

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### URP 506

Urban Economics, 3 units

Spring Semester, 2025

Thursdays 5:30pm to 8:20pm

Dawson Building 305

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 1:30pm to 3:30pm

(or by appointment)

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### Course Description

This course investigates the economic forces behind the structure of cities. The prevailing question is: “How do individuals and firms choose where to locate in the absence of planning and regulation?” We review the underlying assumptions of so-called location behavior, the base-level urban issues that arise from individual and firm location behavior, and what this means for the effectiveness of urban planning and policy decisions. While much of the course centers on exploring urban economics theories, part of the course is devoted to empirical review of urban economics theories and their relevance to urban planning.

### Learning Objectives and Outcomes

1. Describe the study of urban economics.
2. Articulate microeconomics concepts within the framework of urban economics.
3. Differentiate and evaluate bid-rents and density gradients.
4. Relate urban public policy issues to economic activity.
5. Initiate empirical research that investigates accuracy of urban economics theories.

### Textbook and Readings

The textbook for this course is the ninth (2019) edition of *Urban Economics* by Arthur O’Sullivan (ISBN 9780078021787). Chapters required for each class meeting are defined in the schedule below. Any further readings will be available via Blackboard. All readings are to be completed before the respective class meeting.

**Assignments and Grading**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>% of Grade</b>
In-Class Participation	Your contribution to class discussion, group work, and in-class assignments will be accounted for in your grade. Generally, only students who show a clear lack of engagement or perpetual absences or tardiness will experience a reduced grade in this category.	10%
Readings Quizzes (5 total)	Starting Week 3, a total of five (5) reading quizzes are subject to be given at the start of class that cover the readings of that day. The dates that these will be proctored will be randomly determined. One-third of the value of each quiz will be for taking the quiz. Reading quizzes will be in short-answer format and each quiz is weighted equally. Your lowest one scored quiz will be dropped from your grading.	15%
Analytical Assignments	Two analytical assignments related to urban economics will be given during the semester. Each assignment will be equally weighted. Further instructions will be provided in class or via Blackboard.	25%
Midterm	A closed book/note in-class midterm will cover reading and lecture material up to the date of the midterm. Format will mostly entail short-to-long answer questions.	25%
Term Paper	<p>A term paper is due by <u>the end of the day (i.e., 11:59pm) on Thursday, May 8</u>. The paper shall be in the form of a literature review on a topic of your choice that investigates the empirical legitimacy and implications of a concept/theory in urban economics. The topic shall be selected through consultation with me. Readings beyond the scope of class is required. <u>A draft proposal is due by 11:59pm on Friday, March 28</u>. Late proposals will cost 2.5 percentage points per day late up to 20%.</p> <p>All papers shall be twelve to sixteen double-spaced pages, use 12-point Times New Roman font, with one-inch margins. Title pages, appendices, bibliographies, etc. do not count towards the page requirement. Further specifications will be provided in class or via Blackboard.</p>	25%

**Course Schedule**

Week	Date	Module	Topic	Readings*
1	January 16	Introduction	Course Overview; Personal Introductions	—
2	January 23		Review of Economics Principles; Defining Urban Economics	Ch. 1-2 of O'Sullivan
3	January 30	Urban Economic Theory and Implications	Agglomeration; Location Theory	Ch. 3-4 in O'Sullivan
4	February 6			Ch. 5-6 in O'Sullivan
5	February 13		Urban Labor Economy; Cities and Regions	Ch. 7-8 in O'Sullivan
6	February 20		Land Rent; Monocentric Model; Spatial Sorting; General Equilibrium	Ch. 10-12 in O'Sullivan
7	February 27			Ch. 13-14 in O'Sullivan
8	March 6	Midterm	Midterm Examination; Review of Analytical Assignments	—
9	March 13	SPRING BREAK		
10	March 20	Expanded Concepts; Empirical Review	Core-Periphery Models; Polycentricity; Regional Science	Krugman (1991); Lee (2007); Manduca (2021)
11	March 27		Gibrat's Law; Zipf's Law; Informal Economies; Developing Economies	Bromley and Wilson (2018); Gabaix (1999); González-Val et al. (2014) <b>Optional:</b> Chauvin et al. (2017); Daniels (2004); Eeckhout (2004); Eeckhout (2009); Levy (2009)
12	April 3		Commute Time (Dis)utility; Wasteful Commuting; Travel Time Budgets; Analytical Assignment Presentations	Giuliano and Small (1993) <b>Optional:</b> Cropper and Gordon (1991); Hamilton (1989); Hamilton (1982); Small and Song (1992); White (1988)
13	April 10	Planning and Policy Implications	Local Government, Public Services, and Taxation	Arnott and Grieson (1981); Genschel and Schwarz (2011) <b>Optional:</b> Reynolds (2004); Brueckner and Saavedra (2001)
14	April 17		Housing and Land Use	Fischel (2004); Ch. 1 in McCluskey and Franzsen (2017) <b>Optional:</b> Hamilton (1975); McDonald and McMillen (2011); Pogodzinski and Sass (1990)

