

**ECO333: URBAN ECONOMICS  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, FALL 2020**

1. BASIC INFORMATION

Section L0101

- Synchronous class: Thursday 2:10–3:00PM, every other week (see Section 5), via BB Collaborate
- Tutorials: Friday 11:10–2:00PM, via BB Collaborate

Section L0201

- Synchronous class: Thursday 3:10–4:00PM, every other week (see Section 5), via BB Collaborate
- Tutorials: Friday 2:10PM–3:00PM, via BB Collaborate

Instructor: Jonathan Hall

Email: [jonathan.hall@utoronto.ca](mailto:jonathan.hall@utoronto.ca)

Office hours via <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/95286299873> (passcode 132481):

- Monday, 9–10AM
- Tuesday, 4–5PM
- Wednesday, 9–10AM
- Thursday, 9–10AM
- Friday, 4–5PM

Teaching assistants

- Derek Renaud: Tuesdays from 10:15–11:00AM and Thursdays from 1:15–2:00PM, via BB Collaborate
- Ben Couillard: Wednesday 2:00–3:00PM, via BB Collaborate

Course website: <http://q.utoronto.ca>

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This class is primarily online asynchronous. Most course content will be provided by prerecorded video. Every other week we will meet using BB Collaborate for a class discussion.

In this course we will apply the tools you learned in your first and second year courses to understanding urban and transportation policy. By the end of this course, you will be able to

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*Date:* September 8, 2020.

- Explain the fundamental economic forces causing cities to exist
- Explain the fundamental economic trade-offs driving urban spatial structure, and use this understanding to explain differences within and across cities
- Understand the key issues in urban transportation, be able to explain the trade-offs between different transportation systems, and analyze how different government policies affect mobility within cities
- Analyze how different government policies affect the housing market

See the end of the syllabus for a detailed list of specific questions we will address in this course.

In addition, you will

- Improve your ability to use models to answer questions. This requires mastering the ability to translate back and forth between English and mathematics.
- Improve your ability to interpret tables and graphs.

### 3. APPROACH

Most of the content of this course will be taught using prerecorded lectures. Every other week we will have a 50 minute class discussion. The weekly tutorials are an opportunity for you to ask the teaching assistants any questions you have about the material. After an exam or homework assignment the teaching assistants will go over the answers in the tutorial.

### 4. POLICIES

**First rule of holes.** Stop digging and get help! Come see me, your college registrar's office, CAPS, or any of the other resources listed in Section 6.

**Communication: Email and Quercus.** I check my University of Toronto email accounts once each business day and expect you to do the same. I will respond to all emails within two business days. Emails should be sent from your official University of Toronto email address. When emailing, please prefix the subject line with [ECO333] so that I can prioritize your message.

In order to help me get to know you better, I prefer that you ask questions in class or during office hours; rather than by email. I hold additional office hours in part to make this feasible.

I use the University's learning management system, Quercus, to post course information, announcements, and assignments. I expect you to either check Quercus, or set Quercus to email you notifications and check your email, at least once each business day.

We also have a course Piazza page, accessible via Quercus. Piazza is an ideal place to post questions, and it allows fellow classmates, the TAs, and me to collaborate on answering them.

**Accommodation.** I am willing to provide reasonable accommodations for a variety of reasons, including disability, health problems, religious observance, participation in an extra-curricular activity, death in the family, illness, or injury. I require a written request for an accommodation. If you need an accommodation for a disability you should register with Accessibility Services (<http://accessibility.utoronto.ca>).

*Missing an exam.* The most common accommodation request is to miss an exam. There is no need to request an accommodation for your first missed exam. I will automatically drop your lowest exam.

If you need to miss subsequent exams, you must email me, from your official University of Toronto email account, *before* 5PM the day of the exam. You must not have started or looked at the exam. Your email must concisely explain why you missed the test, contain the statement "I understand that it is a punishable academic offense to present false or misleading information with my request for a make-up test" and close with your name and student number. I do not require a medical note. To make up any subsequent exams that are missed, there will be a makeup exam December 17. This exam will cover the entire course.

