

**Urban Geography
Geography 241-01
Macalester College**



Architectural Rendering for “Highland Bridge” a new neighborhood-scale project for the redevelopment of the Ford Plant site in the Highland Neighborhood of St. Paul. Source: [MPR News](#).

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces you to the interdisciplinary study of cities and emphasizes a geographical lens. The central point of the course is to examine how the built environment of cities are shaped by human activity and how, in turn, urban life is shaped by the built environment. The course focuses on American cities and Minneapolis-St. Paul in particular. This course takes advantage of Macalester's location by introducing you to the urban environment of the Twin Cities and connecting you to its history, landscapes, communities, and institutions through case studies, field study exercises, and visits with experts working in organizations and institutions in the local community. You will also conduct research on a significant issue facing cities today, which you will share with your classmates. This course will demand a lot from you, but it should be a lot of fun and offer a formative learning experience, not only about cities, but about the discipline of geography, the liberal arts, and even yourself.

LEARNING GOALS

Satisfactory work in this course will help you develop abilities and skills that will serve you in college and afterward. This course focuses on the following goals:

- Critical thinking – routine activities in this class, including discussion, assignments, and an independent research project will help you to enhance your critical thinking skills.
- Foundational knowledge of US urban issues – You will enhance your awareness and understanding of several key relationships and issues that are fundamental to understanding the urban experience, both past and present, in the United States.
- Thinking geographically – You will develop your geographic literacy by learning about and working with a number of geographical concepts that are helpful for studying urbanization (the process of developing cities) and urbanism (the experience of being in cities).
- Interest in the Twin Cities – The experiential learning activities in this course will immerse you in the landscape and life of the Twin Cities and you will develop your own questions about how this place works and use this interest to engage the wider world.

We pursue these goals in a number of ways, including interacting with course content, working on assignments, and supporting and challenging each other in this work. There are multiple principles, norms, and expectations that help to ensure that our engagement rests on an inclusive and supportive foundation.

POLICIES & COLLEGE RESOURCES

Class format and expectations

Our meetings will include a mix of discussions, group and individual learning activities, and lectures. Your regular attendance, preparation, and full participation are necessary to sustain an optimal environment for learning. I therefore expect you to have completed all readings and assignments before coming to class and be prepared to talk about them in detail.

In sum, I expect that you do your best to stay current with course readings and assignments. This means completing asynchronous activities by their stated deadlines and showing up on time to synchronous

meetings, prepared for the day's tasks. I will communicate detailed steps for completing these activities in Moodle, the college's learning management software.

A note about our class

Leaving campus

The assignments in this course require you to leave campus and explore the Twin Cities. Be sure to factor travel time into your work on these assignments. All locations are accessible by public transportation. You may also reach most locations by bicycle. If you do not own one, you can check out a bicycle from the library. However you decide to travel, you will need to plan ahead to complete the field assignments in a timely fashion.

One out-of-class event

We will take a guided tour of the historic Minneapolis Riverfront area, along the falls of St. Anthony. This walking tour is scheduled for September 18th, from 9:30am – 1pm. Travel and tickets for this fieldtrip will be arranged for you. **This event is optional.**

Moodle

Moodle will serve as a virtual home for our class. I will post copies of the syllabus and assignments on Moodle and use its announcement forum. Any post to the announcement forum will also be sent to your e-mail. Following the schedule outlined in this syllabus, there is a link to a separate page for each class day, which lists relevant activities, including resources to review and tasks to complete. All assignments are turned in via Moodle. Feedback is shared via Moodle as well. I will do my best to remind you of tasks and assignments during our meetings. That said, a best practice will be checking our course Moodle page regularly each day to see any announcements and review tasks to complete so that you are prepared for the day's activities.

Communication

I will make regular announcements to our class when we meet and through Moodle. You may reply to announcements issued through Moodle, however these replies are sent to everyone in the class by default. Take care using this feature.

For one-on-one communication, I invite you to contact me via email or schedule a time during my office hours. I will also be available for 10-15 minutes after our in-person meetings. This will enable casual or impromptu conversations.

