Course Description

This course explores, from an interdisciplinary perspective, issues facing cities in the developing world. Given that an increasing majority of the world population lives in cities, the pursuit of social and economic justice is increasingly a question of urban governance. The aim of this course is to introduce students to the factors specific to the urban context that create and reproduce marginality and the proposed innovations in local governance to ameliorate such problems. The course is divided into two sections: (1) institutions of local governance in the Global South; and (2) urban challenges and innovations.

Unit one unpacks the causes and consequences of dual reform episodes in the last decades, decentralization and participatory governance. While these policy innovations promised to make governments more responsive to citizens, they have not always lived up to this promise. In explaining the effect of these reforms on governance outcomes, we analyze three key mediating factors: the design of institutions of fiscal federalism, local fiscal policy (revenue and expenditure), and the institutional capacity of local governments. The second unit discusses key problems in the Urban Global South together with public policy examples of how these issues have been addressed successfully in different latitudes. We will concentrate on challenges such as public goods and service provision, the informal economy and informal settlements, transport systems, urban segregation, and environmental degradation. Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to: understand the major challenges faced by cities in the Global South, analyze the roles of institutions of local governance and approach major questions about cities from a social science perspective.

Learning objectives

- Assess the role played by local governments in the welfare of cities’ inhabitants.
- Differentiate between the urban challenges faced by cities according to their level of development.
- Given data and case studies in class, students should be able to discuss and explain urban policies.
- Collect, describe, and interpret qualitative and quantitative data.
- Present ideas effectively orally and in writing.

Attendance

It will be difficult to do well on this course without regular attendance given (i) how essential the lectures will be for your learning process, (ii) the pop quizzes that will take place in many sessions, and (iii) the class activities and discussions prepared for our class sessions. Class participation and in-class work are important aspects of this course, so your engagement is critical to your success.

Student athletes should provide a Travel Request Letter to justify their absence. Similarly, students not attending class due to a religious observation should provide notice in advance. Students registering in the course late should notify the professor.

Late work policy

Please communicate with me in a reasonable amount of time (24 to 48 hours before an assignment due) if you would like to request an extension on a specific assignment due to a health issue or family emergency with documentation. Extensions will be permitted on a case-by-case basis, and with a grade penalty.
There is no way to make up for quizzes or in-class work missed unless you have a health issue or family emergency and provide documentation. Pop quizzes and in-class work will occur in many class sessions. Thus, missing a quiz for an unjustifiable reason (all but documented health issue or family emergency) will not considerably affect your grade. Furthermore, during the semester two or three extra credit assignments will be offered to compensate for missed quizzes and in-class work.

**Assessment Policy**
The course will be evaluated through (i) pop quizzes, in-class work, and assignments, (ii) short presentation (iii) a mid-term exam (iv) and a final exam. These assessments are designed to evaluate the degree to which students have increased their understanding about the class material.

Grades will be determined based on the following:

- **Pop Quizzes, In-Class Work, Assignments** 50%
- **Short Presentation** 10%
- **Mid-Term Exam** 20%
- **Final Exam** 20%

**Grading Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>98 – 100</td>
<td>A+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 – 97.99</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 92.99</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 – 89.99</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 – 86.99</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 – 82.99</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77 – 79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>73 – 76.99</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 – 72.99</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67 – 69.99</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<tr>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 – 62.99</td>
<td>D-</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt;60</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Pop Quizzes, In-class work & Assignments (50%)**

Students must read, on average, two articles per week/topic covered during the semester. We will cover 11 different topics and all the readings are accessible in Blackboard. **To do well in this course, you need to do the readings.** Therefore, as a measure of accountability there will be many pop quizzes during the semester. These will be based on your knowledge about the readings assigned for each topic.

Every topic covered in this course will include a lecture session followed by class activities and discussion. Students are expected to actively participate and take part in discussion and class activities. To have fruitful sessions, it is highly important that students come prepared to class and participate with questions, comments, or reflections. For obvious reasons, your attendance to class sessions is key.

Some assignments, may involve watching a video, listening to a podcast or radio episode, reading an article, or analyzing quantitative data. Each of these activities will be explained during class before the assignment is due.

**Short presentations (10%)**

One or two students per class/topic will do an extra reading assignment each week and present it to the class. Only the students presenting will do the extra reading (denoted in the course reading list with an asterisk). Presentations should last from 5 to 7 minutes. Students should distribute an outline to classmates to make the content delivery more effective. Presentations should aim to: (1) effectively summarize and explain the extra reading in a clear way and (2) provide complementary information for the lecture.
Mid-term Exam (20%)
The mid-term exam will take place on **Oct 8. during class.** Students must prepare 4 topics out of the 7 topics covered in the first unit. The exam will consist of the writing of 2 essays on 2 topics out of the 4 had to study for.

Final Exam (20%)
The final exam will take place on **Dec. 5.** You must prepare 3 topics out of the 6 topics covered in the second unit. The selected topics will be announced three weeks before the exam. The exam will consist of the writing of 2 essays on 2 of the 5 topics students had to prepare.

Tips for Success

- Keep up with the weekly reading assignments and attend the weekly session ready to discuss the class materials.
- Take notes on the readings and during lecture. This will be very useful for the pop quizzes.
- Plan and allocate time in your calendar to do the class readings well before every Monday.
- Make sure you check the course website on Blackboard to remain up to date with the course calendar, assignments, readings, PowerPoint presentations/lecture notes and guidelines.
- Once more: do the readings and come to class!

