

URBAN STUDIES

Department of Urban Studies

The goal of the Department of Urban Studies is to foster an understanding of the complex challenges that face an increasingly urban and metropolitan world. The field of Urban Studies uses an interdisciplinary approach to understand metropolitan life. It immerses students in an academically rigorous and personally challenging course of study that helps them discover who they are, and how they can become change agents in this global society. The Urban Studies Department cultivates the development of critical thinking skills necessary to excel in today's competitive world. Urban Studies graduates enjoy outstanding careers in a wide variety of occupations, such as, public administration, policy development, non-profit management, urban planning, business, law, human services, health care management, housing management, gerontology and social work.

- 4+1 Program in Urban Studies / Master of Public Administration and Policy (MPAP)
- 4+1 Program in Urban Studies / Master of Public Management (MPM)
- 4+1 Program in Urban Studies / Master of Science in Nonprofit Management (NPM)
- Public Policy and Urban Planning Minor
- Social Work and Social Policy Minor
- Urban Studies Major
- Urban Studies Major, Concentration in Public Policy and Urban Planning
- Urban Studies Major, Concentration in Social Work and Social Policy
- Urban Studies Minor

Faculty

Thomas E. Conroy, Professor (2010), B.A. Salem State University; M.A., Ph.D. University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Shiko Gathuo, Professor (2005), B.Ed. Kenyatta University; M.B.A. University of Nairobi; Grad Certificate, M.S., Ph.D. University of Massachusetts, Boston

Danielle Morales, Assistant Professor (2022), B.S. Renmin University of China; M.S., Ph.D. Texas A&M University

Timothy E. Murphy, Department Chair, Associate Professor (2013), B.A. Indiana University; M.A., Ph.D. University of California, Davis

Adam Saltsman, Associate Professor (2016), B.A. Colby College; M.A., Ph.D. Boston College

Courses

UR-101 Introduction to Urban Studies

LASC Categories: USW, HBS

This course offers a broad contextual overview of urban life that examines the relationship between humans and their environment. Fall and Spring and every year. 3 Credits

UR-103 Introduction to Women's Studies

LASC Categories: DAC, ICW, HBS

This course uses a variety of academic disciplines to study the situation of women around the world. Every year. 3 Credits

UR-142 Practicum in Urban Studies-Introductory

Students engage in field-based experiential learning through collaboration with WSU faculty and community partners. By stepping out of the classroom, students gain concrete skills that empower them to be agents of change while building a social and professional network of peers and community members. Practicum courses at this level are introductory experiences to field-based learning. There is no cost associated with this course.

Other or on demand and every year. 1-3 Credits

UR-150 Introduction to City Research

LASC Categories: USW, HBS

This course introduces students to various forms of quantitative and qualitative research processes that are employed in exploring city systems, histories, and groups. It also brings students into the field to practice and develop their burgeoning skills in an Urban Studies lab, the city. As part of their coursework, students will contribute to active research projects in Citylab.

Fall and Spring and every year. 3 Credits

UR-191 Special Topics

Introductory course to cover various topics

Other or on demand and other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-193 First Year Seminar Urban Studies

LASC Categories: FYS

Every year. 3 Credits

UR-201 Introduction to Urban Policy

LASC Categories: HBS, DIV

Analysis of activities, programs, and policies designed to sustain and enhance the livability of an urban environment.

Fall and Spring and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-212 American Metropolitan Evolution

LASC Categories: USW, WAC

Prerequisites: UR-101 and EN-102

Development of metropolitan America from a multi-disciplinary approach with emphasis upon dynamics of urban growth, internal development of cities, immigrations, socio-economic stratification, metropolitanization, and problems deriving from growth.

Fall and Spring and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-213 Human Identity and Urban Environment

Prerequisites: UR-101

This course addresses a number of learning outcomes, including: studying historical experiences, cultural patterns, and social advantages and disadvantages of different groups within society; exploring social problems such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation as both mainstream and non-mainstream groups experience them; examining the diversity of different groups and their changing dynamics; helping students become knowledgeable about diversity issues and develop the ability to distinguish facts from interpretations and opinions; become familiar with materials written by and about diverse groups.

Spring only and every year. 3 Credits

UR-214 Urban Demography**LASC Categories:** DIV, HBS, QR

Urban Demography is a course designed to introduce students to the study of population dynamics in urban settings. The course will cover a range of topics, such as the growth and characteristics of urban populations, relationships between urbanization and the three demographic processes (fertility, mortality, and migration), social disparities, residential segregation, housing, and population policy. Through lectures, discussions, in-class activities, and assignments, students will gain a deep understanding of the factors that shape urban population dynamics, and the implications of these dynamics for urban planning and policy. By the end of the semester, students will be familiar with various theories.

Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-217 Child Advocacy**LASC Categories:** ICW

This course will introduce students to the basic structure of Child Advocacy. Over the semester, students will establish an understanding of existent legal protocol which represents children who constitute what is recognized as "at risk" populations and how it works in action.

Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-220 Immigrant City**LASC Categories:** ICW, DIV

This course will explore the important role that immigrants have played in the development of our society, with a particular focus on our cities. We will discuss why and how people move, the forces that shape their opportunities and the constraints on their lives, and how a world increasingly defined by migration is changing everything.

Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-221 Introduction to Social Work**Prerequisites:** College Writing II or permission of department chair.**Prerequisites or Corequisite:** UR-101 previously or concurrently.

This course introduces students to the changing concepts, terms, and theories, about the field and practice of Social Work, how social workers interact with individuals and society, and the different roles social workers play in our diverse, ever-changing society. It is structured to provide students with the historical and current understanding of the role of social work practitioners, and it requires that students examine their own concepts, beliefs, and ideas of what "social work" and "social worker" means. These experiences will enhance student's skills in cognitive thinking, reading, writing, and speaking.

Fall only and every year. 3 Credits

UR-230 Technology, Public Policy and Urban Society**LASC Categories:** HBS, WAC, ICW**Prerequisites:** EN-102

Examination of high-technology and its impact on urban society in areas such as privacy, ethics, intellectual property rights, sense of community, and access to information and services.

Spring only and every year. 3 Credits

UR-232 Quantitative Data Analysis of Urban Problems**LASC Categories:** QR

An introduction to methods of developing and examining quantitative information, widely used by planning practitioners and often structuring how issues are framed for public/private discussions and policy decisions. Learn to apply tools of historical and predictive quantitative analysis to all aspects of land use planning and policy, both theoretical, what we expect to happen based on certain assumptions, and empirical, verifying those theoretical relationships by analyzing relevant evidence using mathematical techniques. We will examine and correlate the relationship between data, assumptions, and the leading issues planners and their cities face in today's world.

Alternating and every year. 3 Credits

UR-235 Urban Topics Seminar

An examination of urban topical issues that challenge the intellectual and creative interests of mid-curriculum students in urban studies.

Other or on demand and every year. 3 Credits

UR-240 Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences**LASC Categories:** HBS, WAC**Prerequisites:** EN-102

This introduction course provides an overview of the research process, and introduces students to commonly used qualitative methods in the social sciences.

Every year. 3 Credits

UR-242 Practicum in Urban Studies-Intermediate

Students engage in field-based experiential learning through collaboration with WSU faculty and community partners. By stepping out of the classroom, students gain concrete skills that empower them to be agents of change while building a social and professional network of peers and community members. Practicum courses at this level reflect intermediate-level engagement with field-based learning. There is no cost associated with this course.

Other or on demand and every year. 1-3 Credits

UR-250 Introduction to Urban Planning**LASC Categories:** ICW

An exploration of planning theory, dynamics, and practice, and how they form the modern urban planning agenda.

Fall only and every year. 3 Credits

UR-270 Leadership in Nonprofit and Public Organizations**LASC Categories:** HBS

The course explores the not-for-profit sector and the macro-environment within which it operates. The not-for-profit sector is used to describe nonprofit organizations and public organizations. The course explores traditional and popular approaches to leadership and the application of these theories in the not-for-profit world. Additionally, the course will review various important areas within the not-for-profit world (the micro-environment) including strategic planning, fundraising, marketing, governance and financial management.

Other or on demand and other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-275 Urban Art**LASC Categories:** CA

Urban Art teaches students how to appreciate, develop, and manage public arts programs from the perspective of an urban Arts & Culture Office.

Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-280 The Queer City**LASC Categories:** GP, DIV, TLC

This course is an introduction to the study of same-sex sexualities, their meanings and social organizations, across cultures and through time. The materials for the course are drawn from an array of disciplines, from biology to history, but center upon cultural and urban anthropology. Students will learn to think critically about the role of culture and society in the construction of genders and sexualities worldwide, with an emphasis on urban contexts.

Fall only and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-285 Urban Anthropology**LASC Categories:** GP, TLC

Students in this course will become familiar with urban anthropology through an exploration of ethnography - the study of peoples, cultures, and power dynamics from the perspective of an insider. By investigating ethnographic fieldwork and ethnographic writing from our globalizing world, students will be introduced to a number of different accounts about peoples and cultures - some struggling and some thriving - in cities spanning the globe. Through this diverse sample of lived, urban environments, students will become critical thinkers about the role of culture and society in the construction of the city.