Please allow for a 24-hour response time to your email messages during the week and 48-hour for messages sent on the weekend. Generally speaking, I plan to reply to email messages during my office hours.

Office Hours

First, it may be help to consider: "What are office hours for?" I see them as an extension of our class -- as an opportunity to work through something challenging or perplexing and/or a chance to share connections, realizations, and excitement about the course or related material. In either case, coming to my office hours is an act of trust. I pledge to respect you and earn your trust through careful listening and compassionate support.

My office hours will be held in Carnegie 104e. They are scheduled for 12-1 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays, and 2-3:30 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I will not hold office hours on Labor Day, September 6th, during Fall Break, and Thanksgiving Break. If these times do not work with your schedule, don't hesitate to contact me via email and we can set up an appointment for an alternative time.

How to show up for Office Hours

You must first claim or sign up for office hours by navigating to my google calendar:

<https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUdZZm5wZURDYXBhfGRlZmF1bHR8ZjQ5MjlmNTdmMTAzYmU1ZDlhODkxYmZjODQ0Yzc3ZWU>

Scroll through the calendar [top left side, use the < and > buttons] to select a day and time to meet. You can do this in advance or, if there's an open slot, you can do in the moment. Appointment slots are 15 minutes long. You are welcome to drop by my office hours without making an appointment in advance, but I will prioritize meeting with those who have scheduled an appointment. On this point, I encourage you to check my google calendar before you stop by to make sure I am available.

Inclusivity

I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment that welcomes and supports everybody. We as learners and teachers all bring various experiences and life contexts to this course. These differences will emerge in class and be part of what we negotiate and benefit from as a developing community. I acknowledge that academic institutions have evolved within a historical context that privileges certain students over others, and in this classroom, I will do my best to be aware of how these inequities may manifest. I hope you will feel comfortable coming to me to express any concerns or suggestions; this is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of all.

Accommodations

I am committed to ensuring access to course content for all students. If you have a disability, please meet with me early in the term to discuss your accommodation plan. If you have not yet obtained a plan or are unsure if you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact Disability Services: disabilityservices@macalester.edu, or call 651-696-6974.

Public Health Expectations

When we are in class together on campus, we will follow the [Mac Stays Safer Community Commitment](#).

If you do not feel well, please do not come to class. This includes if you are experiencing common cold symptoms. If you miss class, we can make arrangements to cover missed material, activities, and assignment deadlines.

Attendance

Being there plays an essential role in learning. I expect you to attend all scheduled class meetings. Attendance will be important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another. Your presence in class matters.

I recognize that there are unavoidable circumstances that sometimes make it impossible for you to attend class. If you will not be in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me via email. It is also your responsibility to make up work you missed in your absence.

Accumulating more than five absences during the semester will negatively impact your grade.

Participation

In our first week, we will work together to generate a set of shared norms and expectations that ground how we participate and interact with each other. The norms we generate will reflect our unique situation, but will be grounded in principles of mutual respect, inclusion, and maintaining a focus on learning. We may need to revisit these norms and expectations and adjust them according to how our interactions unfold. These will be recorded and made available through Moodle.

Personal Health and Well-being

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from other resources, including those listed on the Hamre Center for Health and Wellness: macalester.edu/healthandwellness

Sexual Misconduct

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students, staff, and faculty. If you (or someone you know) has experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone, and that help and support are available.

Please be aware that *as a faculty member, I am a non-confidential resource, although I will keep anything you disclose to me private*. This means that if I become aware of incidents or allegations of sexual misconduct, I am required to share the matter with the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinators. This College policy is intended to ensure that you receive the resources and support you need.

Even as you might be away from campus, or your needs change, resources are available for you if you need support related to sexual and/or relationship abuse.

