



ECO333: Urban Economics

Fall 2025

Note: Some sections and dates in the syllabus may still be subject to change.

- Lecture LEC0101:** Mon 11-1pm, UC 179, Eastern Time Zone (GMT-4)
Tutorials will take place Wed 11-12pm in RW 110
Your TA is Derek Thiele (d.thiele@mail.utoronto.ca)
- Lecture LEC0201:** Mon 3-5pm, SS 2108, Eastern Time Zone (GMT-4)
Tutorials will take place Wed 12-1pm in RW 110
Your TA is Grant Benjamin (grant.benjamin@mail.utoronto.ca)
- Lecture LEC5101:** Mon 5-7pm, SS 1071, Eastern Time Zone (GMT-4)
Tutorials will take place Wed 1-2pm in RW 110
Your TA is Yasmine Benfares (yasmine.benfares@mail.utoronto.ca)
- Instructor:** Fern Ramoutar
Office: 150 St. George Street, Room 314
Phone: TBD
Email: fern.ramoutar@utoronto.ca
- Delivery:** In-person
- Prerequisites:** ECO200Y1/ECO204Y1/ECO206Y1
Corequisites: None
Exclusions: ECO333H5
Credit Value: 0.5



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1 Course Description

This course will explore the economics of cities and space. We will start by studying how and why cities form, the benefits and costs of urban density, and the spatial distribution of activity within and across cities. Next, we will examine the structure of local housing markets and urban development. Finally, we will analyze some key features of contemporary urban life (e.g., congestion, segregation, poverty, pollution), along with redressive urban policies and governance.

The concept of spatial equilibrium, where agents move across space to optimize their location, will serve as a fundamental tool to analyze these dynamics. We will review canonical frameworks in urban economics, along with models from other fields like industrial organization and public economics, where applicable. Throughout, we will also learn about papers at the research frontier of the field, which combine theory and data to generate novel empirical insights and policy predictions.

2 Course Objectives

This course aims to...

- apply and develop tools and economic concepts introduced in the core economics units;
- understand the origins of cities and challenges they are facing today;
- appreciate and analyze issues related to the organization of economic activity of cities;
- understand social problems that arise in local environments;
- discuss urban policies.

By the end of the course, students should be able to...

- explain the contributions that economics can make to the analysis and organization of cities;
- evaluate policies to address issues such as housing affordability, pollution, or congestion;
- apply economic tools and methods to urban issues;
- interpret tables and graphs in research papers.



3 Course Format

The course consists of 12 two-hour *lectures* and 10 one-hour *tutorials*.

Lectures: In the lectures, you will be introduced to concepts and tools that explain the origins, evolution, and organization of cities. These insights will help you evaluate the benefits and challenges of urban life, as well as policies aimed at alleviating urban disamenities. The economic tools used to address urban issues will be similar to those from your core economics courses.

Tutorials: In the tutorials, you will learn about spatial data analysis and mapping techniques, drawing from state-of-the-art research papers. You will have the opportunity to ask the teaching assistants questions about the material. Following exams or homework assignments, the teaching assistants will also walk through the answers during the tutorials.

4 Class Meetings

The course will be taught in person. The syllabus applies to LEC0101 held in University College (UC 179), LEC0201 held in Sidney Smith (SS 2108), and L5101 held in Sidney Smith (SS 1071).

5 Office Hours

My office hours will be held on Thursdays from 4-6 pm. To attend in person, please come to my office at 150 St. George, Room 314. To attend virtually, please join Zoom using Meeting ID 6716832819 and Password 480097.

The teaching assistants will each hold office hours for their respective tutorial sections. They will send an announcement to specify the format of their office hours (i.e., virtual and/or in-person). The times of their office hours are listed below:

- L0101, Derek: Wednesdays from 10-11am
- L0201, Grant: Tuesdays from 4-5pm
- L5101, Yasmine: Mondays from 1-2pm on Zoom: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/85277934173>

6 Evaluation Criteria

Final grades in the course are given as letter grades. They reflect the overall performance in achieving the stated [Course Objectives](#). Assessments and interim evaluations will take different forms (see below and course structure). Homework and quiz evaluations provide feedback on your progress towards the final course grade. The plagiarism software [Plagiarism Detection Tool](#) will be used in



this course. It is integrated into Quercus. Final grades will automatically be curved up to ensure the median grade is at least a B-. Final grades will never be curved down. Please contact me if you would like more guidance on your individual course performance. The following is required for successful completion of the course:

Evaluations	Weight	Deadline	Submit via	Plagiarism Detection
Homework	25%	Fridays, 5pm	Quercus	Y
Quizzes	10%	In Class	Blue Book	Y
Midterm Exam	30%	Week 7	N/A	N
In-Person Final Exam	35%	Final Exam Period	N/A	N

6.1 Homework and Quizzes (35%)

35% of your final grade will be based on homework and quizzes. *Homework* must be typed and submitted on Quercus. You may work on the homework in teams, however, the answers you submit must be **your own original writing**. See Section 9.2 for discussion about use of generative AI for homework assignments. Late homework will be assessed a 10 percentage point penalty per day. *Quizzes* will be hand-written and submitted independently in class; no collaboration is allowed.