Fall only and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-290 Gender and the City**LASC Categories:** WAC, GP, HBS**Prerequisites:** EN-102

Exploration of the ways in which gender, both male and female, structures responses of individuals to urban life and spaces.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-301 Cities and Suburbs**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Multi-disciplinary study of city and suburban growth patterns and problems both of the past, and that hamper metropolitan cooperation and affect the quality of life for city and suburban residents and businesses.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-305 Group Conflict in the Urban Community**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Study of conflict and its resolution in contemporary urban settings. Personal, small group, and societal strategies for conflict resolution will be explored.

Fall and Spring and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-306 Interviewing and Counseling Techniques

Investigation of skills and process of interviewing and counseling with emphasis upon theory and practice, participant exercises, and development of helping skills and effective counseling relationships.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-310 Power, Politics and Decision-Making in Urban Communities**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Exploration from multi-disciplinary approach of social power and its relation to decision-making in urban communities. Emphasis on theories of power, understanding research methodologies, and policy implications.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-311 Urban Politics and Policies**LASC Categories:** HBS**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Political behavior and perceptions in cities and towns from a multi-disciplinary perspective with emphasis on how policy is initiated, developed, and implemented in various governmental forms.

Spring only and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-312 Worcester: A City & Its People**LASC Categories:** USW, DIV**Prerequisites:** any 100 level course in Urban Studies.

This Urban History class explores the histories of Worcester's different peoples and their stories, many that are left out of what might be called official Worcester history. Students will read and research various primary and secondary sources, explore different approaches to studying and creating history, conduct fieldwork, and create papers or projects about the city's lesser-known and lesser-told histories, groups, individuals, and events.

Fall only and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-315 Oral History for Urban Areas**LASC Categories:** TLC**Prerequisites:** College Writing II or permission of department chair. Any 100-level Urban Studies course or permission of instructor

In its simplest terms, Oral History is the collection and study of historical information using audio or video recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events. Often powerful and rich personal narratives, oral histories provide insight into a past event or series of events, often communicating unofficial or previous unknown/ misunderstood stories especially in Urban areas. This class explores the theoretical underpinnings of memory and remembering, and best practices for oral history. Students will also engage in oral history work including interviewing, recording, transcribing, analysis, and preparing oral histories for research and dissemination.

Spring only and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-319 Transportation Planning**LASC Categories:** GP, ICW**Prerequisites:** 75 credits. It is recommended that students take UR 250 (Urban Planning) or a GIS or Cultural Geography class in the Department of Earth, Environment, and Physics before taking this course.

This course examines the policy, politics, planning, and design of transportation systems in urban areas, with a special focus on Massachusetts. It covers the roles of the federal, state, and local governments and MPOs. It will also overview planning for different modes (e.g. public transit, auto, active travel), tools for transportation planning and policy analysis, transportation impacts such as air pollution, social costs, and climate change, land use and transportation interactions, and citizen participation and citizen needs in the transportation planning process.

Spring only and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-320 Power and Urban Insecurity**LASC Categories:** ICW

This class looks at how public policy relates to the social construction of race, class, and gender categories and how urban residents navigate such policies as part of their everyday struggle for survival and stability. We consider how popular discourse features dominant narratives of security, insecurity, and human worth when it comes to questions of how the social safety net is allocated. How do these narratives contribute to the way urban residents experience and interpret government on an everyday level? How do these narratives affect the way urban residents interact with the state and public institutions?

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-321 Advanced Social Work**Prerequisites:** UR-101 and UR-221.

This course is designed to build upon basic social work skills, and enhance students' understanding about the changing concepts, terms, and theories, about what the field and practice of Social Work is. It is an more in depth examination of the approaches used by social work professionals in assessing and meeting the needs of increasingly diverse, complex and complicated populations.

Spring only and every year. 3 Credits

UR-331 Crime and the City**LASC Categories:** HBS, GP**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Investigation of crime in contemporary urban society and the social, legal, economic, and cultural strategies for dealing with crime and deviance.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-332 Global Cities**LASC Categories:** GP

For the first time in history, urban dwellers outnumber those in rural areas in the world population. Why are people increasingly flocking to cities? And what are some of the impacts of this shift on populations in different parts of the globe? As cities grow to accommodate their swelling numbers, dynamics of both inclusion and exclusion are bound up in processes of change and development. This course addresses these issues by exploring a variety of topics associated with urban exclusion, such as displacement, development, climate change, changing family dynamics, the informal sector, housing, inequality, and forms of resistance to exclusion.

Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-340 Urban Housing Dilemma**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Analysis of the factors that shape the nature, location, and supply of urban housing with special focus on federal policies and the housing needs of elders.