Requests due to non-medical reasons must be received by the end of the second week of class.

For medical issues that last longer than a few days, you should consult with your college registrar.

*Homework.* As an automatic accommodation for sickness, technical problems, etc. that impact your ability to complete the homework or quizzes done on Quercus on time, your worst 10% of homework or quizzes on Quercus will be dropped. There are no other accommodations made regarding the homework.

**Late homework.** Late homework will be assessed a 10 percentage point penalty per day.

**Appealing grades.** If you believe an assignment, quiz, or exam has been incorrectly graded, you may for it to be re-evaluated. For exams, instructions will be posted on Quercus about how to do so; for other assignments please email Professor Hall. You need to make this request as soon as possible after receiving the work back, and the request must be received within two weeks of the coursework being handed back. The entire work will be regraded and your grade

may increase or decrease. I have this policy not to punish you for asking for a re-evaluation, but because notwithstanding all our efforts to achieve precision in grading, grading inevitably involves a degree of randomness and in regrading we wish to reduce the randomness (both in your favor and against) on all parts of the work in order to come to a more precise measure of your true performance on the assignment. If after completing this process you still have a problem with any aspect of your grade, the overall grade appeal process under the university's policies remain available to you (see <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>).

**No audio or video recordings.** You may not create audio or video recordings of classes, with the exception of those students requiring an accommodation for a disability, who must speak to me prior to beginning to record lectures.

**Exam rules.** For the exams, the only allowed test aid is a ruler. We will not use calculators for the exams, nor should you use your notes, the internet, etc.

**Academic Integrity.** All students, faculty and staff are expected to follow the University's guidelines and policies on academic integrity. For students, this means following the standards of academic honesty when writing assignments, collaborating with fellow students, and writing tests and exams. Ensure that the work you submit for grading represents your own honest efforts. Plagiarism—representing someone else's work as your own or submitting work that you have previously submitted for marks in another class or program—is a serious offense that can result in sanctions. Speak to me or your TA for advice on anything that you find unclear. To learn more about how to cite and use source material appropriately and for other writing support, see the U of T writing support website at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca>. Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/student-academic-integrity> and <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca>.

**Copyright.** Course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. These materials are made available to you for your own study purposes, and cannot be shared outside of the class or "published" in any way. Lectures, whether in person or online, cannot be recorded without the instructor's permission. Posting course materials or any recordings you may make to other websites without the express permission of the instructor will constitute copyright infringement.

## 5. IMPORTANT DATES

	Activity	Exact date
Week 1	—	September 10
Week 2	Class discussion	September 17
Week 3	Midterm 1, covers Weeks 1–2	September 24
Week 4	Class discussion	October 1
Week 5	Midterm 2, covers Weeks 1–4	October 8
Week 6	Class discussion	October 15
Week 7	Midterm 3, covers Weeks 3–6	October 22
Week 8	Class discussion	October 29
Week 9	Midterm 4, covers Weeks 5–8	November 5
	Reading week (November 9–13)	
Week 10	Class discussion	November 19
Week 11	Midterm 5, covers Weeks 7–10	November 26
Week 12	Class discussion	December 3
Week 13	Midterm 6, covers Weeks 9–12	December 15

## 6. RESOURCES

**Academic Success Centre.** <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc>

**Accessibility Services.** <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

**Health & Wellness Centre.** <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>

**College Registrars' offices.** <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/academic-advising-and-support/college-registrars-offices>

**English Language Learning.** <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>

**Office of Student Academic Integrity.** <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai>

**Rights & Responsibilities.** <http://uoft.me/rights>

**Writing help.** <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/>

**Advice for thriving at university.**

- <http://www.vox.com/2015/1/7/7500705/college-advice>
- <http://www.vox.com/2014/6/24/5824192/study-smarter-learn-better-8-tips-from-memory-researchers>

**7. GRADES**

Grades will be based on

- 6 exams (75%)
- Homework and quizzes (25%)

Final grades will automatically be curved up to ensure the median grade is at least a B-. Final grades will never be curved down.

