

**Course:** USP 567 Urban Housing Policy  
**Term:** Spring 2025  
**Days/Times:** Mondays 1-3:30pm  
**Room:** KMC 255

**Instructor:** Matthew Gebhardt  
**Office Hours:** [By appointment](#)  
**Office:** URBN 370Q  
**E-mail:** [mfg@pdx.edu](mailto:mfg@pdx.edu)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Housing Act of 1949 declared:

“... the general welfare and security of the Nation and the health and living standards of its people require ... the realization as soon as feasible of the goal of a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family, thus contributing to the development and redevelopment of communities and to the advancement of the growth, wealth, and security of the Nation.”

Nearly 75 years later, we seem to be getting farther from rather than closer to this goal. What went wrong? Why has it not been feasible?

In a market economy, non-public actors build, own, and operate the majority of the housing stock (along with other assets, including other types of real estate, businesses, even ideas). However, public policies and programs play a critical role in framing, influencing, and guiding the decisions and approaches of these actors. This course explores public policies and programs aimed at shaping the housing sector. The focus of this course is on federal and state level interventions, though we will consider the role of local actors in implementation and delivery (this course complements USP 554 Planning and Housing Markets, which focuses primarily on local actors). We will examine historic and current policies and programs, consider the institutions and actors that shaped them, and critically assesses their goals and implementation.

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course is a primary course within the Housing and Community Development (CD) MURP Pathway. Students who successfully complete this course will:

- Understand the current and changing context of housing problems and policies in the U.S. with some focus on Oregon and Portland
- Gain a working knowledge of historic, existing, and potential housing policies and programs and their implementation through state/local agencies and nonprofits
- Understand housing as a market and common good, and as a social, ethical, and political issue
- Develop a viewpoint about defining housing problems and developing solutions, backed by data, theory, and values and presented as a persuasive argument

## TEACHING METHODS

This course is taught through a once weekly lecture/seminar scheduled for 1-3:30pm on Monday afternoons. Class sessions will involve a variety of teaching methods including lectures, discussions, case studies, videos, and in-class activities. We may also have local experts join the class to serve as guest instructors, sharing their expertise and experience. Given the limited number of class sessions, students are expected to attend every session unless arrangements have been made with the instructor *prior to class*. Students are also expected to read all required readings and come to class prepared to discuss that week's topics with the class, the instructor, and the guest speakers.

## TEXTS AND READINGS

There are no required texts for this course. Instead, readings will be made available online either through the University Library's website or other sources. **Note: please regularly check the online version of the syllabus and reading list as readings may change or new readings or resources may be added during the term depending on course progress and student needs.**

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Your course grade will be based on the assignments below

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|--|-----|
| • Assignment 1 (Practice): Weekly Reflections  | 50  |
| • Assignment 2: Policy Testimony/Brief on Emerging/Innovative Housing Policy/Program | 30  |
| • Assignment 3: Program Impact Analysis Scoping                                      | 20  |
| • Total  | 100 |

The basic rubric used to grade graduate-student work is as follows:

- A: Demonstrates original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis, and is clearly written or presented. Excellent work.
- A- or B+: Presents above average analysis with appropriate evidence to support the ideas and is clearly written or presented. Good work.
- B or B-: Shows a basic level of understanding, with analysis limited to the most obvious arguments. Writing is competent. Adequate work.
- C+ or below: Misunderstands or misrepresents the material, or is so poorly written presented as to obscure the analysis. Inadequate work.

*The following represent summaries of the assignments; further guidance and detailed instructions about the four assignments will be provided in class and via Canvas.*

### **Assignment 1 (Practice): Weekly Reflections (50%)**

Purpose: To encourage reflection, dialogue, and debate on the concepts and cases shared in this course.

Task: For this assignment you will bring to class and submit a one-page reflection each week on how, as a future practitioner, you will engage with housing policies/programs. This will begin in Week 2, where you will describe the professional setting in which you anticipate working. Weeks 3-10 you will reflect each week on how, in your chosen role and institution, you anticipate engaging with that week's housing policies and/or programs.

Due: Mondays at 9am via Canvas

### **Assignment 2: Policy Brief or Public Testimony on Emerging/Innovative Housing Policy/Program (30%)**

Purpose: To practice explaining and advocating for a policy or program.