Every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-347 Refugees in American Society**LASC Categories:** USW

This course assesses the place of refugees in United States cities, historically and currently. We look at the experience of refugees in the US, relevant policies pertaining to this population, and the various popular debates circulating about refugee settlement and asylum in the US. The course also explores the nature of exile, displacement, and struggle in relation to urban inclusion and exclusion.

Alternating and every 2-3 years. 3 Credits

UR-350 Urban Youth in American Society**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Role and problems of youth in urban societies viewed from a variety of social science perspectives with additional employment of contemporary music and literature.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-360 Environmental Systems and Public Policy**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Examination of urban ecosystems, focusing on land uses designed to effectively utilize water, open space, and other natural resources.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-361 Public Policy and Environmental Issues**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Investigation of the factors that determine the formation of public policy on the environment with consideration of the roles played by state and federal regulatory agencies.

Other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-380 Public Policy and Cultural Diversity**LASC Categories:** HBS, USW**Prerequisites:** UR-101

This course examines contemporary policy issues to support inclusion in diverse societies. Topics addressed include race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, religion, immigration, segregation, and affirmative action.

Fall and Spring and other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-390 Research Methods in Urban Studies**Prerequisites:** UR-101

This course will provide an overview of the research process, and review commonly used qualitative and quantitative methods in the social sciences. The course will cover the what, how, and when of qualitative interviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, story narratives, ethnographic research, observations, participatory action research, document review and survey research. It will also cover the ethical dimension of research. No prior research knowledge or experience will be assumed.

Other or on demand and every year. 3 Credits

UR-401 Research Seminar in Urban Studies Capstone**LASC Categories:** CAP**Prerequisites:** UR-101, UR-212, UR-213, and UR-390 and have completed 75 credits.

Research skills for urban-based projects including techniques in gathering, analyzing, and reporting data and various forms of field research.

Fall only and every year. 3 Credits

UR-408 Directed Study: Urban Studies

Directed study offers students, who because of unusual circumstances may be unable to register for a course when offered, the opportunity to complete an existing course with an established syllabus under the direction and with agreement from a faculty member.

1-3 Credits

UR-410 Independent Study**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Individual or small group directed research into selected problems and issues in urban affairs.

Fall and Spring and other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-421 Selected Topics in Urban Studies**Prerequisites:** UR-101 Or permission of instructor

In-depth examination of topical issues challenging the intellectual and creative interests of advanced students in urban studies.

Fall and Spring and other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-430 Seminar in Current Urban Problems**Prerequisites:** UR-101

Individual and group investigation and research of selected and current urban problems.

Fall and Spring and other or on demand. 3 Credits

UR-440 Practicum in Urban Studies

Directed experiential study for advanced students.

Other or on demand and every year. 1-3 Credits

UR-442 Immigration Law Practicum

Students will collaborate with WSU's partner the Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice to provide legal services to Worcester area immigrants, especially asylum seekers, in need of legal aid. This practicum will be run through the Urban Studies Department and in partnership with the Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice, which also runs a 40-hour training every fall, and which provides ongoing supervision for students who complete the training and who are paired with immigration law attorneys. Pre-requisite: Students who enroll in this class must first complete an immigration law training offered every fall semester through a partnership with the Student Clinic for Immigrant Justice and then request permission from the instructor to enroll.

Fall and Spring and every year. 1-3 Credits

UR-450 Internship: Urban Studies

Supervised and intensive semester-long experience in community agencies, including weekly group seminar. (Requires completion of 21 credits in Urban Studies and consent of instructor.)

Fall and Spring and every year. 3-12 Credits

Program Learning Outcomes

- Students will conduct advanced interdisciplinary research incorporating a variety of source materials, research concepts, methodological approaches, and technological resources.
- Students will critically assess research studies and produce publishable papers, studies, reports, presentations, and projects.
- Students will learn how to be part of a supportive intellectual community driven in collaboration, professionalism, ethical research standards, and best practices in writing, research, and peer mentoring.
- Students will compare and contrast experiences of urbanization from different cultural, demographic, and geographic perspectives -- locally, regionally, nationally, and globally -- and will analyze them from different theoretical viewpoints.
- Students will develop interdisciplinary, critical reading and creative thinking skills, and advanced written and interpersonal communication skills.
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in creative problem-solving through coursework, experiential learning, and the development of a spirit of inquiry.
- Students will complete service- and experiential learning opportunities through coursework with department faculty, expert practitioners, and community partners.
- Students will engage in career-oriented experiences that prepare them for leadership roles in their fields through service learning coursework, internships, practica, and independent studies.
- Students will develop empathy for the greater understanding of the range of human experience and social responsibility with emphasis on intergenerational and intercultural dynamics.