

CP 4020: Intro to Urban & Regional Planning

Fall 2026 Syllabus

School of City & Regional Planning

College of Design

Georgia Institute of Technology

Tuesday/Thursday, 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm

Location: TBD

Instructor: Grace Barrett, AICP

Contact: Sbarrett40@gatech.edu

TA:

Contact:

Office hours: After class or by appointment

Official Course Description

This course provides an overview of the planning of cities and metropolitan regions. The legal and historical context as well as substantive areas of urban planning are addressed.

Real Course Description

This course will explore the history as well as current and future trends of city planning. Throughout the semester, you will learn about the who, what, and how of city planning - How do cities come to be? Who designs them? Who manages them? In addition to answering these questions and more, you will learn about the complexities of society and the impact that economic, cultural, social, political, and environmental conditions have on places. This course will not only provide you with a strong foundation of fundamental planning history and theory but will help you explore modern day planning practices and applications. Throughout the course, you will gain a better understanding of how planners, along with government, developers, businesses, citizens, and other stakeholders, work together to plan cities and affect development.

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion

Course Requirements:

Success and your grade are dependent on the following: attending lectures; providing thoughtful commentary in class and on discussion boards; and demonstrating your acquired knowledge through written assignments, group projects, and exams.

Class Participation and Attendance: 10%

Class participation and attendance will help you to get the most of this course! It will make the content more meaningful, help with comprehension, and make the course more enjoyable. Attendance at all sessions is important, *especially* when there is a guest speaker. You may miss up to two sessions for any reason with no penalty. Beyond two absences, your attendance grade will be lowered. Please let me know if there are extenuating circumstances that will cause you to miss more than two classes, and I will do my best to work with your situation. I do not need to know details, but please let me know in advance.

Reading Reflections: 10%

Keeping up with the assigned weekly reading and submitting weekly reading reflections is required for this course and a great way to prepare yourself for lectures and exams. Weekly reading assignments are included in the detailed course schedule below. Weekly discussion boards will be posted on Canvas with instructions and/or a prompt for you to answer based on that week's reading. Reading reflections are due each Monday by midnight.

Group Project: 25%

You will form groups of 4 to 5 people for your final project. By this time in the semester, you will be familiar with the different areas of city planning. Each group will be assigned one of the 9 areas that we will have covered and will give a 7-minute "TED talk" style presentation to the class. Instructions and a grading rubric will be distributed later in the semester.

Individual Project: 15%

For your individual project, you will each pick a city of your choice – your hometown, a place you have lived, currently live, or want to live, etc. You will review this city's comprehensive plan and write a paper reviewing the plan based on a set of criteria and questions you must answer. Instructions and a grading rubric will be distributed later in the semester.

Exam 1: 25%

The exam will cover the first half of class, which covers the history and practice of planning as a general discipline as well as some planning specialties. It will be an open book/notes, in-class test which may include short answer questions. Some material is from the readings. Some is from class discussions.

Exam 2: 15%

The exam will cover the second half of class, which covers planning specialties and current/future planning trends. It will be an open book/notes, in-class test which may include short answer questions. Some material is from the readings. Much is from presenters/class discussions.

Optional Extra Credit

The optional extra credit assignment will involve attending (either in-person or virtual) a public meeting in your community. This could include a City Council meeting, Zoning Board Meeting, Planning Commission Meeting, or other special-called meeting that is open to the public. You will be required to write a two-page summary of the meeting, which will include your thoughts and takeaways. Credit will

be given as earned based on effort and quality. You may complete this assignment at any time throughout the semester.

Missed or Late Assignments

I do not accept missed or late assignments unless there are extenuating circumstances (sickness, death in the family, etc.) and you have let me know PRIOR to the assignment being due. I do not offer alternate exam schedules unless you have cleared it with me BEFORE the exam date.

Your Grade

Grades are regularly posted throughout the semester. If you have concerns about your grade, please contact me by the 10th week of classes. There are plenty of ways in which you can earn an A in the class. Your grade is up to you.

A = >90%

B = 80 – 89.99%

C = 70 – 79.99%

D = 60 – 69.99%

F = <60%

Technology

Mobile devices may be used for in-class activities. Please try to avoid using your cell phone for personal reasons during class instruction. Laptops, tablets, e-readers, and other digital devices may be used to take notes or refer to relevant information.

Required Readings

Required readings are outlined in the course schedule below. Reading assignments must be completed prior to the class they are listed under. You will be required to purchase one book for this course. It is available on Amazon or through Barnes and Noble:

LeGates, Richard T. and Frederic Stout. *The City Reader, Sixth Edition*. London: Routledge.

Other readings and course materials will either be linked in the course schedule below, posted on Canvas, or sent via email.

Academic Integrity

For information on the Georgia Tech Student Honor code, consult the website:

<https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code> . You are expected to uphold and abide by this Honor Code.

