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Office Hours: (Online) Mon/Wed 12pm-1:30pm, Tues 2pm-4pm, and by appointment
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Course Description and Objectives:

Four-fifths of the U.S. population and about half of the world population live in urban areas. This course will focus on the economics of cities and regions as well as the challenges faced by economic agents in urban areas. An emphasis will be placed on policies (public and private) that have important effects on urban forms, structures, and markets.

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

- Recognize the economic forces that lead to the development of cities
- Understand the implications of canonical theoretical models in urban economics
- Apply the economic models in three ways: conceptually, graphically, and mathematically
- Evaluate policy along the dimensions of efficiency, equality, sustainability, and other criteria
- Tie economic models to personal experiences by participating in the urban snapshots project

Prerequisites: Intermediate Microeconomics or Managerial Economics (ECO 260 or ECO 262) and Intermediate Macroeconomics or Money and Banking (ECO 255 or ECO 270). This course builds on the basic concepts of supply and demand, competitive markets, elasticities, and so on. We will review some key concepts at the beginning of the course, but for additional reference, you may wish to consult your intermediate economics textbooks or Chapter 24 of the O’Sullivan textbook.

This course, while having a strong focus on applied policy, is nonetheless a 400-level course in a discipline of economics. Therefore, it will use mathematical models, equations, graphs, and statistics. We will build models that simplify the world but still allow us to draw conclusions and evaluate policy. The course will use algebra and graphs, but there will be no calculus or econometrics. If you have questions about the level of quantitative proficiency required in the course, please talk to me or send me an email.

Recommended Materials:

- O’Sullivan, A. 2018. *Urban Economics*. 9th edition. (ISBN: 978-0078021787). This is our primary textbook. There is a copy on reserve at the library. The 8th and 7th editions are acceptable, but not recommended because the chapters do not correspond. If you choose to use an earlier edition, it is your responsibility to locate the relevant course material.
- Glaeser, E. 2013. *Triumph of the City*. (ISBN: 978-0143120544). This supplemental text, written by an urban economist, presents an interesting look at the majesty and greatness of cities.
- I strongly encourage students to read about current events related to urban issues and try to connect and apply the course material to them. Important sources include: *The Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *The Economist*.
- I also encourage students to follow the well-known economics podcasts: <https://www.npr.org/sections/money/> and <https://freakonomics.com/>.
- Supplementary materials will be posted on Blackboard. This includes lecture slides, handouts, problem sets, and course announcements. It is your responsibility to check Blackboard often.

Grading:

There are four components that make up your course grade.

25%	Problem sets	
25%	Urban snapshots project	Due <u>5/9 at 11:59pm</u> (via Blackboard)
20%	Midterm exam	Blackboard, 75 minutes, any time from <u>3/25 to 3/28</u> .
30%	Final exam	Blackboard, 160 minutes, any time from <u>5/11 to 5/16</u> .

Problem sets (25%): Problem sets assigned throughout the semester are worth 5 points each:

- 5 pts. Strong effort with mostly correct answers
- 4 pts. Good effort with many correct answers
- 3 pts. Mediocre effort with many wrong answers
- 2 pts. Weak effort or mostly incomplete

Urban Snapshots Project (25%): One of the most interesting aspects of urban economics is that urban structure and local public policy (both good and bad) can be observed simply by looking around. Is there too much congestion on city streets? Is there too much trash on the sidewalk? What forces lead to neighborhood segregation or neighborhood gentrification? The urban snapshots project asks you to take scenes relevant to you and interpret them through the lens of the models we talk about in class.

You are to take **seven photographs** of urban scenes and write accompanying text (1-2 pages of double-spaced text per scene) to interpret the scenes using economic concepts. For example, a photograph of an LIRR station may prompt a discussion of transit systems, modal choice, or externalities. You may also juxtapose two photographs to illustrate one scene (rich vs. poor, sprawling vs. dense, etc.) – those count as one scene.

Be sure to attribute your photographs! Make a note of who took the photograph and the location/date/time. If you have taken a photograph before this course that you would like to include, that is fine. Finally, if you happen upon a *really effective* photograph taken by someone else (a friend's album, on a website, in a book), you may include it *with proper attribution*. No more than three of your scenes may come from photographs not taken by you.

You must hand in your own project. No collaboration is allowed.

Projects will be graded on several dimensions: (1) your ability to transfer the concepts seen in class to your photographs; (2) the quality of your descriptions and their relevance to class material; (3) the variety and originality of your selections; and (4) a brief in-class presentation of one of your scenes. Remember that this is not a photography assignment, but an economics one. Each of your seven scenes as well as your brief in-class presentation will be graded out of 10 possible points, so the total grade is out of 80 points. Extra consideration will be given if you can unify all of your photographs within a grand theme.

