

URB 4670/8670 | THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CITY

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Class Meetings: Tuesdays, 12:45pm–3:15pm | Online via iCollege and Zoom

COURSE DELIVERY

The Interdisciplinary City will be taught online in Spring 2021 and it will be possible to complete the course remotely. Students will be required to attend synchronous online seminar sessions on Tuesdays 12:45–3:15pm to facilitate discussion, deliberation, and debate between students and guest speakers. These sessions will be augmented by online content and forums, including asynchronous lecture material, iCollege discussion rooms, and student peer review. You can login to the course via iCollege. If you need more help, you can review the Welcome to iCollege help-guide. If you have problems accessing your course, please contact CETL [here](#).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Rapid urbanization means cities are where the grand societal challenges of the 21st century, from economic inequality and digital disruptions to climate change and global pandemics, will be most acutely felt, but also where innovation and adaptability will emerge and take hold. Urban society requires novel, interdisciplinary solutions. Interdisciplinarity, however, is easier said than done. Academic disciplines speak different languages while at the same time, academic knowledge often struggles to gain relevance and applicability in the 'real world'. Different words and concepts mean differing things to different groups in different settings.

The purpose of this course is to understand, and build bridges across, the academic and professional silos that shape the production and dissemination of urban knowledge. Drawing from the expertise of the Urban Studies Institute and Georgia State faculty, students will be trained as 'boundary agents' and gain competencies to speak varied urban languages to a diverse set of academic and practitioner audiences. Each week, students will examine a particular urban lens, or compare and contrast across multiple disciplinary perspectives, through a combination of assigned readings, discussions with external speakers, and field-based research. They will assess and apply multiple disciplinary perspectives, including their own background and training, to a key theme throughout the course. In Spring 2021, *The Interdisciplinary City* will explore **Urban Futures after COVID-19**. The course will be interspersed with skills training sessions that will train students to synthesize diverse bodies of knowledge and communicate through a variety of academic and professional formats.

*** *This syllabus provides a general plan for the course and deviations may be necessary* ***

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Through the course, students will:

- 1) Gain a strong grounding regarding how urbanists understand and research the city.
- 2) Develop the critical thinking skills necessary to creatively assess the utility and limitations of differing modes of urban knowledge and data.
- 3) Conduct interdisciplinary research by applying multiple disciplinary perspectives to address a complex urban challenge.
- 4) Analyze the implications of interdisciplinary work for implementing inclusive urban development.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The course will provide students with the knowledge and skills to become interdisciplinary urbanists capable of understanding and speaking across the academic and professional bodies of knowledge that shape the growth, governance, and sustainability of cities. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Define how different academic and professional disciplines conceptualize the city.
- 2) Identify and evaluate the methods and communities of practice needed to generate inclusive urban knowledge.
- 3) Compare and contrast forms of urban knowledge as they relate to key challenges facing contemporary cities.
- 4) Synthesis and communicate interdisciplinary perspectives to a range of audiences through written, visual, and oral presentations.

REQUIRED READING

Iossifova, D., Doll, and Gasparatos, A. (eds.) (2018). *Defining the urban: Interdisciplinary and professional perspectives*. New York: Routledge

Defining the Urban is available as an e-book through the GSU Library. Additional required readings for each week are listed below. Reading academic papers is a skill that takes practice – and some solid strategies – to master. Consult Prof. Dan Immergluck's brief **guide to reading social science articles** posted under the "Course Introduction" module in iCollege. Throughout the course, pay attention to what approach works best for you.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation and Discussion 20%
Peer Evaluation	
Reflexive Essay 30%
Group Project 50%
Written Report or Multimedia Presentation	35%
Group Presentation	5%
Policy Brief	10%

Participation and Discussion

The participation grade is weighted to reflect the importance of engagement in course forums. Participation will be assessed based on the following factors: (a) **quality** of comments (does a comment advance the discussion, keep the class focused on the main overall topic, and reflect a close reading of the text? Are you offering high quality claims backed with good reasons, or just expressing your own opinion?); (b) **quantity** of comments (are you contributing regularly, and in a manner that does not monopolize conversation?); (c) **participatory style** (do you show a thoughtful respect for other students and their views? Does your involvement encourage others to participate? Are you able and willing to engage in an extended high quality and intense exchanges with your peers?). Comments that take us back to the specifics of the text are almost always more valuable than comments that take us off on a tangent. Each week, post in the iCollege Discussions at least one discussion question on the readings—for online discussion.

