
UP 547 International Planning and Urbanization

Spring 2026

Wednesdays, 10:00– 12:30 AM

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INTRODUCTION

Urban planning does not happen in a vacuum. The policies we create and the institutions we build are deeply shaped by a country's unique social, political, and economic landscape. To be effective, planning must directly respond to the real demands of the society it serves. This class equips you with the analytical tools to understand these complex challenges internationally. We will explore how diverse political, cultural, and socio-economic forces directly impact the physical spaces of cities and regions around the world.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to

- Critically evaluate how diverse social, political, and economic contexts shape the formation of planning policies and institutions across different international cities.
- Examine the spatial and social impacts of globalization - specifically rapid population growth, resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and social inequality—on regional development.
- Critique outdated frameworks in international planning (such as the traditional "Global South" dichotomy) to develop a more nuanced, interconnected perspective of global urbanism.
- Design and propose culturally and politically appropriate planning interventions that directly respond to the unique societal demands of rapidly changing, diverse global environments.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

As a graduate seminar, this course is driven by collaborative discussion rather than traditional lectures. You and your peers are expected to lead the conversation and actively engage with the material. My role as the instructor is to serve as a facilitator - providing introductory context, asking prompting questions, and keeping our discussions focused on the weekly themes. To come prepared, expect a reading load of approximately 80 pages (roughly four academic journal articles) per week.

Weekly readings & Reading Synthesis (60% of the final grade):

- The Materials: Expect to spend 5–6 hours each week reviewing a mix of journal articles, book chapters, professional reports, and multimedia. Always check the Canvas weekly module for the official reading list.
- Reading reflection Assignment: Before Wednesdays, post a 500 - 800 word synthesis of the week's materials to Canvas.
- What to Include: Rather than simply summarizing, your synthesis should address:
 - The Research Gap & Core Questions
 - Methodology & Key Findings
 - Methodological & Theoretical Critiques
 - Overall Synthesis & Future Research Directions

- Discussion Prompts: Conclude your post by providing two thoughtful questions you would like the class to discuss. We take turns to lead the discussion.

International Planning Research Project (40% of the final grade):

Throughout the term, you will develop a 3,000-word research paper analyzing a specific urban planning issue in an international city, with a focus on equity and social justice. The project is scaffolded into four stages to ensure steady progress (detailed instructions are on Canvas):

- **Week 3 (Proposal):** Identify your city, define the urban issue, draft a research question, and outline a justice-oriented thesis.
- **Week 6 (Methodology & Data):** Outline your research design and present pilot data, explaining how your methods will uncover power dynamics and inequities.
- **Week 9 (Full Draft):** Submit a complete draft including your introduction, methods, results, and policy-focused conclusion.
- **Week 11 (Final paper):** Submit your polished 3,000-word final paper and deliver a 10–15 minute presentation summarizing your research.

WEEKLY TOPICS

Week	Thematic topics of the Week
1	Beyond the "Global South" – Re-theorizing Global Urbanism
2	Power, Institutions, and Governance
3	The Housing Crisis, Land, and Informality
4	Environmental Degradation and Climate Justice
5	Mobility, Infrastructure, and Spatial Inequality
6	Insurgent Planning and Social Movements
7	Migration, Refugees, and the Transient City
8	The "Smart City" and Technological Imperialism
9	Global Agendas vs. Local Realities
10	Final presentation & course wrap-up

Attention: The final weekly reading list is according to those listed on Canvas course website under the weekly course modules. The readings in the following are still a tentative list.

ACCESS AND INCLUSION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

PSU values diversity and inclusion; My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. I am committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. Additionally, the Disability Resource Center

(DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers in the learning environment. The DRC works with students who have physical, learning, cognitive, mental health, sensory, chronic illness, and other disabilities.

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.

If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that I have received your DRC Faculty Notification Email so we can discuss your accommodations.

The DRC is located in 116 Smith Memorial Student Union, Suite 116. You can also contact the DRC at 503-725-4150 or, drc@pdx.edu. Visit the DRC online at

<https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center>.

Title IX

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: Julie Caron by calling 503-725-4410, via email at titleixcoordinator@pdx.edu or in person at Richard and Maureen Neuberger Center (RMNC), 1600 SW 4th Ave, Suite 830
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator: Yesenia Gutierrez by calling 503-725-4413, via email at yesenia.gutierrez.gdi@pdx.edu or in person at RMNC, 1600 SW 4th Ave, Suite 830

Statement about Academic Honesty

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of 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 ConductCode](#). 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.