Advanced Academic Programs
Zanvyl Kreiger School of Arts and Sciences
Johns Hopkins University

Online Course - Urban Economics AS.440.667.81
Fall 2016

Instructor: Ted Rosenbaum
Email: trosenbaum@jhu.edu
Office Hours: By appointment via phone or Adobe Connect. Please contact the instructor by email to set up an appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course develops a framework to analyze how cities operate and how to improve them. The first part of the course addresses basic questions about cities: Why do cities exist? What makes some cities more costly than others? What determines housing prices? The second part of the course examines specialized topics including residential segregation, economic development programs, and suburbanization. Prerequisites: 440.601 Microeconomic Theory and 440.606 Econometrics.

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course examines equilibrium and optimal land use, causes of urban agglomeration such as Marshallian positive external economies, such as knowledge spillovers and labor market pooling, local public goods, and negative externalities, such as congestion. Emphasis is placed on the spatial characteristics of the urban economy, especially land use. The influence of local and national policies on the formation and growth of urban areas is also considered.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS & SOFTWARE
2. R (Free software for Statistical Computing and Graphics)

OPTIONAL TEXTBOOK
O’Sullivan, A. (2012). Urban economics. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. Students may choose to purchase this textbook. However, required readings from this text will be made available through eReserves (ARES).

OTHER READINGS
Readings are listed in the Course Schedule below. All readings except those from the required texts are available on the Johns Hopkins EReserves (ARES) link on the left menu in your Blackboard course.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
• Describe how theories of agglomeration can explain why we have cities.
• Describe the drivers of home price and wage differences within and between cities.
• Explain econometric strategies for estimating the impact of local amenities on housing prices.
• Identify the key features associated with sprawl.
• Assess policies designed to address urban transport congestion.
• Explain the theoretical basis behind place-based government interventions.
• Identify key elements of major journal articles in urban economics.
• Analyze urban economic policies through the lens of economic theory.

ASSIGNMENTS

• **Problem Sets** (5) – 50% (Students will complete 6 problem sets; can drop the lowest score.)
  Problem sets will include questions testing reading comprehension, the ability to apply economic models to new situations, and empirical skills. They will involve a mix of quantitative, programming, and qualitative questions. See **Assessment Plan** for specific details.

• **Midterm** (1) – 25%
  Will consist of questions similar to those in the problem sets from the first half of the course. See **Assessment Plan** for specific details.

• **Final Paper** (1) – 25%
  Students will write a 1000-word policy paper commenting on a policy question in urban economics. The policy paper should be supplemented by a data/theory appendix outlining any background information relied upon in the essay. The topic must be approved by the end of week 9. See **Assessment Plan** for specific details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Other Required Activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Install R</td>
<td>Sep 4, 2016</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Submit Problem Set 1 (Agglomeration Economics)</td>
<td>Sep 18, 2016</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Submit Problem Set 2 (Urban Space)</td>
<td>Oct 2, 2016</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Submit Problem Set 3 (Location Choice)</td>
<td>Oct 16, 2016</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Submit Midterm</td>
<td>Oct 23, 2016</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Graded Midterms returned to students</td>
<td>Nov 6, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Submit Problem Set 4 (Suburbanization)</td>
<td>Nov 6, 2016</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Submit Midterm Review questions</td>
<td>Nov 13, 2016</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Submit Problem Set 6 (Place-based Policies)</td>
<td>Dec 4, 2016</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Submit Policy Paper</td>
<td>Dec 11, 2016</td>
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*Lowest problem set score dropped.* **Total Points** 100
Late Policy
Assignments are due at midnight on Sunday night. No late work will be accepted without a written note describing an extenuating circumstance and any proposed accommodation. Any request for accommodations based on such an extenuating circumstance must be made by midnight on Saturday night (i.e., 24 hours) before the assignment is due.

Feedback
I will return all assignments within one week, absent an extenuating circumstance. If such a circumstance arises, I will inform the class as soon as possible.

GRADING POLICY

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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98% to 100%</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<td>90% and less than 94%</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>88% and less than 90%</td>
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<td>84% and less than 88%</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>70% and less than 80%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>0% and less than 70%</td>
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COURSE SCHEDULE

Module 1 – Introduction to Urban Economics and Software (Week 1 [8/29 – 9/4])
1. O’Sullivan, pp.2-6

Module 2 – Foundations (Weeks 2 [9/5 – 9/11] and 3 [9/12 – 9/18])

Week 2
- Brueckner, Ch. 1
- O’Sullivan, pp.45-47

Week 3

Module 3 – Spatial Structure of Cities (Weeks 4 [9/19 – 9/25] and 5 [9/26 – 10/2])