Your lowest homework grade and your lowest quiz grade will both be dropped. Your final homework/quiz grade will be calculated as the average of the remaining homework/quiz grades. Please note that all homework and quiz submissions will be checked, and any instance of cheating will result in a zero mark. Zero marks due to cheating cannot be dropped.

6.2 In-Person Midterm Exam (30%)

30% of your final grade will come from the midterm exam. This exam will be 2 hours, it is in-person synchronous, and it will cover the material from Weeks 2–6. It will take place in Week 7.

6.3 In-Person Final Exam (35%)

35% of your final grade will come from the final exam. The final exam will be given as scheduled by the Office of the Faculty Registrar during the final exam period. The final exam will be comprehensive, but will be heavily weighted towards the last half of the course. The final is in-person synchronous.



7 Lecture Schedule

Week 01, 09/01 - 09/05: No lecture

Week 02, 09/08 - 09/12: *What is a city?*

Week 03, 09/15 - 09/19: *Urbanization and city formation*

Week 04, 09/22 - 09/26: *Agglomeration economies*

Week 05, 09/29 - 10/03: *Urban spatial structure I*

Week 06, 10/06 - 10/10: *Urban spatial structure II*

Week 07, 10/13 - 10/17: No lecture; Midterm is this week

Week 08, 10/20 - 10/24: *Housing markets and urban development*

Week 09, 10/27 - 10/31: No lecture

Week 10, 11/03 - 11/07: *Residential sorting and urban dynamics*

Week 11, 11/10 - 11/14: *Urban inequality and segregation*

Week 12, 11/17 - 11/21: *Housing policy and urban land use*

Week 13, 11/24 - 11/28: *Transportation and infrastructure*

Week 14, 12/01 - 12/05: *Cities and the environment; The future of cities*



8 Reading Material

Most of the reading material for this course will consist of detailed lecture notes that will be distributed before the start of each class. There will also be required readings posted on Quercus. Students should aim to complete the readings for each week before the start of lecture.

Text books that inspired parts of this lecture include:

- Bertaud, Alain 2018. Order without Design. MIT Press.
- Brueckner, Jan 2011. Lectures in Urban Economics. MIT Press.
- O'Sullivan, Arthur 2018. Urban Economics. McGraw Hill; 9th Edition.
- Sieg, Holger 2020. Urban Economics and Fiscal Policy. Princeton University Press.

9 Policies and Statements

9.1 Communication

I check my University of Toronto email account 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.

In all communications—whether in class, in tutorial, or via email—please maintain respect toward fellow students and instructors. Healthy disagreements during discussions are welcome, but always approach others with the same respect and consideration you would hope to receive.

9.2 Generative AI

Students are permitted to use generative AI, including Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT or Claude, in limited instances. In this course, the answers you submit to the homework must be **your own original writing**. Students may not copy from any AI tools for the purpose of completing the homework assignments. The knowing utilization of AI tools, apart from using them as a learning aid to deepen your understanding of the material, may be considered an academic offense in this course.

Utilizing LLMs can be a reasonable approach in some use-cases, such as outlining basic coding tasks or explaining steps to problems that are not clear. However, these tools are prone to providing incorrect answers and can disincentivize us from learning and thinking critically. Given that you will not be allowed to use LLMs or any other assistive technologies for the majority of the evaluations in this course (i.e., quizzes, midterm, final exam), I would strongly advise that you first try to



work through the homework without them. The goal of the homework, in particular, is to help you evaluate your own understanding of the course material. If you are unable to solve a problem, that is a useful thing to be able to recognize and address. If you have any questions, please consider working with a classmate, or asking me or the teaching assistants for guidance. Learning how to ask questions clearly and coherently, and developing your problem-solving skills accurately, efficiently, and collaboratively, are two sets of skills that will benefit you immensely in this class and in whatever path(s) you choose in the future.

9.3 Plagiarism Detection Tool

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the [Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site](#).