Task: For this assignment, you will select an emerging/innovative housing policy or program (something not yet established, though you could argue for expansion of something that exists). Using available data and evidence, along with conceptual work, you make an argument in support of your policy or program to an appropriate audience of your choice (e.g., federal or state agency, legislator, legislative committee). Depending on your audience, the format of your argument may take the form of a policy brief or written public testimony.

Due: Via Canvas by 11pm, Monday, June 9<sup>th</sup>

### **Assignment 3: Program Impact Analysis Scoping (20%)**

Purpose: To practice program analysis and project scoping.

Task: For this assignment, we will be working with a local affordable housing agency to assist them in scoping a request for proposals for an analysis of the local economic, social, and equity impacts of their work. This document is planned as a tool to allow the organization to both explain existing programs and advocate for policy and system changes. The exact format of the final product will be determined in collaboration with our community partner.

Due: *Via Canvas by 11pm, Friday, June 13<sup>th</sup>*

**Late Assignments and Missed Classes:** Late assignments create a variety of issues related to equity, pedagogy, and integrity. Please try to avoid them if at all possible. If you have legitimate reasons for a late assignment, I am generally open to granting extensions. Communication is important; please keep in contact and let me know in advance of a deadline that you need to request an extension.

The same is true for missed classes. This course will work best if everyone is able to attend class and participate. If you are unable to attend, please let me know so we can address any important material you might miss.

**Academic Integrity:** All work done for the course must be your own. The work must be original and prepared for this class. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Copying the work of another and not citing it; lifting text from the Internet without attribution; or even presenting ideas that are not your own without proper referencing are all examples of plagiarism. Submitting work for this class that has been done for another class also counts as plagiarism, it is called “plagiarizing oneself.” Using AI to write your assignments in this course is unacceptable. **Violations of academic integrity as described above will result in a zero on the assignment and could result in higher university level sanctions.**

### **ACCESS AND INCLUSION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. My goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, 503-725-4150, [drc@pdx.edu](mailto:drc@pdx.edu), <https://www.pdx.edu/drc>.

- If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.
- Students who need accommodations for tests and quizzes are expected to schedule their tests to overlap with the time the class is taking the test.
- Please be aware that the accessible tables or chairs in the room should remain available for students who find that standard classroom seating is not useable.
- For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the [Fire and Life Safety](https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) [webpage](https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety) (<https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-and-life-safety>) for information.

## **SEXUAL ASSULT AND HARRASSMENT**

Portland State is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of prohibited discrimination and sexual harassment (sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and gender or sex-based harassment and stalking). If you have experienced any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or sexual harassment, know that help and support are available. Information about PSU's support services on campus, including confidential services and reporting options, can be found on PSU's Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website at: <http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help> or you may call a confidential IPV Advocate at 503-725-5672 or schedule Online at <https://psuwrc.youcanbook.me>. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to:

- PSU's Title IX Coordinator: Rebecca Lawrence by calling 503-725-4410, via email at [titleixcoordinator@pdx.edu](mailto:titleixcoordinator@pdx.edu) or in person at Richard and Maureen Neuberger Center (RMNC), 1600 SW 4th Ave, Suite 830.
- Taylor Burke, Deputy Title IX Coordinator and Dean of Students: 503.725.4422 | [askdos@pdx.edu](mailto:askdos@pdx.edu), Smith Memorial Student Union (SMSU), 825 SW Broadway, Suite 433

Please be aware that all PSU faculty members and instructors are required to report information of an incident that may constitute prohibited discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. This means that if you tell me about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence that may have violated university policy or student code of conduct, I have to share the information with my supervisor, the

University's Title IX Coordinator or the Office of the Dean of Student Life. However, the Title IX Coordinators will keep the information confidential and refer you to a confidential advocate. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module *Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Learning Resources* in Canvas.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTERS**

The Cultural Resource Centers (CRCs) create a student-centered inclusive environment that enriches the university experience. We honor diversity, explore social justice issues, celebrate cultural traditions, and foster student identities, success, and leadership. Our centers include the Multicultural Student Center, La Casa Latina Student Center, Native American Student & Community Center, Pan African Commons, and Pacific Islander, Asian, Asian American Student Center and the Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian Initiative. We provide students with employment, volunteer, and leadership opportunities. Along with extensive programming, our spaces offer resources such as computer labs, lounge areas, and study spaces. All are welcome! More information about the CRCs can be found at [www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers](http://www.pdx.edu/cultural-resource-centers) and <https://www.facebook.com/psuculturalcenters/>, CRCs can be contacted at [cultures@pdx.edu](mailto:cultures@pdx.edu) and 503-725-5351.