If you would like to contact the Title IX office, Macalester's Title IX Coordinator is available and can assist you with supportive measures and referrals:

- Phone: 651-696-6258 Email: titleixordinator@macalester.edu
- Incident Report Form: [Macalester Incident Report](#)

If you would like to talk to someone who would not have to share what you tell them with the Title IX office, *confidential* support resources through Macalester are also available to you:

- Free, Urgent, Phone Counseling (Press 2) is available to Macalester students anywhere in the world, 24/7/365. Speak to a licensed mental health counselor 24 hours a day by calling Hamre Center at 651-696-6275, then press or say option 2 when prompted.
- To make an appointment with one of the college's counselors or medical providers, call 651-696-6275 or email health@macalester.edu
- To contact support through the Center for Religious and Spiritual Life, call 651-696-6298 or email religiouslife@macalester.edu

Local and national resources are also available:

- [Ramsey County SOS Sexual Violence Services](#) offers confidential phone support at 651-266-1000 or you can use the [SOS Contact Form](#) (SOS is currently not offering face to face meetings)
- RAINN is a national resource with both confidential phone support and live chat: Find out more about [RAINN](#)
- Futures Without Violence offers a COVID-19 specific page with a robust range of resources, including identity-specific options such as Trans Lifeline and the DeafHotline. FWV also offers resources on safety plans, check out [FWV's COVID-19](#) page.
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is expected at all times. All work for this course must be your own. You must properly cite any work on which you draw in your written assignments. Plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course. Furthermore, such behavior will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in suspension or even dismissal from the college. Please see me if you have questions about what counts as plagiarism.

All of that is a lot to take in. It may take a while to absorb and some of the preceding statements will serve as resources or reminders that are more in the background. Others may be more active and involved in our day-to-day interaction. I share all of this information to be as transparent as possible and to let you know about expectations and resources right away. I may have left something out. Don't hesitate to ask questions or make suggestions.

Above all, I want you to have a rewarding and impactful experience in Urban Geography and feel connected to the college community and well positioned to pursue your college goals, however they take shape at Macalester.

The preceding content might be thought of as the connective tissue for the course. Supporting this is a curriculum that provides the skeletal structure. Put another way, after contemplating 'how' we will work, let's consider 'what' we will do in our course.

CURRICULUM

Text

There is one required text for this course. It is available for purchase through the campus bookstore and for 2-hour check out via the Library Course Reserve.

- Kaplan, D., Holloway, S., and Wheeler, J. (2014). *Urban Geography*, 3rd edition. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons. (Hereinafter referred to as “Text.”)

Additional Readings

In addition to the required text, we will be reading a number of articles from peer-reviewed journals as well as the popular press and listening to podcasts. This format allows us to explore a variety of writing styles, perspectives, and case studies. These readings are referenced in the schedule by last name of the author. These are available 24 hours a day through our course Moodle page. Let me know if you have any problems accessing this material in a timely manner.

Assignments

Your grade in the course will be based on performance in the following assignments (I will provide detailed instructions and grading criteria for each one at an appropriate time). 1000 points total:

The [MAX Center](#) is Macalester’s academic resource center. I strongly encourage you to take full advantage of any and all of the excellent resources they provide there, as they are committed to supporting all students to succeed at Macalester.

Field assignment

250 points total. In addition to assigned readings, this course asks you to go out into the urban landscape of the Twin Cities to see examples first-hand, reflect on what you see vis-à-vis the text and assigned readings, and ask original questions. In effect, the field assignment reflects the notion that the urban landscape represents another kind of “text” that you will need to study. The itinerary for the field assignment also coincides with the “project” assignments described below. This assignment includes additional reflective work:

- Post 12 original photos to the course blog: <https://urbanscots.wordpress.com/blog/>
 - The photos will reflect your observations during fieldwork. Each photo must have a brief caption and tag.
 - You are required to post at least 4 photographs in connection with each of the three parts of the field study. This works out to one photo per week.
 - Following these directions will enable you to earn 150 points. Partial credit is possible if you depart from the instructions.
- *Fieldwork reflections*. This assignment allows you to reflect on your observations and experiences and share questions by composing two brief digital stories. We will use a browser-based program, *WeVideo*, to create these reflective stories. You will receive instruction for using this software program. You will submit your entries to a course webpage. Due dates for the entries are as follows:
 - Digital story 1 – October 4th (50 points)
 - Digital story 2 – November 8th (50 points)

Quizzes

200 points total. There will be two quizzes. These will pose multiple-choice, short answer and essay questions. Each quiz will cover a specific segment of the course. Each quiz is worth 100 points.