While there will be some variation and flexibility, class time will roughly be organized as follows: the first hour will feature disciplinary introductions by guest speakers, which will provide insights into the urban basis, views and methods they use. Students will then have the opportunity for Q&A discussion. The second half of the class will be devoted to either: (1) seminar discussion of the week's assigned readings, facilitated by course instructors; (2) external speakers discussing the role of urban knowledge and interdisciplinary skills in professional practice; or (3) skills workshops that build students' intercommunication capabilities. **Please ensure that you have a functioning microphone and camera.**

Students are expected to contribute to in-class discussions, complete assigned readings, and come to class prepared to discuss them. Students are also expected to actively and professionally engage external speakers using these interactions as opportunities to build the insights and competencies necessary to complete the course assignments. During our 'guest speaker debates', the class itself will feature an open discussion that we expect students to actively participate in. In particular, we want you to reflect on the following prompts while listening to, and engaging, our speakers:

- What is the basis of these disciplines as a mode of urban thought and practice?
- How do their foundational assumptions shape the approach(es) taken to urban analysis?
- What are the dominant methods employed?
- What are the major strengths and constraints each discipline brings to urban analyses?
- What potential and limitations are there for cross-fertilization and exchange of ideas between disciplines, public policy, and professional practices?

PLEASE NOTE: Our speakers may or may not elect to directly address the course theme - **we are placing the onus on you to think through, prompt, and provoke our guests on the urban challenges presented by the course theme.** At the outset, this may be on broad terms, but as the semester progresses and your group projects take shape, you should strategically consider how external speakers may contribute to (or challenges) the specific issues you are tackling for your major deliverable.

Peer Evaluation

Students will complete a peer evaluation for their group after the policy brief assignment is submitted, which will contribute to their participation grade.

Reflexive Essay

Students will write an essay drawing from in-class and additional readings that: assess THREE (academic or professional) disciplines, examining how they (1) engage the city; (2) the methods used; and (3) can contribute to an interdisciplinary study examining the course theme; Urban Futures after COVID-19. The essay should highlight points of convergence and divergence among the disciplines and examines the potential of, and challenges faced when, trying to work across these differing urban knowledges.

Undergraduate essays are expected to be 4-5 double-spaced pages and will include full bibliographic information (not included in the page count). They should include at least 6 references.

Graduate essays are expected to be 8-10 double-spaced pages and will include full bibliographic information (not included in the page count). They should include at least 12 references.

Group Project Addressing the Course Theme

Student groups of approximately three students will have the option of completing either a Working Paper or Multimedia Presentation on the course theme: **Urban Futures after COVID-19**. Student groups will be assigned by the course instructors. Group projects should strategically address a key urban organization, community, or stakeholder. This year, students are recommended to target their projects towards select departments in the City of Atlanta, including the Mayor's Office, Office of Resiliency, Office of Mobility, for example. Students may also propose directing their projects towards other stakeholders, for instance, other local municipalities, the Atlanta Regional Commission, the State Department of Transportation, and the Regional Chamber of Commerce, among others.

- Groups that select a **Written Report** will conduct an interdisciplinary systematic review of the literature relating to the course's theme and produce a 10-page report for a key urban stakeholder, including presenting the findings of research and recommendations for policy interventions.
- Working groups that select a **Multimedia Presentation** will build on the course's skills training session to produce a 10-minute podcast, 5-minute video-blog, or other approved multimedia presentation on the course's theme, including presenting the findings of research and recommendations for policy interventions.