## **OTHER CAMPUS RESOURCES**

The CARE (Coordination Assessment Response Education) Team is available to help students experiencing distress and to assist with concerns about a fellow student. More information about the CARE Team can be found at: <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/care-team>.

The CARE Team also maintains a comprehensive list of resources, both campus and community, which can be found here: <https://www.pdx.edu/dos/sites/www.pdx.edu.dos/files/C.A.R.E.%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>.

The Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC) provides community-based health care for students, including physical health, dental services, mental health, and testing services. You can find information about what SHAC provides and how to access them at: <https://www.pdx.edu/shac/center-for-student-health-and-counseling>.

If you are having trouble meeting basic needs: shelter, sleep, nutrition, there are resources available to help. The PSU Food Pantry offers supplemental food items to currently enrolled PSU students. The pantry is located in SMSU 325. For more information, you can email [foodhelp@pdx.edu](mailto:foodhelp@pdx.edu). For more information on food and

wellness assistance for students visit: <https://www.pdx.edu/student-access-center/>. For help meeting other basic needs, contact the Basic Needs Hub at [basicneedshub@pdx.edu](mailto:basicneedshub@pdx.edu).

Student Legal Services provides legal advice and assistance on a range of areas of law including family, landlord-tenant, and immigration. More information can be found at: <https://www.pdx.edu/sls>.

Services are available for students with children, including childcare subsidies and family events, a lending library and clothing closet, lactation spaces, and a Family Resource Room. More information can be found at: <https://www.pdx.edu/students-with-children/our-services>.

The Office of Diversity & Multicultural Student Services (Smith Memorial Union 425) provides structured, academic support service, advising, referrals, and advocacy for first-generation college students, low-income and others facing special challenges. Visit <http://www.pdx.edu/dmss/> for info.

International Student Services provides a range of assistance to international students, including help with visas and immigration status, internships and employment, and life on campus and in Portland. They also have a Student Aid Fund for international students experiencing financial difficulties. More information is available at: <https://www.pdx.edu/international-students/>.

The Learning Center (Millar Library 245) mission is to foster the learning process by empowering PSU students to accomplish their academic and personal goals. In addition to helping with current coursework, academic support services can assist in developing effective learning strategies. See <http://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/> for more info.

The Portland State University Millar Library offers a wide range of helpful resources, databases, and tutorials to assist with coursework and research. In particular, you might find the resources that have been collated specifically for urban studies useful (<http://guides.library.pdx.edu/urbanstudies>).

The Writing Center (Cramer 188) will help you with all varieties of projects, including class assignments, resumes, application essays, presentations, and creative writing. It aims to help writers at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to the final draft. You can schedule an appointment online: <http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/>. Their website also contains resource pages that suggest ideas and strategies for completing writing projects.

## Course Outline

Below is an indicative/evolving list of topics that are planned for inclusion in the course. The exact schedule and groupings after Weeks 1-3 is not set. It is subject to revision based on student interest, changing conditions, and availability of guest speakers. Each week will cover a cluster of topics (e.g., financing, incentives, capacity, regulation), supported by 2-3 weekly readings, videos, and/or additional resources.

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>
Week 1	<b>Introductions; Current Conditions and Core Concepts</b>
Week 2	<b>Core Concepts Cont., Real Estate Basics</b>
Week 3	<b>Historical and Evolving Policy Environment, Key Actors</b>
Week 4	<b>(Affordable) Housing Finance, LIHTC</b>
Week 5	<b>Neighborhood Interventions</b>
Week 6	<b>Public Housing and Vouchers</b>
Week 7	<b>Homeownership</b>
Week 8	<b>State Housing Policy, Housing and Land</b>
Week 9	<b>Fair Housing, Housing Discrimination</b>
Week 10	<b>Houselessness</b>