- Quizzes will be given via Moodle on October 18th and December 14th.
 - There are no opportunities for make-up exams. Students who do not submit an exam on the scheduled day will receive no credit.

Projects

250 points total. There are two projects that engage critical thinking skills through our study of cities. Both projects are informed by your experiences with the field study assignment. Project work must be submitted via Moodle. Due dates and assignments values are as follows:

- Project 1 – Reading the Urban Landscape (125 points) is due October 1st
- Project 2 – Regeneration along the Green Line? (125 points) is due November 15th

Culminating Research Project

250 points total. This assignment asks you to delve deeper into a topic related to Urban Geography that interests you. The topic could come from the text, a reading, an experience you've had in our class, or an observation you've made during the fieldwork, among other sources of inspiration. You will conduct research on your chosen topic and compose a four-minute digital story. In your story, you should pose a question, explain why it is interesting to you, make a case for why it is something of significance for urban geography, and share the research you've done to address the question. The research must involve further reading and may encompass other forms of research too. The story is due on December 6th, and we will screen it in class during the final two days (Dec 8th & 10th).

Participation

50 points total. Our meetings will regularly involve small group activities as well as discussion of assigned readings. These provide an opportunity for you to clarify uncertainties and synthesize your understanding of concepts and ideas presented in the lectures and readings. Participation in these activities thus present important learning opportunities in the class. You will of course need to be present to participate, but beyond this you will be evaluated for your ability to: (a) contribute pertinent content and ideas to the activities, and (b) provide leadership and direction in order to maximize the learning experience. In the event that you are reluctant to participate in class, please know that I am happy to work with you to find ways that facilitate your participation.

Changes

As the term unfolds, there may be reason to make changes to the course. I will announce any changes to readings, topics, or the schedule in class and via Moodle. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

Deadlines

Deadlines for assignments are firm. Penalties for missed deadlines are noted in the assignment descriptions below. Note: in a couple of cases, assignments will not be accepted past their deadlines. If you have obligations that conflict with this class' scheduled assignments, you must communicate this to me no later than Wednesday, September 9th so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

Grades

Your final grade will be based on performance in all parts of the course. Letter grades will be assigned according to the following distribution:

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Satisfactory</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>	<u>Failing</u>
A (1000-930)	B+ (899-880)	C+ (799-780)	D+ (699-680)	NC (< 600)
A- (929-900)	B (879-830)	C (779-730)	D (679-630)	
	B- (829-800)	C- (729-700)	D- (629-600)	

Bibliography of Assigned Readings

- Bishop, B. (2008). *The Big Sort*. Houghton Mifflin Company: Boston.
- Center for Culture, History, and the Environment Place-Based Workshop (No Date). *Reading an Urban Landscape*. Available online: <http://nelson.wisc.edu/che/events/place-based-workshops/2009/project/index.php>
- Choy, C. (2020). In this Country. *The Society Pages – Wonderful/Wretched Special Feature*. Available online: <https://thesocietypages.org/specials/in-this-country/>
- Cosgrove, D. (1989). Geography is everywhere: culture and symbolism in human landscapes. In *Horizons in Human Geography*, eds. D. Gregory and Walford, 118-135. Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books.
- A Field Guide to Public Spaces* (No Date). [webpage]. <https://publicspaces.guide/>
- Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (2019). Gentrification in Minneapolis & St. Paul [webpage]. <http://gentrification.umn.edu/>
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- Lewis, P. (2003). “The monument and the bungalow” in Wilson, C., Groth, P. (eds.) *Everyday America*, pp. 85 – 108. The University of California Press: Berkeley.
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- Samuels, A. (2016). “Segregation in paradise” *The Atlantic*, July 12. Available online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/07/twin-cities-segregation/490970/>
- Thompson, (2015). The miracle of Minneapolis. *The Atlantic*, March. Available online: <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/the-miracle-of-minneapolis/384975/>
- Webster, M., and Corey, M. (2021). How the Twin Cities housing rules keep the metro segregated. *Star Tribune*, August 7.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
1	Sept 1 (W)	Introduction		
	Sept 3 (F)	The landscape approach to Urban Geography	1) Cosgrove 2) Meinig	
<u>I. Building American Urban Landscapes</u>				
2	Sept 8 (W)	Transportation and urban form	Knox and McCarthy	
	Sept 10 (F)	Reading landscapes – phases of development	1) Text Ch 1 2) Lewis	Project 1 assigned – Reading the Urban Landscape
3	Sept 13 (M)	Architecture walking tour	McAlester	
	Sept 15 (W)	Urban Origins & Urbanization	Text Ch 2: 22-45	
	Sept 17 (F)	<i>No Class – work on the field study</i>		
	Sept 18 (S)	Tentative: Minneapolis Riverfront Tour		
4	Sept 20 (M)	Introduction to Digital Storytelling and <i>WeVideo</i>		
	Sept 22 (W)	Urbanization of the Twin Cities Text Ch 2: 45-58		
	Sept 24 (F)	<i>No Class – work on the field study</i>		
5	Sept 27 (M)	Minneapolis in the American Urban System	1) Text Ch 3: 61-71 2) Freakonomics podcast	