Week	Date	Module	Topic	Readings*
15	April 24	Planning and Policy Implications (cont.)	Parking and Transportation	Brueckner and Franco (2018); Winston (1991)  <b>Optional:</b> Hall (2018)
16	May 1	Closing Lecture	Course Conclusion; Closing Dialogue; Analytical Assignment Presentations	—

\* Readings are complimentary to lectures. Contents of readings do not define all content that will be covered on the given topic.

### Grading Scale

Grade	Percent Range
A	[90%, 100%)
B	[80%, 90%)
C	[70%, 80%)
D	[60%, 70%)
F	[0%, 60%)

### Academic Honesty

Membership in the AAMU learning community imposes upon the student a variety of commitments, obligations, and responsibilities. It is the policy of AAMU to impose sanctions on students who misrepresent their academic work. These sanctions will be selected by appropriate classroom instructors or other designated persons consistent with the seriousness of the violation and related considerations.

Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to:

- 1. Plagiarism, taking someone else's intellectual work and presenting it as one's own (which covers published and unpublished sources).**  
Using another's term paper as one's own; handing in a paper purchased from an individual or agency; submitting papers from living group, club or organization files; or using another's computer program or document are all examples of plagiarism. Standards of attribution and acknowledgment of literary indebtedness are set by each discipline. Faculty are encouraged to include disciplinary or class-specific definitions in course syllabi. Students should consult with their department or with recognized handbooks in their field if in doubt.
- 2. Cheating is unacceptable in any form.**  
Examples include consultation of books, library materials or notes during tests without the instructor's permission; use of crib sheets or hidden notes; intentional observation of another student's test; receipt of a copy of an exam or questions or answers from an exam to be given or in progress; substitution of another person for the student on an exam or another graded activity; deliberate falsification of lab results; submission of falsified data; alteration of exams or other academic exercises; and collaboration on projects where collaboration is forbidden.
- 3. Falsification, forgery or alteration of any documents pertaining to assignments and examinations.**
- 4. Students who (cooperate or in other ways promote) participate in promoting cheating or plagiarism by others (or who take credit for the work of others) will also be in violation of this policy.**

Students participating in any violation of this policy must accept the consequences of their actions. Classroom instructors and/or university review/appeals committees and administrators will assess the sanctions for violation of this policy. The seriousness of the violation will dictate the severity of the sanction imposed.

Academic sanctions may include but not be limited to any of the following:

- verbal or written warning
- lowering of grade for assignment/activity
- lowering of term grade
- failure of class assignment

Administrative sanctions may include but not be limited to either of the following:

- suspension from the University
- dismissal from the University

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Alabama A&M University is committed to providing equal access to all educational programs and ensuring compliance with applicable laws, including Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the applicable titles of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 for qualified students with disabilities.

If you require or may benefit from disability accommodation, please contact Disability Services within the first week of classes by visiting their office at the Health and Counseling Center or emailing them at [disabilityservices@aamu.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@aamu.edu).

**Bibliography**

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