Urban Studies

The Urban Studies interdepartmental concentration is designed for students who major in a variety of disciplines, are interested in urbanization, and wish to gain an interdisciplinary perspective on city life.

Faculty and Staff

Daniel Trudeau, professor of geography and program director, teaches City Life, Qualitative Research Methods, Urban Geography, The Politics of Urban Public Space, and The Political Economy of Urban Sustainability. His recent research projects include analyzing the role of nonprofit organizations in immigrant integration, the geographical implications of land-use politics in urbanizing communities, and the geography of the New Urbanism, a planning and design movement.

Ernesto Capello, associate professor of history, teaches courses in Latin American history, cultural history, and urban history. His research focuses on the cultural history of modern Latin America with a special emphasis on the intersections of space and memory, especially in Ecuador. He is the author of City at the Center of the World: Space, History, and Modernity in Quito (2011) which concerns the role that ‘history’ played in crafting modern identities in the Ecuadorian capital and is currently writing a book concerning the representation of the Andean equatorial zone in geographic science and visual culture.

I-Chun Catherine Chang, assistant professor of geography, teaches courses on global urbanism, urban (political) ecology, and Asia. Catherine’s scholarship focuses on the political economy and policy mobilities of urban sustainability initiatives in the global South. Her research draws on qualitative methods to contextualize how these initiatives manifest on the ground, and to trace how the complex connectivities of these initiatives shape the global circulation of sustainable planning knowledge and practices.

Ruthanne Kurth-Schai, professor and chair of Educational Studies, teaches courses on social, philosophical, and political dimensions of education. Her research interests include philosophical and policy analyses centered on the role of public education in addressing social justice, environmental, and spiritual issues, as well as contemporary reform efforts in the United States and abroad aimed at effective response to the challenges posed by globalization. Her recent book, Re-Envisioning Education and Democracy, is co-authored with Charles R. Green, professor emeritus of political science.

Lesley Lavery, associate professor of political science, teaches Urban Politics, Politics and Policymaking, and Politics and Inequality. She is currently working with Minneapolis Public Schools to explore questions related to teacher quality and retention and St. Paul Public Schools to document and address challenges related to declining enrollment. She has authored several pieces on school choice and union impact and is at work on a narrative about the place of teachers’ unions in education reform.

Brian Lozenski, associate professor of urban and multicultural education, teaches Race, Culture, Ethnicity, and Education: Critical Issues in Urban Education; Teaching and Learning in Urban Schools; and Research Methods for Education and Advocacy. His recent research includes analyzing how using participatory action research through the lens of African knowledge systems as a teaching model impacts how youth of African descent are able to mobilize their cultural practices toward educational transformation.

Crystal Moten, assistant professor of history, teaches courses on modern African American history, with particular emphasis on women’s and gender history, public history, digital history methods, and urban history. Her research examines African American women’s economic activism in postwar Milwaukee and interrogates the ways in which politics and economics coalesced in black women’s community activism.

Margaret (Molly) Olsen, professor of Latin American studies, teaches courses on Latin American and Spanish language literature and culture. She specializes in trans-Atlantic literatures of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as Afro-Caribbean texts of the colonial and contemporary periods. She is currently working on street performance culture in New Orleans with special attention to matters of race, class, and space in an increasingly neoliberal context.

Paul Schadewald, associate director of the Civic Engagement Center, assists faculty with integrating community-based learning and research into academic courses. He is an urban historian with interests in the importance of faith communities to the experience of living in cities and in the practice of public history, particularly in urban contexts. He co-leads Macalester’s annual Urban Faculty Colloquium.

Laura Smith, associate professor of geography and chair of the Geography department, teaches Metro Analysis, Urban GIS, and a senior research seminar, Transportation Geography. Her most recent research projects have focused on the patterns and characteristics of mortgage foreclosures in the Twin Cities and on issues of American Indian land ownership and development in Minnesota.

Harry Waters Jr., professor in the Theatre and Dance Department and a certified Meisner teacher, works at the intersection of performance and community-based theater-making. He teaches two levels of Acting, African American Theatre, Hip Hop Performance, and Community-Based Theatre. He works with numerous organizations in the Twin Cities as a community dialogue facilitator connecting city planners, architects, and cultural organizations in the quest to reimagine and reshape urban experiences. Currently he is in the process of creating events linking urban sculpture parks, community, and performance of classical texts.
Special Opportunities

Action research is a powerful form of teaching and learning in which students and faculty work together in small groups or as a whole class to do research that has been requested by a nonprofit, government, or neighborhood organization. Students in the Urban GIS course recently partnered with the Northside Achievement Zone to conduct research supporting that organization’s efforts with a Promise Neighborhood in North Minneapolis.

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest offer an urban studies program in Chicago. Students spend a semester in Chicago taking classes, working on an internship, and developing an independent study project. This is a unique opportunity to gain firsthand experience of the reality of Chicago’s urban life and to develop the confidence and competence to work for change. The Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs (HECUA) is based in the Twin Cities metro area and sponsors a number of study abroad opportunities in urban studies. HECUA offers urban studies programs in the Twin Cities, Scandinavia, and Latin America. Students participate in an internship program, meet for a seminar, and engage in field experiences.

Internships

Internships are an integral part of the Urban Studies program. Macalester’s Internship Office assists students in finding and arranging internships. Typical internships might include positions with local community organizations and city planning departments.

Lee Guekguezian ’18 (Newtonville, Mass.), Urban Ventures, development intern
Nate Merrill ’18 (Durham, N.C.), HOME Line, GIS intern
Rachel Auerbach ’17 (Silver Spring, Md.), Metro Transit, Light Rail Transit Planning, community outreach intern
G.G. Gunther ’17 (San Francisco), City of Palo Alto, historic preservation planning intern
Abby Raisz ’17 (Jamaica Plain, Mass.), Metropolitan Council, land use planning intern
Jon Riddle ’16 (Minneapolis), Frogtown Community Radio, programming intern
Benjamin Schwed ’15 (New York), Transit for Livable Communities, research intern
Maria Dewees ’14 (Chevy Chase, Md.), Second Harvest Heartland, outreach coordinator

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Josh Koh ’18 (New York) is a community engagement intern with the New York City Department of Transportation.
Kaia Lund ’18 (Mondovi, Wis.) is a mayoral policy fellow with the City of Minneapolis.
Nina Escriva Fernandez ’17 (Den Helder, Netherlands) is a management analyst in the Disability Supports Division at the Minnesota Department of Human Services.
Spencer Nelson ’17 (Kansas City, Mo.) is pursuing a master’s degree at McGill University.
Julia Gay ’16 (Cleveland Heights, Ohio) is Lake Street Arts! program assistant at Pangea World Theater in Minneapolis and an apprentice at Ananya Dance Theatre.
Paige Moody ’16 (Lee, N.H.) manages map and data operations at Mapbox.
Natalie Westberg ’15 (Seattle) is a transportation planner with King County Metro.
Zack Avre ’14 (Sioux Falls, S.D.) recently concluded work as a development analyst at New York City Economic Development Corporation to begin a master’s degree of city planning at MIT.
Daniel Knickelbein ’14 (Chicago) is a government affairs manager at Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization.

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