Exam:** 225 points (45%)
- **Midterm Exam:** 150 points (30%)
- **Problem Sets:** 75 points total (15%)
  4 problem sets, 25 points each, **lowest score dropped**
- **Presentation:** 50 points (10%)

Is there a curve? Typically yes. At the end of the term, the class is usually curved.

Exams

Exams will be administered during class time. Tentative exam dates are listed below and may change. Any changes will be announced in writing at least two weeks in advance.

No alternate exam dates will be offered. Makeup exams or grade reweighting will only be considered in cases of documented emergencies, subject to instructor approval. If you anticipate missing an exam or facing circumstances that interfere with your course participation, contact me as soon as possible prior to the exam.

The College has strict policies regarding missed final exams. Missing the final results in an incomplete grade (INC or WU) and requires taking a makeup exam during the middle of the following semester. This delays course completion and should be avoided.

Midterm Exam: March 16th

The Hunter College Final Exam Schedule lists our final exam as **May 20th, 11:30AM to 1:30PM**.

Problem Sets

There will be **four** problem sets throughout the term. Problem sets are designed to help you practice the tools used in urban economics and to signal what to expect on the exams.

- Each problem set is worth **25 points**.
- The **lowest-scoring** problem set will be **dropped**.
- **No late problem sets** will be accepted.

Problem sets are your best study tool for the exams. Do all of them.

General tips: start early, work with others, and come to office hours.

Group Presentation

At the end of the course, you will complete a **group presentation** on a journal article related to urban economics.

- Groups will be **randomly assigned** after the first week.
- Papers must be **approved by me**. If you do not choose a paper, one will be assigned.
- You should present the paper as if you were the author, including motivation/background, data, empirical approach, main results, conclusions, and possible extensions.

Topics

1. Existence of Cities
2. Clustering, City Size, & Growth
3. Rents and city shape
4. Neighborhood Choice
5. Urban Labor Markets
6. Minimum Wage, Monopsony & Empirics
7. Place Based Policies
8. Housing Policy
9. Transportation
10. The Geography of Income Inequality

Policies

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. No dictionaries, cell phones, headphones, or PDAs of any kind are allowed during exams, and students may not communicate with other students during exams.

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy of Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

ADA Policy

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions.

Students with documented disabilities (emotional, medical, physical, and/or learning) should consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: **(212) 772-4857** or **(212) 650-3230**.