

Public Health and Built Environment

Course Information

Instructor: Arthi Rao (arthir@gatech.edu)

Course Prefix and Number: CP 4812/CP6850C/EH 584 [Emory section]

Term: Fall 2026

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course examines how cities and neighborhoods can have both positive and adverse effects on human health and produces recommendations to improve these outcomes. This Online **SEMINAR course** is a planning and public health course that explores the interconnections between these fields and equips students with skills and experiences to plan healthy communities. This course covers planning and public health foundations, natural and built environments, access to healthcare, and health impacts of policies. This is a cross-listed course with Emory University and provides an enriching experience where GT and Emory students interact, learn, and work together.

Course Learning Outcomes

By enrolling in this course, students will:

1. Understand public health and planning history, evolution and significant movements to the present, and historical and current theories on the relationship between the built environment and public health.
2. Identify contemporary features of the built environment such as patterns of development, parks, public works projects, houses, and transportation systems that reflect past efforts to influence health, and use methods developed by architects, urban planners, public health professionals, sociologists and anthropologists to address current health impacts of the built environment.
3. Learn about interdisciplinary frameworks to better integrate that understanding when evaluating differing built environments, socioeconomic positions, social and cultural backgrounds, and health status.
4. Adopt new perspectives, interests or values based on issues addressed throughout the semester.
5. Develop skills to identify studies and engage communities, critique methods and findings, and apply lessons from planning and public health research to current and future problems.
6. Integrate current evidence regarding the impacts of the built environment on health with information and perspectives from other courses and/or personal experiences.

Required Course Materials

Botchwey, N., Dannenberg, A. L., & Frumkin, H. (Eds.). (2022). Making healthy places : designing and building for well-being, equity, and sustainability / (Second edition.). Island Press. <https://doi.org/10.5822/978-1-64283-158-0>

Additional materials will be made available through the Canvas site (<https://Canvas.gatech.edu>). Consult the reading lists or the instructor, if unsure.

Grading Policy

Urban Planning Policy levers (25% of course grade)

In-Class Quizzes (20%)

Final Project Intermediate Check-in (5%)

Final Project (35%)

Participation (15%)

A>90; B>80; C>70; D>60

Attendance Policy

This class will be taught in an in-person format. Attendance is an important component of your participation grade. Please inform me in writing of any (un)anticipated absences and please check with us regarding what qualifies as an excused absence. Classes will combine lectures, discussions, group projects, and student presentations. Informed participation in discussions is essential, so your first responsibility is to do required reading and other homework on time.

Academic and Research Honesty/Integrity Statement

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review the student [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Academic Honor Code](#), especially [Appendix A: Graduate Addendum to the Academic Honor Code](#).

Students are expected to perform research in an ethical and responsible manner. All Doctoral and Master's Thesis students are required to take the [Responsible Conduct of Research training](#), and it is expected that students abide by the principles taught in that training while performing research.

Allegations of scientific or scholarly misconduct are handled in accordance with the procedures outlined by the [Policy for Responding to Allegations of Scientific or Other Scholarly Misconduct](#).

Core IMPACTS

Not applicable.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

Expectations of Graduate Research Assistants

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. The [Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulates some basic expectations that you can have of your professors and that they can have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek.