

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
ECON 490-001: URBAN ECONOMICS

FALL 2021

MWF from 12:20 PM – 1:10PM in Gardner Hall, Rm. 309

Instructor:	Rita A. Balaban	E-Mail:	balabanr@email.unc.edu
Office Hours:	Mondays (3:30 PM – 5:00 PM in the EconAid Center/Gardner 009) and Thursdays (9:30 AM – 11:00 AM via Zoom: https://unc.zoom.us/j/949953760)		
Website:	http://sakai.unc.edu This is the course website and you can access it by using your ONYEN. Please become familiar with Sakai. This is where you will find a detailed outline of what you are expected to do before/after each lecture. It also contains the official course gradebook, announcements, and other supplementary materials. It is your responsibility to frequently check Sakai to stay on top of course announcements and assignments. The course will appear as ECON490.001.FA21 in Sakai.		
Credit Hours:	3 hrs.		
Prerequisites:	C or better in ECON 400 and ECON 410		

Course Description: This course introduces space into economic models to study the location of economic activity and the implications location has on business and individuals. We examine the major contemporary issues confronting urban areas, exploring possible economic solutions to the problems of housing, transportation, education, employment, poverty, and crime. Also considered will be theories of why cities exist, city location, city size, the causes of growth and decline.

Course Expectations and Format: We will draw on the tools that you learned in ECON 410 so this course will feel fairly rigorous and demanding at times. However, I have carefully constructed the assignments in this course to maximize your learning. You are expected to work hard, actively participate, ask questions when you have any doubts, and perform to the very best of your ability. Class time will be used to introduce new material, hold discussions related to the course content, and do activities. You are expected to be engaged and you are highly encouraged to ask questions as soon as they arise.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand why cities exist and describe the market forces that determine their location and development.
- Understand how land is allocated between competing sectors (manufacturing, offices, and households) within a city and the role of government in urban land use.
- Identify the unique features of housing and analyze policies that assist low- and high-income households.
- Explain the role of local government and analyze the effects that the local public sector has on the spatial patterns of the urban area.
- Analyze the externalities that occur within urban areas and possible policy solutions.

Required Materials:

- All required readings are available on Sakai under Course Reserves.
- Zoom – You will need Zoom to join my Thursday office hours. Make sure you are using the latest version of Zoom and that you are using your UNC Zoom account (unc.zoom.us). Zoom is freely available to you and you can sign up at unc.zoom.us.
- Basic calculator.
- Stable internet connection
- Gradescope – You will submit most of your assignments on Gradescope by using the link on our Sakai course page. Gradescope is free to you. It is your responsibility to make sure your submitted assignments are clear and easy to read. This means that you should use pen or dark pencil and make sure that your ink does not bleed through to the back of the page if you are writing on both sides. When taking photographs or scanning a document, make sure the pages are properly oriented and ordered numerically, and clearly indicate where each problem appears. For more information on how to submit homework to Gradescope and other frequently asked questions, follow this link (<https://www.gradescope.com/help#help-center-section-student-workflow>). Note: When you submit an assignment, you will receive an automated email from Gradescope that includes the date and time you turned in your work, the assignment Due Date, and a link to your submission. Make sure that you receive this email before you navigate away from the submission page.

Course Components

- **Guided Reading Questions (GRQ):** These questions are tied to the readings that you are scheduled to prepare for a given lecture and will generally be 1-2 pages in length. All responses must be typed in at least 10-point font, double-spaced, and uploaded to Gradescope by their deadline (12:15pm on class days). These questions will be graded for 1) completion, which means that ALL questions must be answered; 2) accuracy (70% or better); and 3) clarity (i.e., your response is clearly written). You are welcome to discuss these questions with your classmates, but everyone is expected to turn in their own assignment and put their responses in their own words – do not copy and paste from the reading - before uploading them to Gradescope. If you meet all these requirements, then you will receive credit (1 point), otherwise, you get no credit (0 points). I expect to assign about 18-20 GRQs this semester. I do not provide answers to the GRQs because their content is discussed during our lectures. I will drop your two lowest GRQ scores before calculating your final grade.
- **Problem Sets (PS):** I will assign 10-12 problem sets this semester. PS will be assigned on Wednesday afternoons and must be uploaded to Gradescope by 11:55pm on Monday evenings. Explicit instructions will be provided in the assignment and the questions will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Each homework will be graded for 1) completion, which means that ALL questions must be answered; and 2) accuracy (70% or better). If you meet all these requirements, then you will receive credit (1 point), otherwise, you get no credit (0 points). You may submit one PS per 4 students, and I will drop your two lowest PS scores before calculating your final grade. Solutions will be provided to all PS.
- **Recorded Presentation:** Each student will be required to do a recorded presentation on a book, academic article, documentary, lecture, podcast, or other that is related to the course content. Your source must be submitted to me for approval by emailing me a complete citation of the source (feel free to attach a copy or a link to a website) and including a short explanation on how the source is related to the course content and why you think this content would be interesting to future ECON 490 students. Your topic must be approved by November 5th and the presentation is due by December 1st. Detailed instructions with the presentation guidelines will be provided by August 23rd.
- **Midterm Exams:** There will be 3 midterm examinations and the dates are scheduled for September 17th, October 18th, and November 17th. Each of your two highest exam scores will count towards 15% of your final grade and your lowest exam score will be dropped. The exams will be based on class content, GRQs, and problem sets. You will be permitted to use one 8.5x11 page of notes during the exam.

- **Cumulative Final Exam** will take place during the final exam period assigned by the registrar (12:00pm – 3:00pm on Monday, December 6th). The exams will be based on class content, GRQs, and problem sets. You will be permitted to use one 8.5x11 page of notes during the exam.

The grading breakdown follows: (percentage of final grade)

Guided Reading Questions	15%
Problem Sets	15%
Recorded Presentation	15%
3 Midterms Exams (lowest score dropped; 15% each for the two highest scores)	30%
Cumulative Final Exam	25%

Grading Scale (as a percentage of total points)

A	= 93-100	C	= 73-76
A-	= 90-92	C-	= 70-72
B+	= 87-89	D+	= 67-69
B	= 83-86	D	= 60-66
B-	= 80-82	F	< 60
C+	= 77-79		

Generally, I do not curve final grades. However, if I feel that your preparation and in-class participation merits reward, then I will consider a 1-point curve of your final grade.

When and How to Contact Me

- If you have a question about the course material:
 - If it’s brief, then you can ask me before or after class.
 - Speak to me during my office hours.
- If you have a question about Class Policies or Grading:
 - Always check the syllabus and Sakai announcements first as 90% of course procedure questions are answered there.
 - If you cannot find the answer in the syllabus or the Sakai announcements, then please email me at balabanr@email.unc.edu.
 - You can expect to receive a response within 24-48 hours. If you do not hear from me after 48 hours, please check the email address you used. Emails sent to other email addresses will not be answered.
- If you have a sensitive or personal issue that you would like to discuss:
 - Feel free to setup an individual appointment with me at <http://calendly.com/balabanr> or send an email to balabanr@email.unc.edu.
 - If you use the proper email address, then you can expect to receive a response within 24-48 hours. Emails sent to other email addresses will not be answered.
- If you have a question about majoring in economics or careers in economics:
 - See the section on Sakai entitled “Interesting Links” as many of your questions may be answered there.
 - You can discuss career-related questions with me during office hours.

- A comment on email etiquette
 - Send all correspondences from your UNC email address and include your FULL (official) NAME and PID.
 - Briefly describe the issue in the subject line.
 - Use full sentences (i.e., not text language), and be concise.
 - Be polite and respectful.

Diversity Statement: I value the perspectives of individuals from all backgrounds reflecting the diversity of our students. I broadly define diversity to include race, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, religion, social class, age, sexual orientation, political background, and physical and learning ability. I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve, I appreciate suggestions.

UNIVERSITY AND COURSE POLICIES

Community Standards in Our Course and Mask Use: This semester, while we are in the midst of a global pandemic, all enrolled students are required to wear a mask covering your mouth and nose at all times in our classroom. This requirement is to protect our educational community — your classmates and me — as we learn together. If you choose not to wear a mask, or wear it improperly, I will ask you to leave immediately, and I will submit a report to the [Office of Student Conduct](#). At that point you will be disenrolled from this course for the protection of our educational community. Students who have an authorized accommodation from Accessibility Resources and Service have an exception. For additional information, see [Carolina Together](#).

Honor Code Statement: I expect all students to follow the guidelines of the UNC honor code. In particular, students are expected to refrain from “lying, cheating, or stealing” in the academic context. You can read more about the honor code at honor.unc.edu. In any course, including mine, what constitutes cheating can change from one activity to another. For example, collaboration may be encouraged for an assignment but qualify as cheating during an exam. Please see my guidelines for each activity, and if you are unsure, please ask me to clarify.

You are not permitted to upload any content from this course to the web in any form, including but not limited to Chegg, Course Hero, Coursera, Google Drive, etc. If you post my course content, you may be violating my intellectual property rights. If you post your own work from this course, you are allowing sites to profit from your intellectual property. In utilizing web sources to upload or download course content, you risk violating the University’s Honor Code.

Attendance Policy: No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences:

1. Authorized University activities
2. Disability/religious observance/pregnancy, as required by law and approved by [Accessibility Resources and Service](#) and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC)
3. Significant health condition and/or personal/family emergency as approved by the [Office of the Dean of Students](#), [Gender Violence Service Coordinators](#), and/or the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#) (EOC).

Students who present me with University Approved Absence documentation are eligible for makeup work. This includes documentation which comes specifically from ARS, EOC, the Office of the Dean of Students, the Gender Violence Service Coordinators or the official organization (barring club sports). All other types of documentation

cannot be used for University Approved Absences, and thus, makeup work cannot be given under these circumstances. Documentation must specify exactly which dates the student is to be excused for; thus, a beginning and end time must be made explicit.

Invalid excuses are anything not listed explicitly as a University Approved Absence, including but not restricted to club activities/events, interviews (unless interviewer provides documentation that the date of the interview cannot be changed), travel and/or vacation plans, feeling unprepared, etc.

Finally, regular attendance is strongly recommended. You are responsible for any announcements that you may have missed if you choose not to attend class or if you cannot attend class. You should get the missed notes/announcements from one of your peers. Discuss any questions you have on the content with a classmate or stop by during my scheduled office hours. It is expected that you will respect your peers and the instructor with appropriate behavior while in class and that you will arrive to class on time. **Students who are not willing to attend regularly should drop the course.** In the case of extreme illness or family emergency please notify me and the Dean of Students as soon as possible.

If you have a university approved absence, then it is your responsibility to email me at balabanr@email.unc.edu either before or during the week you return to let me know which assignment(s) you would like to make up. If you email well past the week you return, you will be unable to make up the missed work.

Late/Missed Work Policy

- You are strongly urged to complete assignments in advance of the deadline to avoid any last-minute technical difficulties (e.g., internet issues).
- Late assignments are not accepted unless you have a University Approved Absence with one of the proper documentations as described above.

Regrade Requests: If you feel that your work has been graded unfairly, you may submit it for a regrade. However, the regrade request must be submitted to balabanr@email.unc.edu within one week of when the assignment's grade was posted. There are no exceptions to this rule. Note: if the assignment was completed on Gradescope, then select the "Request Regrade" button within Gradescope (<https://help.gradescope.com/article/8hchz9h8wh>).

In order for your regrade request to be considered, if applicable, you must submit the original work with NO additional markings or changes along with a detailed description of what you believe was graded unfairly and why you think you deserve additional points. Please keep in mind that I reserve the right to regrade any and all parts of the work which is submitted for re-assessment, and your grade may increase, decrease, or stay the same as a result.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Accessibility Resources & Services: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities.

Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

In order to assure that I have time to comply with your accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible and at least 72 hours in advance of any deadline.

The Learning Center: The UNC Learning Center is a great resource both for students who are struggling in their courses and for those who want to be proactive and develop sound study practices to prevent falling behind. They offer individual consultations, peer tutoring, academic coaching, test prep programming, study skills workshops, and peer study groups. If you think you might benefit from their services, please visit them in SASB North or visit their website to set up an appointment: <http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is located in the Student and Academic Services Building and offers personalized writing consultations as well as a variety of other resources. This could be a wonderful resource to help with your writing assignments in this course (and any assignments in your other courses). You do not need a complete draft of your assignment to visit; they can help you at any stage! You can chat with someone in the writing center or set up an appointment on their website: <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>

Counseling and Psychological Services: CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Go to their website: <https://caps.unc.edu/> or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

Title IX Resources: Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (Elizabeth Hall, interim – titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

Calendar and Reading List

Below is a general outline of the topics that will be covered this semester. A detailed outline with a schedule of required readings and assignments can be found in Sakai. You should always refer to the weekly schedule on Sakai when you are preparing for class.

Dates	Topic and Readings
Aug. 18	Introduction to Urban Economics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Glaeser, E. L. (2011). <i>Triumph of the city: How our greatest invention makes us richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier</i>. New York: Penguin Press. (Introduction, pp. 1-15)
Aug. 20 – Sep. 1	Market Forces in the Development and Location of Cities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapter 1) Glaeser, E. 1998. "Are cities dying?" <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> 12(2): 139- 160.
Sep. 3 – Sep. 15	Land Rent and Land-Use Patterns in Urban Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapter 2)
Sep. 17	Midterm #1
Sep. 20 – Oct. 4	Applications of the Monocentric Model <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapters 3, 4)
Oct. 6 – Oct. 15	Urban Transportation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapter 5) O’Sullivan, A. (2012). Urban Transit. In <i>Urban Economics</i> (8th edition) (pp. 290–311). McGraw-Hill/Irwin.
Oct. 18	Midterm #2
Oct. 20 – Nov. 8	Housing Demand and Housing Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boustan, L. (2011). Racial Residential Segregation in American Cities. In N. Brooks, K. Donaghy, & G.-J. Knaap (Eds.), <i>The Oxford Handbook of Urban Economics and Planning</i>. Oxford University Press. Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapters 6, 7)
Nov. 10 – Nov. 15	Local Public Goods and Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapter 8)
Nov. 17	Midterm #3
Nov. 19 – Dec. 1	Urban Poverty and Crime: The Role of Neighborhood Effects and Social Networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brueckner, J. K. (2011). Lectures on Urban Economics. The MIT Press. (Chapter 10, sections 10.1-10.3) Chetty, R., Hendren, N., & Katz, L. F. (2016). The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Experiment. <i>American Economic Review</i>, 106(4), 855–902.
Dec. 6	Cumulative Final Exam (12:00pm – 3:00pm)

Disclaimer: Although the instructor intends to follow this syllabus as closely as possible, there may be times when deviations from the material presented herein are necessary. Changes will be announced as early as possible so that students can adjust their schedule.