Group Presentations

Groups will present their deliverable in a **15-minute presentation** in class.

Policy Brief

Student groups will also produce a one-page policy brief based on their Written Report or Multimedia Presentation for a key urban stakeholder. Policy briefs are short, to the point, jargon free documents written for non-specialists. They present research or project findings to policy actors, highlighting the relevance of the specific research to policy and offering recommendations for change. Details on writing policy briefs will be provided during the course.

GRADING CRITERIA

Grades will be awarded based on the following assessment criteria:

A+	98+*	Exceptional: Exceptional grasp of the subject area. Demonstrates expert-level review/innovative synthesis and great originality in discussion and analysis that clearly exceed the requirements of the assignment.
A	92-97	Excellent: Impressive grasp of the subject area with excellent critical use of relevant literature. Develops a substantive argument with significant analysis and elements of originality in satisfying the requirements of the assignment.
A-	90-91	Exemplary: Strong grasp of the subject area. Demonstrates a substantial knowledge of key concepts and/or techniques and constructs an argument with some degree of originality in fulfilling the requirements of the assignment.
B+	88-89	Very Good: Thorough grasp of the subject area. Demonstrates evidence of extensive reading, knowledge of key concepts and/or techniques, and a fairly high degree of skill when using them to satisfy the requirements of the assignment.
B	82-87	Good: Solid grasp of the subject area. Evidence of relevant reading with meaningful discussion and analysis. Effective use of key concepts and/or techniques to satisfy the requirements of the assignment.
B-	80-81	Satisfactory: Sound grasp of the subject area. Constructs a satisfactory argument that demonstrates familiarity with the literature and a reasonable use of key concepts and/or techniques to satisfy the requirements of the assignment.
C+	78-79	Competent: Reasonable grasp of the subject area but primarily descriptive analysis. Evidence of adequate reading and an acceptable familiarity with basic concepts and/or techniques in meeting the requirements of the assignment.
C	72-77	Adequate: Some grasp of the subject area and evidence of reasonable engagement with the literature. Some understanding of key concepts and/or techniques but flawed discussion and analysis. Marginal skill in satisfying the requirements of the assignment.
C-	70-71	Passing: Limited grasp of the subject area. Unclear argument with limited or irrelevant reading. Poor understanding of key concepts and/or techniques with negligible skill in satisfying the requirements of the assignment.
D	60-69	Poor: Slightly better than minimal knowledge of required concepts and/or techniques with serious flaws in use and very limited ability to satisfy the requirements of an assignment. Incoherent argument with limited or no evidence of independent research.
F	0-59	Failing: Very limited or no demonstrable grasp of the subject area. Minimum knowledge to lack of understanding of concepts and/or techniques needed to satisfy the requirements of an assignment.

Although many of the requirements for undergraduate and graduate students are the same, the expectations and evaluation of student work are not. Work will be assessed relative to students' level of study.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

All readings listed in the syllabus are required and are available online via the GSU Library, iCollege, or the internet.

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

12 January	Course Introduction: Welcome to the Interdisciplinary City
19 January	Doing Urban Interdisciplinarity
26 January	The Theme: COVID-19 and the City

PART II: ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES

2 February	Geography and Anthropology
9 February	Sociology and Economics
16 February	Social Work and Public Health
23 February	Environmental Science and Urban Political Ecology (Reflexive Essay due Feb 26)
2 March	Public Health Policy and Law
9 March	Urban Design, Planning and Community Development
16 March	NO CLASS Spring Break

PART III: APPLICATIONS

23 March	Visualization and Dissemination
30 March	Arts and Humanities
Apr 6	Resiliency and Sustainability
13 April	Group Presentations
20 April	Course Conclusion
23 April	Group Project Multimedia/Written Report Policy Brief Peer Evaluation

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance and Participation

All students are expected to promptly participate in course activities and actively engage in class discussions (synchronous and asynchronous), thus making a demonstrated effort to master the course material. Failure to attend classes regularly may result in poor course performance. The University expects each student to take full responsibility for their academic work and academic progress. Students are expected to attend classes in order to gain command of the concepts and materials of their courses of study. The University requires instructors to verify attendance early in the term. Failure to attend classes may result in you not appearing on the Verification Roll and being dropped from the class. Please see [section 1340 of the graduate catalog](#) and click on the appropriate catalog link to read about attendance policy.

Students are expected to attend their assigned class sessions. There are graded online and seminar discussions that will contribute to the final course grade. The attendance policy for this class is in alignment with the "Policy on Class Attendance" in the Student Code of Conduct. Attendance will be noted in online and seminar formats. If you are unable to make class, please email me ahead of time with a reason. I will decide if the absence will count as excused. In general, regular employment is not considered an excused absence. All students should be familiar with the university's course withdrawal procedures. These can be found in [section 1314 of the graduate catalog](#).

Diversity, Inclusivity, and Respect

The course format assumes the **relationship between all participants is respectful and collegial**. We will explore topics this semester that may be difficult for you both intellectually and emotionally. All discussions and comments should be respectful and follow the established class guidelines even when there are disagreements or diverging opinions. Major differences in background and theoretical inclination that may become evident are to be faced openly and debates, but without any element of interpersonal rancor, or comments that might close off discussion. Engage in discussions with care and empathy for all of your classmates. In this class we will not shy away from the uncomfortable. Critically examining and assessing our most basic assumptions and values is not just one of the tasks of philosophy but is an activity vital to building more inclusive, equitable and just societies.

Academic Honesty

All students are required to be familiar with the Academic Honesty policy of the university and to comply with the policy. This can be found in section 1350 of the graduate catalog. All work submitted for this course must be completed in accordance with the Georgia State University's policies on academic honesty and integrity. The guidelines are posted at <http://education.gsu.edu/files/2016/05/plagiarism.pdf> and <http://codeofconduct.gsu.edu/files/2013/2014-2015-Section-II-Academic-Conduct-Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>. If you are ever uncertain about these guidelines, please consult with the instructor. Any work you submit must be your own and should be submitted for this course only. If you are found in violation of the University's academic honesty policies, the severest punishment will be pursued.

Late Submission Policy and Make-Up Assignments

Assignments should be submitted by the listed deadlines. Late assignments will be accepted with a 10% penalty per day unless an explicit arrangement is agreed between instructor and student. Make-up assignments may be offered at the discretion of the course instructor.

Students with Disabilities

Georgia State University complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the Access and Accommodations Center at <https://access.gsu.edu/>. Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all courses in which accommodation is sought within the first two weeks of classes. To register for accommodations please follow this link disability.gsu.edu/services/how-to-register. Phone: (404) 413-1560, Email: dismail@gsu.edu, Website: disability.gsu.edu.

Remote Academic Coaching. The Office of Disability Services also offers free remote academic coaching. To learn more go to disability.gsu.edu/services or watch a [Coaching Video](#)

Veterans and Serving Military

Students who are veterans, serving in the military, their dependents, and the survivors of serving military are encouraged to avail themselves of a range of college services and activities through the Military Outreach Center (MOC). For assistance and guidance while attending Georgia State University, contact the Atlanta Campus Military Student Advocate. Be sure and let the instructor know ASAP if or when there is any possibility of you being activated and deployed. For more information, contact the GSU Military Outreach Center. Phone: (404) 413-2333, Email: dgarcia9@gsu.edu Website: veterans.gsu.edu.

Basic Needs Statement

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable us to provide resources that we may possess. The [Embark program at CSU](#) provides resources for students facing homelessness and [Panther's Pantry](#) provides resources for students facing food insecurity.

Student Illness

If a student develops a fever, cough or shortness of breath they should not go to class and should notify their instructor immediately. The student will work with the instructor to develop a plan to complete the necessary course content and assessments in order to meet the course student learning outcomes.