

William & Mary
Spring 2020

SYLLABUS

ECON 325 – 01 & 02. Urban Economics

01: T/R. 2:00 - 3:20PM. Washington Hall 302

02: T/R. 3:30 – 4:50PM. Washington Hall 302

Instructor: Thomas P. LaSalvia, PhD
Office Location: Tyler 230
Office Hours: W: 2-4, F: 10-12, appointments, walk-in
Email: tplasalvia@wm.edu

Course Description: Urban economics uses fundamental economic theory to model location decisions of utility maximizing households and profit maximizing firms. These models are then analyzed to gain a better understanding of why cities exist, what causes cities to expand or contract, land-use patterns within a city, and the effect of public policy on the health of a city and its populace.

Course Objectives: Develop a working knowledge of the tools used by urban economists to evaluate the location decisions of households and firms, and how those decisions affect the outcomes of particular urban environments.

Students will have the opportunity to practice and hone their use of microeconomic fundamentals (economic reasoning, graphical modeling, game theory, etc.).

Students will have the opportunity to experience a collaborative working environment.

Prerequisite: Working knowledge of microeconomic fundamentals, ECON 101

Important Dates: Add/Drop: January 31. Withdraw: March 23.

Course Structure and Assessment: This class combines lectures with in-class project based learning. Students will work in groups to provide an economic analysis of a chosen U.S. city. In-class lectures will provide the tools needed to perform the analysis. Exams will be used for individual level assessment.

The below descriptions, dates and weights are **approximates** and subject to minor adjustments.

| <u>Assignment Type & Amount</u> | <u>Weight</u> |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Midterm Exam (1) | 15% |
| Comprehensive Final Exam (1) | 30% |
| Project Presentation 1 (group) | 15% |
| Project Presentation 2 (group) | 25% |
| Project Executive Summary (1) | 10% |
| Participation/Hw | 5% |
| Total | 100% |

Midterm Exam: Approximately week 7 or 8

Final Exam: Section 01: May 13. 2 – 5pm, Section 02: May 5. 2 – 5pm.

Participation/Hw: Between “workshop” classes you will do a small amount of individual research that you can discuss with me and your group. I’d like you to hand in approximately a page (bullet points are acceptable) of what you found.

Project Details: Each group will examine a particular US city using fundamental microeconomic tools. The examination of the city will be broken up into 2 parts:

1. Observation of current land-use patterns and social concerns
2. An economic analysis of the relation between the land-use patterns and social concerns

There will be a presentation during the first half of class discussing part 1. Late in the semester a second presentation will discuss part 2. Additionally, an “executive summary” of the presentations will be due late in the semester. (This is a high level overview of the main points in your presentations. The inclusion of maps and graphs will be helpful. It is meant to be a 10 minute read, a few pages)

You will mostly be graded on your ability to use economic tools to explain the how and whys of your city (I want to see your ideas not just what others say), but I will also look for presentation skills and “excitement” you create regarding this presentation (why is this city interesting, what graphs and pictures and maps do you show.)

Grading (Presentations): A – F scale (4 – 0 equivalence). Specifics to follow.

Rubric - Part 1:

- Broad “feel” of the city
- Narrow “theme” of current land-use patterns and social issues
- Use of maps, data, graph, pictures
- Organization, flow, accuracy. (presentation quality)

Rubric - Part 2:

- Use of relevant economic models
- Clarity of economic models
- Innovation of models
- Organization, flow, accuracy. (presentation quality)
- Overall convincing analysis of the land use patterns and connected social issues

Grading (Individual Questions): A - F scale. (4 – 0 equivalence)

- F (0) = nothing of economic value
- D (1) = an economic thought, graph, or equation
- C (2) = an economic thought, graph, and/or equation in the right direction
- B (3) = an economic thought, graph, or equation in the right direction with a small mistake
- A (4) = complete and correct economic thought, graph, and/or equation (full communication as an economist, based on in-class discussions)

**For partial credit, you are graded on how you answer the question. Did you call upon the proper fundamental concept and how close were you to having consistency of that concept with the required graph or mathematics.

**Individual assignment grades will be determined using the traditional GPA calculation method (Each question receives an A – F. Covert to points. Total points divided by the number of questions determines the GPA).

**Final grades will be determined by weighting each assignment level GPA and then using the below scale.

Grading Scale:

| | | | |
|------|------------|------|------------|
| A = | 3.8 - 4 | A- = | 3.5 – 3.79 |
| B+ = | 3.2 – 3.49 | B = | 2.8 – 3.19 |
| B- = | 2.5 – 2.8 | C+ = | 2.2 – 2.49 |
| C = | 1.8 – 2.19 | C- = | 1.5 – 1.79 |
| D+ = | 1.2 – 1.49 | D = | 0.8 – 1.19 |
| D- = | 0.5 - 0.79 | F = | 0 – 0.49 |

Text: (Recommended) O'Sullivan, A. *Urban Economics* (any edition will do)

- This is a decent text, but mostly we will use readings and basic theory.

Supplemental Material:

Jackson, Kenneth. *Crabgrass Frontier*. 1985. Oxford University Press

- Great read on the suburbanization of the US during most of the 20th century

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. 1961. Random House

- Influential observations of a non-academic. Her thoughts still resonate with urban theorists today

Glaeser, Edward. *Triumph of the City*. 2011. The Penguin Press

- Contemporary king of Urban Economics

Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. 2002. Basic Books

- Urban Sociologist that adds useful elements that Glaeser often brushes aside

City-data.com

Clustermapping.us

Zillow.com

Census.gov

Citylab.com

<http://www.petergordonsblog.com/>

<http://economicshelp.org>

EconLit & The Economist

<https://libraries.wm.edu/databases/by-subject/411> (W&M library)

Writing Resources Center (WRC) - Communications Related

The Writing Resources Center, located on the first floor of Swem Library, is a free service provided to W&M students. Trained consultants offer individual assistance with writing, presentation, and other communication assignments across disciplines and at any stage, from generating ideas to polishing a final product. To make an appointment, visit the WRC webpage www.wm.edu/wrc .

Student Accessibility Services:

"William & Mary accommodates students with disabilities in accordance with federal laws and university policy. Any student who feels they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning, psychiatric, physical, or chronic health diagnosis should contact Student Accessibility Services staff at

757-221-2512 or at sas@wm.edu to determine if accommodations are warranted and to obtain an official letter of accommodation. For more information, please visit www.wm.edu/sas."

Course Policies:

You must be **respectful** to everyone.

Do not text

Do not talk while others are talking.

Do not use the web for non-relevant activities.

Do not be late.

Do not leave early.

Do not miss class.

Do not be a loud consumer of food or drink.

If you need to leave early or need to leave your phone on because of an expected important call, please tell me at the beginning of class.

I genuinely want to help all of you.

Be a kind and thoughtful human being

The William & Mary Pledge

"As a member of the William and Mary community, I pledge on my honor not to lie, cheat, or steal, either in my academic or personal life. I understand that such acts violate the Honor Code and undermine the community of trust, of which we are all stewards."