Week 4
- Brueckner, Ch. 2
- O’Sullivan, pp. 161-173

Week 5

Module 4 – Location Choice Across Cities and Neighborhoods (Weeks 6 [10/3 – 10/9] and 7 [10/10 – 10-16])

Week 6
- Brueckner, Ch. 11
- O’Sullivan, pp. 215-225
Week 7

Module 5 – Review/Midterm (Week 8 [10/17 – 10/23])

Module 6 – Suburbanization (Weeks 9 [10/24 – 10/30] and 10 [10/31 – 11/6])
Week 9
- Brueckner, Ch. 4

Week 10

Week 11
- Brueckner, Ch. 5 (Freeway congestion)
- O’Sullivan, Ch. 11

Week 12

Week 13

Week 14

Module 9 – Final Project Due (Week 15 [12/5 – 12/11])

**COURSE COMMUNICATION POLICY & PROTOCOLS**

**Contacting the Instructor**
- For questions about course content, assignments, etc. that would be of interest to other students, please post your questions on the *Syllabus and Assignment Question* forum.
- For other questions or to set up an appointment for office hours, contact the instructor via email. You will receive a response within 24-48 hours.\(^1\)

\(^1\) There are three weeks during the term when, due to religious observances, the instructor will be off of his email from sundown on Sunday until an hour after sundown on Tuesday evening. During those times, responses could be delayed slightly beyond 48 hours. All students will be made aware of those times in advance.
• All email messages will be sent to you via your JHU email account, so you should be in the habit of checking that account every day or you should ensure that your JHU email account forwards messages to another account of your choice.

Network Etiquette (i.e. “Netiquette”)
In this course, online discussion will be primarily take place in our online discussion board. In all textual online communication, it’s important to follow proper rules of netiquette. What is netiquette? Simply stated, it’s network etiquette -- that is, the etiquette of cyberspace. And "etiquette" means the social and cultural norms of communicating with others in a proper and respectful way. In other words, netiquette is a set of rules for behaving and interacting properly online.

The Netiquette “Core Rules” are a set of general guidelines for cyberspace behavior. They probably won’t cover all situations, but they should give you some basic principles to use in communicating online.

Course Protocols
How will I know about changes to the course?
Frequently, you will find new announcements posted in the Announcements, which contain information about current course activities that you are working on and any changes to the course. Please check announcements every time that you log into your online course.

How should I communicate with others in this course?
You should communicate often with your classmates and with your instructor. The majority of communication will take place within the Discussion forums. When you have a question about an assignment or a question about the course, please contact your instructor, or post your question in the course’s “Syllabus & Assignment Question” forum.

Are there any requirements for sending e-mail messages?
When you send an e-mail message to the instructor or to another participant in the course, please observe the following guidelines:
• Include the title of the course in the subject field.
• Keep messages concise, and check spelling and grammar.
• Send longer messages as attachments.
• Sign your full name (the sender’s email is not always obvious).

Specific Technology Requirements & Skills for this Course
This course requires the use of a computer that complies with the following hardware specifications. For specifics, please see the recommendations of the Information Technology Office at Johns Hopkins.

Learning online requires some basic knowledge of computer technology. At a minimum, you need to be able to:
• Navigate in and use Blackboard; the Blackboard Student Orientation course on your “My Institution” page
• Create and save MS Word documents; see MS Word training and tutorials for PC users (all versions); Word Help for Mac users
• Find basic resources on the Internet
• Create and organize files & folders on your computer
• Send, receive, and manage email
This course also requires the use of R (a free software environment for statistical computing and graphics) and the ability to type math on a computer (note that Microsoft Word has this capability). No handwritten assignments will be accepted. The first week of the course will provide some guidance in these areas, and no prior experience is assumed.

Note that this is not a course in R or math typing, and so if you do not have experience with either of these, you will likely need to budget time to learn them. However, since these are important skills for someone working in economics, I think that it is a worthwhile investment of your time!

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

General
This course adheres to all University policies described in the academic catalog. Please pay close attention to the following policies:

Students with Disabilities
Johns Hopkins University is committed to providing reasonable and appropriate accommodations to students with disabilities. Students with documented disabilities should contact the coordinator listed on the Disability Accommodations page. Further information and a link to the Student Request for Accommodation form can also be found on the Disability Accommodations page.

Ethics & Plagiarism
JHU Ethics Statement: The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the Internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor.

Read and adhere to JHU’s Notice on Plagiarism.

Dropping the Course
You are responsible for understanding the university’s policies and procedures regarding withdrawing from courses found in the current catalog. You should be aware of the current deadlines according to the Academic Calendar.

Getting Help
You have a variety of methods to get help. Please consult the help listed in the "Blackboard Help" link in the online classroom for important information. If you encounter technical difficulty in completing or submitting any online assessment, please immediately contact the designated help desk listed on the AAP online support page. Also, contact your instructor at the email address listed atop this syllabus.