Important reminders:

1. You should not expect that photographs of the real world can be perfectly explained by the models we discuss in class. The real world is much more complex than any of our models ever are. Keep this in mind in your write-up.
2. *Your safety is of paramount importance!* Please do not put yourself at risk by traveling to unfamiliar or unsafe areas, especially at night. Do not go to unfamiliar places alone, and do tell friends and family where you are going. Do not be too conspicuous in taking photographs, and do not take photos of people without their permission.

The due date for the urban snapshots project is Sunday, May 9th at 11:59pm (via Blackboard).

Midterm exam (20%): The midterm exam will be online from March 25th through March 28th. There will be no make-ups for the exam. If you cannot take the exam, you must let me know at least 48 hours in advance and provide proper documentation.

Final exam (30%): The comprehensive final exam for this course will be online from May 11th through May 16th. This time is not flexible. An excused absence for the final exam will be handled according to the policy of the college and the Dean of Students.

Expectations and Feedback:

I expect you to attend every class and to have done the assigned readings. I value your attendance and participation in all class discussions and activities. I also expect you to help maintain an effective learning environment by being open-minded and considerate toward your fellow classmates. Students who are distracting class will be asked to leave. In return, I will strive to conduct organized and insightful class sessions and to treat you and your intellectual work with fairness and respect. I greatly value feedback related to the course subject matter, the lecture pace, and my teaching style. Feel free to talk to me in person, send me an email, or leave an anonymous note addressed to me under the door of the School of Business Mailroom (BUSC 125).

Academic Integrity Policy:

Farmingdale State College has developed regulations concerning [academic integrity](#) and dishonesty to maintain an ethical academic environment. Presenting someone else's work as your own is a serious offense. Cheating on exams, problem sets, or the snapshots project, including **plagiarism**, will be dealt with harshly. I reserve the right to determine an appropriate punishment including course failure.

Student Code of Conduct:

The President of the College and the Vice President for Student Affairs recognize the rights of designees including University Police, to enforce all regulations, policies, license agreements, laws, and codes on campus. If any individual allegedly violates the laws, Student Code of Conduct, or campus policies, a President's designee will institute proceedings against the offender(s). For more information on the student code of conduct, see the [Code of Conduct](#) section in the current [Student Handbook](#).

Copyright Statement:

Course material handed out in class or accessed from Blackboard is for the exclusive use of students who are currently enrolled in the course. Content from these systems cannot be reused or distributed without written permission of the instructor and/or the copyright holder. Duplication of materials protected by copyright is a violation of the Federal copyright law, as well as a violation of SUNY copyright policy.

Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible so that your learning needs can be appropriately addressed. You will need to provide documentation of your disability from the Disability Services Center (Roosevelt Hall, Room 151, or call 934-420-5174).

Religious Absences:

If you are unable to attend class on certain days due to religious beliefs, please consult with me well in advance of the absence so that appropriate accommodations can be made.

Cancellation of Classes:

Campus-wide cancellations will be listed on the Farmingdale State College home page, Facebook, and Twitter. You can also sign up for RAVE and SUNY Alert. Go to the [Rave](#) web page and use your Farmingdale user ID and password to enter. For SUNY-Alert, visit the [University Police](#) web page.

Tentative Course Outline:

I will do my best to adhere to this schedule, but I reserve the right to make changes as needed.

Date(s)	Topic	Reading (O'Sullivan)
2/2, 2/4, 2/9, 2/11	Introduction: Key Definitions and Concepts of Urban Economics	Ch. 1 & 2
2/16, 2/18, 2/23, 2/25	Trading Towns and Factory Towns: Scale Economies, Clusters, and Agglomeration	Ch. 3 & 4
3/2, 3/4, 3/9, 3/11	City Size, Urban Growth, and Urban Labor Markets	Ch. 7 & 8
3/16, 3/18	Land Rent and Land Use: Manufacturing Land, Office Space, and Tall Buildings	Ch. 10, & 11
3/23, 3/25	Land Rent and Land Use: Residential Land, Agricultural Land, and Housing Prices	Ch. 12
3/25 – 3/28	Midterm Exam (Ch. 1-4, 7-8, 10-11)	
3/30, 4/1	Suburbanization, Sprawl, the Monocentric City, and General Equilibrium	Ch. 13 & 14
4/6, 4/8	Neighborhood Choice and Segregation	Ch. 15
4/13, 4/15, 4/20, 4/22	Zoning, Growth Controls, Housing Policy, and Gentrification	Ch. 16 & 17
4/27, 4/29, 5/4, 5/6	Transportation: Cars, Roads, Congestion, and Public Transit	Ch. 18 & 19
5/11 – 5/16	Comprehensive Final Exam (Ch. 1-4, 7-8, 10-19)	

Special thanks go to Dr. Ron Cheung (Oberlin College) for his help in creating this course.