College of Design Faculty Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The College of Design (COD) community of faculty, staff, and students aspires to create and nurture an environment that is supportive of all backgrounds where different views and ideas are respected and encouraged. In all our pursuits, we commit to justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion with regard to race,

national origin, language, age, sexual orientation, gender, religion, and ability. Moreover, we will encourage intellectual inquiry and respectful exchange that cements our dedication to these principles.

ADA Accommodations

Please let me know if you require course accommodations due to a disability. If any occurrence of disability changes within the semester, please inform me as soon as possible.

Schedule Changes

Events may cause the instructor to rearrange class topics due to speaker availability, severe weather, etc. Schedule changes will be announced in class or via the course website and email.

Office Hours

Office hours are noted above. Please come to office hours. I want everyone to feel comfortable and respected in this class. Please talk to me about any thoughts, concerns, questions, feedback, praise, etc. you have for the course! I am here to help.

Please refer to the [Georgia Tech Student Resource Guide](#) for any other concerns and inquiries you might have both inside and outside of class.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1

August 25: Introduction and Overview

August 27: Introduction and Overview

- *City Reader: "What is a City" Lewis Mumford* (posted on Canvas)
- [Searching for the Essence of Planning](#)

Week 2

September 1: Urbanization and Urban Growth

- *City Reader: "The Urbanization of the Human Population," Kingsley Davis* (pg. 19)
- *City Reader: "The Urban Revolution," V. Gordon Childe* (pg. 30)

September 3: Urbanization and Urban Growth

- *City Reader: "The Great Towns," Friedrich Engels* (pg. 53)
- *City Reader: "Authors Introduction" and "The Town County Magnet", Ebenezer Howard* (pg. 317)
- *Chicago World's Fair* (posted in Canvas)

Week 3

September 8: Land Use Planning and Zoning

- Readings posted on Canvas
- *"Retrofitting Suburbia" Ellen Dunham Jones and June Williamson* (posted on Canvas)

September 10: Urban Design and the Built Environment - Guest Speaker

- *City Reader: "The City Image and its Elements," Kevin Lynch* (pg. 576)
- *City Reader: "The Design of Spaces," William H. Whyte* (pg. 587)

Week 4

September 15: Transportation Planning and Mobility

- *City Reader: "The Drive-in Culture of Contemporary America," Kenneth T. Jackson* (pg. 71)
- *City Reader: "The Uses of Sidewalks: Safety," Jane Jacobs* (pg. 149)

September 17: Transportation Planning and Mobility – Guest Speaker

- [Online article: "Where It All Went Wrong," Atlanta Magazine](#)

Week 5

September 22: Public Participation in Planning

- *City Reader: "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," Sherry Arnstein* (pg. 279)
- Readings posted on Canvas

September 24: Urban Design and the Built Environment

- *In-class movie: "Social Life of Small Urban Spaces"*

Week 6

September 29: Environmental Planning and Sustainability

- *City Reader: "Towards Sustainable Development," World Commission on Environment and Development (pg. 404)*
- *City Reader: "Urbanism in the Age of Climate Change," Peter Calthorpe (pg. 511)*

October 1: Environmental Planning and Sustainability – Guest Speaker

- [Atlanta Tree Canopy Study Summary](#)
- Readings posted on Canvas

Week 7

October 6: NO CLASS – Fall Break!

October 8: Social Equity and Community Development

- *City Reader: "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," Paul Davidoff (pg. 481)*

Week 8

October 13: Social Equity and Community Development – Guest Speaker

- Readings posted on Canvas

October 15: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 9

October 20: Housing

- Readings posted on Canvas

October 22: Housing

- Readings posted on Canvas

Week 10

October 27: Housing Markets and Real Estate Development

- Readings posted on Canvas

October 29: GIS and Urban Analytics – Guest Speaker

- Readings posted on Canvas

Week 11

November 3: Urban Governance and Policy

- *City Reader: "The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place," Harvey Molotch (pg. 293)*
- *City Reader: "The Right to the City," David Harvey (pg. 270)*

November 5: Urban Governance and Policy – Guest Speaker

- *City Reader: "Broken Windows," James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling (pg. 259)*

Week 12

November 10: Economic Development

- *Readings posted on Canvas*

November 12: Economic Development – Guest Speaker

- *Readings posted on Canvas*

Week 13

November 17: Urban Planning in Practice – Guest Speaker

- *Readings posted on Canvas*

November 19: Urban Planning in Practice – Guest Speaker

- *Readings posted on Canvas*

Week 14

November 24: Future Trends in Urban Planning

- [Online article: "Robert Goodspeed Plans for Uncertain Futures Using Exploratory Scenario Planning," Planning Magazine](#)

November 26: NO CLASS – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 15

December 1: Group Presentations

December 3: Group Presentations/End of Semester Wrap-up

Week 16

December 8: FINAL EXAM REVIEW SESSION

TBD: FINAL EXAM