**Exams.** 75% of your final grade will come from your average on your five best exams. The exams start in week three, and are every other week. Each exam covers the previous four weeks, though with a greater weight put on the previous two weeks.<sup>1</sup>

The exams will be asynchronous. You will be able to start the exam anytime you wish during a 18 hour window. Once the exam is started you will have 45 minutes to complete it, including uploading your answers. You can scan handwritten answers at the library or using a smartphone app such as Scannable, Dropbox, Scanbot, or Microsoft Office Lens.

**Homework and quizzes.** 25% of your final grade will come from your homework and quizzes.

Via Quercus there will be a large number of short quizzes and response questions. For most of these you will be able to use any resources you have available, including working with classmates. There will be some quizzes that you will not be able to work with classmates, but they will still be open notes.

For the purposes of academic integrity, the homework and quizzes within a given third of the course are considered as one. This means the typical penalty for cheating on a problem set is receiving a zero for all problem sets in that third of the course.

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<sup>1</sup>The first exam covers just the first two weeks.

## 8. COURSE OUTLINE

Below is a list of topics and questions we will address in this course. This is subject to change. Readings will be posted on Quercus.

- (1) Introductions, definition of cities, and why cities exist
  - (a) What is a city?
  - (b) How do we split urban areas into cities?
  - (c) Why do cities exist?
- (2) Agglomeration economies
  - (a) Why are some cities so big?
  - (b) Why do industries cluster in a given city, or within the same area of a given city? To be more specific, why is Bay Street a thing?
- (3) Systems of cities
  - (a) Why don't we all live in one big city?
  - (b) Are cities too big, too small, or just right?
  - (c) Why are cities different sizes?
  - (d) What explains how wages and housing cost differs across cities?
- (4) Basic trade-offs governing urban spatial structure
  - (a) What determines land use within a city?
  - (b) Why is housing more expensive downtown than in the suburbs?
  - (c) Why are buildings taller downtown than in the suburbs?
  - (d) Why are homes smaller downtown than in the suburbs?
- (5) Using model of urban spatial structure to understand differences across cities and how policies will change cities
  - (a) Why is Toronto's tallest building 50% taller than Montreal's tallest building?
  - (b) Why is Phoenix cheaper and less dense than Toronto?
  - (c) What happens to a city as its population grows?
  - (d) What happens to a city if we add a highway?
- (6) Urban sprawl
  - (a) Is urban sprawl a problem?
  - (b) What are the causes of urban sprawl?
  - (c) What should we do about urban sprawl?
- (7) Cities and the environment
  - (a) Are cities good or bad for the environment?
  - (b) How can cities adapt to climate change?
- (8) Housing
  - (a) How can we make housing more affordable?
  - (b) What are the effects of rent control?
  - (c) Who does rent control help?
  - (d) What causes gentrification and who gains and loses?
- (9) Addressing traffic congestion
  - (a) Why are our roads so congested and what can we do about it?

- (b) If economists are such big fans of congestion pricing, why don't we see it more often in the real world?
  - (c) How could we implement congestion pricing so that it would make all road users better off?
- (10) Addressing traffic congestion (part 2) and parking policy
- (a) Is there too much or too little parking?
  - (b) Is parking priced correctly?
- (11) Autonomous vehicles
- (a) How have previous changes in transportation technology affected cities?
  - (b) What are possible benefits and costs from AVs?
  - (c) How can public policy address the downsides from AVs?
- (12) Public transportation
- (a) Why do so few people use public transportation?
  - (b) What could we do to encourage additional transit ridership?
  - (c) Should we subsidize transit fares?
  - (d) Should we build subways, light rail, or buses?