9.4 Course Drop Dates

The latest date to drop fall courses without academic penalty is **November 11, 2025**. Dropping a course after this date will result in a Late Withdraw (LWD) on your transcript. The latest date to add or remove a CR/NCR option in fall courses or to request Late Withdrawal (LWD) from fall courses is **December 2, 2025**.

9.5 Accessibility and Accommodations

If you require accommodations in the course, I will do my best to accommodate your particular needs. I am committed to providing reasonable accommodations for various circumstances, including disabilities, health issues, religious observances, extracurricular commitments, family bereavement, illness, or injury.

To request an accommodation, please register with [University of Toronto's Accessibility Services](#). This helps maintain privacy and confidentiality, and provides students with support when requesting and accessing accommodations. Students who register with Accessibility Services may also be eligible for disability-related services/equipment.

Information about registering with [Accessibility Services](#) is available on the website and in the office's [Graduate and Professional Program Handbook](#). There is also a short [video](#). If you are unsure whether you have a disability, please don't hesitate to connect with the office at accessibility.services@utoronto.ca to discuss.



9.6 Missed Academic Work

Homework and quizzes. If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an [Absence Declaration](#) or the University's [Verification of Student Illness or Injury \(VOI\) form](#). The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form like a letter from a doctor, as long as it is an original document and contains the same information as the VOI including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number.

As an automatic accommodation for sickness, technical problems, etc. that impact your ability to complete the quizzes or submit homework to Quercus on time, your lowest homework grade and your lowest quiz grade will both be dropped. Late homework will be assessed a 10 percentage point penalty per day.

Midterm. If you need to miss the midterm due to illness, you must email me, from your official University of Toronto email account, before 4pm the day of 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. There will be one makeup exam and if you miss it, the weight will be deferred to the final exam. For medical issues that last longer than a few days, you should consult with your college registrar.

Final exam. If you miss the final exam, you must follow Arts & Science's procedures for requesting a deferred exam. Requests due to non-medical reasons must also be submitted.

9.7 Appealing Grades

If you believe an assignment, quiz, or exam has been graded incorrectly, you may request a re-evaluation. A form for submitting re-evaluation requests will be available on Quercus. Please submit your request promptly after receiving your graded work, as it must be received within two weeks of the return date. Note that the entire assignment will be regraded, which may result in an increase or decrease in your grade. This policy is not intended to discourage you from seeking a review but to ensure fairness and accuracy, recognizing that grading can involve some degree of subjectivity. The goal of regrading is to minimize this variability and provide a more accurate assessment of your performance. If you remain dissatisfied after this process, you may pursue a formal grade appeal through the [university's official policies](#).

9.8 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.

9.9 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. All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, please reach out to me or the teaching assistants. Note that you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from me or other institutional resources. For example, 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](#). Consult the Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters for a complete outline of the University's policy and expectations. For more information, please see [A&S Student Academic Integrity](#).

9.10 Copyright, Trademark, and Intellectual Property

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. The [Center for Teaching Support & Innovation \(CTSI\)](#) in Robarts Library can provide further guidance. You may also access [copyright resources](#) on the University of Toronto Libraries website.

10 Mental Health and Well-Being

If you or someone you know is overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, do not hesitate to talk to me or others. In addition, the University of Toronto's [Student Mental Health Resource Guide](#) is an online tool where students can access various on-campus and off-campus mental health resources.

For immediate help, if you are feeling distressed or you are in crisis, contact:



- [TELUS Health Student Support](#) 1-844-451-9700 (North America); 001-416-380-6575 (Outside of North America). Provides mental health support for all U of T students. Offers free, real-time and/or appointment-based confidential, 24-hour support for any concern. You can call or chat with a counsellor directly from your phone wherever you are in up to 146 different languages.
- [Good2Talk](#) 1-866-925-5454 (Ontario); text GOOD2TALK to 686868. Good2Talk is a free, confidential helpline for post-secondary students in Ontario and Nova Scotia, with professional counselling, information and referrals for mental health, addictions and well-being, 24/7/365.
- [9-8-8: Suicide Crisis Helpline](#) Call or text 9-8-8 Support available in English and French for anyone across Canada who is thinking of suicide or who is worried about someone else.

You can also consult: The School of Graduate Studies has a dedicated counsellor for graduate students. Appointments may be booked with them by contacting the Health and Wellness Centre at 416-978-8030 or info.hwc@utoronto.ca and asking to be connected with the dedicated graduate student counsellor. [U of T Employee & Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) 1-800-663-1142 (toll-free); 1-866-398-9505 (TTY); 604-689-1717 (collect). Centre for International Experience Safety Abroad 416-946-3929. Visit [Feeling Distressed?](#) for more resources.

11 Acknowledgements

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