

USP 456 / 556: Transportation Problems and Policies - Winter Quarter 2026

Wednesday 11:00am to 12:40 p.m. - Room: Lincoln Hall 301

Professor: Dr. Aaron Golub, Email: agolub@pdx.edu

Online office hours: *Several times during the week arranged directly through my appointment scheduler – just click and reserve a spot – no need to email me.* <https://calendar.app.google/Qyt245JmWdWwaxrE6>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will offer an overview of transportation problems and policies in the United States from a multi-disciplinary perspective. We will explore transportation's relationship to broader social problems and how it holds the potential to both exacerbate them, and help to solve them. We will study transportation as a complex socio-technical system – one shaped by complex social and political drivers. This system is shaped by multiple planning and policy approaches crossing disciplines, sectors, scales and strategies. We will begin by reviewing travel trends over the past four decades followed by an overview of the past century of transportation policy history. We then go through a series of "Policy Areas" in which key debates and policies have developed. We go through these policy areas in roughly their order of importance – starting with the most important challenge of managing automobile movement and congestion. We then cover policies addressing environment, climate, safety and equity. We finish by looking at emerging policy challenges around public transportation, autonomous vehicles, micro-transit and other issues.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After completing this course, students will master the following concepts:

- The history and dynamics of urban transportation change and development
- The environmental impacts of travel at the local, regional, and global scale
- The unpriced externalities of travel (air pollution, congestion, injuries and death, climate change)
- The dynamics of energy prices and supply and demand and its effects on transportation
- The microeconomics of travel (choice processes, nested choices, fixed and marginal costs)
- The effects of transportation systems on social equity
- The interaction between urban form and innovations in transportation technologies and travel costs
- Demographic changes and their effects on transportation demand
- Emerging new-mobility, micro-mobility, shared and autonomous systems (e-scooters, ridesourcing, etc.)

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

The course will include one required meeting per week, required and optional readings, short outside assignments, and one quarter-long project. It is imperative that everyone prepares the readings and the assignments, as we will include a lot of detailed discussion and debate during class and everyone will be asked to contribute. It is essential to attend every meeting in this course.

Assignments will be judged for their coherence, clarity in writing, and the clarity of documentation (citing the sources you used). Make sure you cite all references and sources of data; and include a list of references at the end of your assignments if appropriate. All assignments should be uploaded as a Word or PDF files into the dropbox on the Canvas website for the class. Please also have access to the assignments in class (on your computer, phone, hard-copy – whatever you prefer) as they will be discussed.

There will be around 700 total points for the short assignments. The final grade will be calculated from weighting the short assignments and final project in the following manner:

1. Short assignments based on the lectures and readings	75%
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2. Major quarter assignment – policy paper/presentation	25%
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Short Assignments: There will assignments of various lengths (and point values) posted to accompany the lectures and sets of required readings. Most will be due just before the class in which they will be discussed. Assignment due dates are non-negotiable except for very extenuating circumstances (medical, family emergency).

Major Assignment: The major assignment will be case study presentation to be announced during the second class.

Final Grading Scale:

A 94.0 % and above ; A- 90.0 % ; B+ 87.0 % ; B 84.0 % ; B- 80.0 % , etc.

COURSE RESOURCES:

Readings: There is a *no* textbook for the course. A **Canvas website** is set up for the class. Each unit is organized into a separate module within the Modules tab. The site contains all assignments, required and optional readings and is where your completed assignments should be uploaded.

Note on submitting work online

Proficiency in the use of Canvas, PSU email, and other computer tools such as ZOOM or parts of Google suite is required for this course. This course requires consistent access to functioning computer equipment and Internet access throughout the length of the course. Reliance on a cellular connection may not provide reliable and fast access to online learning resources. Here are some broadband programs that are free or low-cost:

<https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/are-there-government-programs-to-help-me-get-internet-service>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: engages in any form of academic deceit; refers to materials or sources or uses devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; provides inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; engages in Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone's work as your own through copying it without giving the creator of the work credit. Plagiarism can also include using another person's theories, ideas, or phrases without proper attribution. The simplest way to avoid plagiarizing is to always cite the sources from which you gather information or develop arguments – just cite anything you use from someone else (it actually makes your work stronger!). Plagiarism is a serious issue and is a violation of the PSU [Student Conduct Code](#). University policy requires instructors to report all instances of plagiarism and penalize the perpetrator(s) according to guidelines set. Please see me if you ever have any questions about how to cite your work.

CAMPUS SUPPORT FOR RESPONDING TO HARASSMENT OR DISCRIMINATION

As an instructor, students frequently come to me for assistance in matters that are not related to the course material. Please be aware that PSU's policies require instructors to report any instance of sexual harassment, sexual and relationship violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination to University Officials, who keep the information private. If you would rather share information about these experiences directly with a PSU staff member who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact one of the following campus resources.

- Confidential Advocates: 503.894.7982, or by [scheduling on-line](#) (for matters regarding sexual harassment and sexual and relationship violence)
- Center for Student Health and Counseling ([SHAC](#)): 1880 SW 6th Ave, 503.725.2800
- [Student Legal Services](#): 1825 SW Broadway, (SMSU) M343, 503.725.4556 For more information, please complete the required student module Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources in Canvas.

[PSU Sexual Misconduct Response website](#) gives you comprehensive information about how to support and/or report an incident.

Please complete the required student module [Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources](#) in Canvas, which provides information about PSU policy and resources.

You may also report sexual and relationship violence to law enforcement on campus with [Campus Public Safety Office \(CPSO\)](#).

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, <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.

REPORTING RESOURCES

- Students who have concerns about incidents happening within USP classes or in other PSU-sanctioned spaces related to TSUSP programs may submit confidential reports to the TSUSP School Director [using this form](#). All reports received are logged, and depending on the nature of the incident, follow-up with the impacted student(s) takes place.
- The [Office of Dean of Student Life](#) maintains a [PSU Incident Report](#) form where students and other PSU community members can report incidents for review relative to the [Student Code of Conduct and Responsibility](#), including academic misconduct. These reports, once investigated and resolved, are shared with the School Director and corresponding Program Director.
- You may file an [anonymous report with Campus Public Safety Office](#) or a [Bias Incident report](#) with the [Bias Review Team \(BRT\)](#). PSU does not typically investigate the reports that are made through these two avenues. These reports help PSU understand what students and employees are experiencing on and around campus and provide support where needed.
- Complaints against Faculty, Staff, or Student Employees of [prohibited discrimination](#) can be reported via the [Employee Complaint Report Form](#) through the Office of Equity and Compliance.
- The [CARE Program](#) can help students experiencing distress and/or other issues that might impact their ability to function at their best in and outside of the classroom. They have a [referral form](#) here.
- The Office of the Dean of Student Life houses the Academic Appeals process. Students who feel they have received a prejudiced or capricious academic evaluation may submit an [Academic Appeal Request](#). Before students submit this request, students must have appealed to the instructor, department chair and appropriate dean. Students should then read the [Academic Appeals Guidelines](#) to see if their grade

dispute fits the purview of the Academic Appeal. For more information, please visit the [Academic Appeals website](#), email askdos@pdx.edu, or call 503-725-4422.

For information about emergency preparedness, please go to the Fire and Life Safety webpage (<https://www.pdx.edu/environmental-health-safety/fire-prevention-life-safety>) for information.

SYLLABUS DISCLAIMER

All syllabi are subject to minor changes to meet the needs of the instructor, school, or class. Every effort will be made to avoid changing the course schedule but the possibility exists that unforeseen events will make syllabus changes necessary. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus as deemed necessary. Students will be notified in a timely manner of any syllabus or schedule changes in class, and through the CANVAS announcements and class email. Please remember to check your PSU email and the CANVAS messages often.

COURSE CALENDAR

Class	Date	Subject
1	7-Jan	Intro - Social change, policy, plans, and investments
2	14-Jan	The current system
3	21-Jan	Transportation history
4	28-Jan	PA1: Congestion management
5	4-Feb	PA2: Air quality, emissions, etc.
6	11-Feb	PA3: Energy use and efficiency
7	18-Feb	PA4: Social equity
8	25-Feb	PA5: Land use and Transportation, PA6: Safety
9	4-Mar	PA7: Active travel, PA8: Public transportation
10	11-Mar	PA9: Emerging modes. Final case presentations