Electronic devices
Unless otherwise announced, **please do not use electronic devices in class.** Research shows that electronic devices not incorporated for lecture purposes detract not only from your own learning, but also from your fellow classmates.

Respect
This course provides a forum for lively debates about competing visions of politics and society. Throughout the semester, we will be addressing some issues on which people may have strong and diverse opinions. Please respect one another by considering the comments made by your peers, even if you disagree, and by addressing your comments at the ideas presented, not the person presenting them.

Grade Grubbing
I advise you not to engage in grade grubbing. Asking the professor for your grade to be raised for no legitimate reason is offensive and contrary to sound pedagogical practice. Grade grubbing is also unfair to the students that do not argue their grades. While you may think there is nothing to lose if you ask for your grade to be raised, think about it twice. Grade grubbers give the impression that they care more about their grade in the course than about learning the material.

As your professor, I strive to create an environment where student engagement is driven by intellectual curiosity and collaborative skill building. Excessive focus on grades risks undermining this environment. At the same time, please take solace in knowing that I take grading very seriously and understand how your GPAs affect your future goals. You do not need to intervene in my grading process to assure that your grade is an accurate reflection of your learning process and scholarly diligence.

Students with learning differences
If you anticipate needing any type of an academic accommodation in this course, please (1) discuss this with me at the start of the semester so I have time to ensure your needs are met AND (2) consult the Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) for the determination of appropriate accommodations. In order for you to receive any type of academic accommodation, I will need to receive a letter from the OSAS during the first few weeks of the semester. Accommodations are not retroactive.

Academic integrity

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1 Often grade grubbers ask the professor to violate the assessment policy contained in the syllabus to improve their grade.
The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

**This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook.** All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage. The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.
Class Schedule & Reading List (The following dates are tentative and are subject to change per my discretion)

I Urban Governance


2. Th. Aug 29. Urbanization Trends and Challenges

Basic Reading:

Further Readings:


UN Habitat, (2018), The World’s Cities in 2018 Data Booklet


Basic Reading:

Further Reading:
WRR, (2016), Towards a More Equal City: Framing the Challenges and Opportunities, pg 1-33.

4. Th. Sep 5. Decentralization

Basic Reading:

Further Readings:


5. T. Sep 10. Local Participatory Governance

Basic Readings:


Further Readings:


IDB, 2022, Urbanismo Ciudadano en América Latina, Superlibro de acciones cívicas para la transformación de las ciudades.

Documentary: “Bogotá Improving Civic Behavior Cities on Speed” by the Danish Radio

6. Th. Sep 12. Local Government Institutional Capacity

Basic Reading:

Further Readings:

7. T. Sep 17. Local Government Institutional Capacity

Basic Reading:

Further Reading:

8. Th. Sep 19. The Urban Fiscal Problem in Developing Countries

Basic Reading:

Further Readings:


9. T. Sep 24. The Urban Fiscal Problem in Developing Countries
Basic Reading:

Further Readings:


Watch the CSIS Conference on “Sub-National Domestic Resource Mobilization, Innovation, and Development Report” held on Sep 15, 2017. 1hr and 15 min.

II Urban Challenges and Innovations

10. Th. Sep 26. The Informal Economy

Basic Readings:

Further Readings:


11. T. Oct 1. The Informal Economy

Basic Reading:

Further Readings:


Basic Reading:

Listen to: NPR, Planet Money, Feb 14, 2012: “Lighthouses, Autopsies And The Federal Budget” (21 min.)

Listen to: Talk Policy to Me, from the Goldman School of Public Policy, May 2, 2019, episode 215 “Talking Public Goods” (21 min.)

Further readings:

13. T. Oct 8. Mid Term Exam


15. T. Oct 15. Violence in the Streets: Guest Speaker. Dr. Danielle Strickland

Basic Reading:

Watch the presentation: “Youth & Violence: Juan Pacheco on Gangs, UCLA” in the forum at UCLA on “Global Perspectives on Youth & Violence” held in March 2009.


Basic Reading:

Further Readings:

Listen to The Compass: Series on My Perfect City, on the BBC World Service: “Participatory Budgeting, Paris France.” (26 minutes).


Basic Reading:

Further Reading:


Basic Reading:


Further Readings:


**Basic Reading:**

**Further Readings:**
ReVista Harvard Review of Latin America, *Transportation*, Fall 2021, Volume XXI, Number 1


IDB webinar on “Informal and Semiformal Services in Latin America: an Overview of Public Transportation Reform” (40 min)


20. Th. Oct 31. Slums and Slum Upgrading

**Basic Reading:**

**Further Readings:**

21. Th. Nov 5. Slums and Slum Upgrading

**Basic Reading:**


**Further Readings:**


**Basic Readings:**

Further Readings:


23. T. Nov 12. Housing Policy

Basic Readings:
UN Habitat, Cities World Cities Report 2016. Chapter 3 The future of housing, pp 47-66.

Further readings:


Phillips, Matt. (2014), Most Germans don’t buy their homes, they rent. Here’s why. Quartz.


Basic Readings:


Further readings:


Basic Readings:

Watch UN-Habitat lectures: (i) “Transforming the City Towards Low Carbon Resilience” by Steffen Lehmann and (ii) “Cities and the new climate economy” by Philipp Rode

Further readings:


Further reading:

27. T. Nov 26. Thanksgiving Break

28. Th. Nov 28 Thanksgiving Break

29. T. Dec 3. Putting it all together