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
5	Sept 29 (W)	Central Place Theory Simulation	1) Text Ch 3: 72-85 2) Text Ch 4: 103-113	
	Oct 1 (F)	Legacy landscapes and beyond	Center for Culture, History, and Environment essay	Project 1 due
6	Oct 4 (M)	Debriefing the Digital Story Reflection		Digital Story #1
<u>II. The Economic Landscape</u>				
	Oct 6 (W)	Urban fortunes: the rise, fall, and rise of University Ave.	Text Ch 5	
	Oct 8 (F)	The City Makers	Sze/Burns/ Propheter/or Ahlfeldt	
7	Oct 11 (M)	Catalyzing investment on the green line – Stadium as solution?		
	Oct 13 (W)	Cities as a growth machine Cities and circuits of capital	Text Ch 6	
	Oct 15 (F)	Reflections on the circuits of capital in re-making University		
8	Oct 18 (M)	Quiz for parts I & II		
	Oct 20 (W)	Culminating Research Project		Project proposal
	Oct 22 (F)	<i>Fall break</i>		
<u>III. The Social Landscape</u>				
9	Oct 25 (M)	From the ‘Minneapolis Miracle’ to ‘Trouble in paradise’	1) Thompson 2) Nickrand 3) Semuels	Project 2 assigned – Regeneration along the Green Line?

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
9	Oct 27 (W)	The Decline of central cities	Text Ch 8	
	Oct 29 (F)	<i>Jim Crow of the North</i>	1) Choy 2) Sarmiento	
10	Nov 1 (M)	Housing opportunities and racial disparities	1) Mapping Prejudice 2) Webster and Corey	
	Nov 3 (W)	<i>No Class – work on the field study</i>		
	Nov 5 (F)	The urban geography of racism in the housing market	Text Ch 9	
11	Nov 8 (M)	How neighborhoods change Debriefing digital story reflection		Digital Story #2
11	Nov 10 (W)	Revitalization and regeneration strategies – Mixed income housing	Gentrification in Minneapolis & St. Paul	
	Nov 12 (F)	Congregation and Segregation	Text Ch 10	Bring a personal computer to class
12	Nov 15 (M)	Regenerating Central cities		Project 2 due
	Nov 17 (W)	Building more inclusive cities	Field Guide to Public Spaces	
	Nov 19 (F)	<i>No Class – work on your assignments</i>		Culminating project annotated bibliography

Wk	Day	Topic	Readings	Assignment
13	Nov 22 (M)	<u>IV. The political landscape</u> Metropolitan fragmentation & the Big Sort	Bishop	Storyboard/project outline
	Nov 24 (W)	<i>Thanksgiving break</i>		
	Nov 26 (F)	<i>Thanksgiving break</i>		
14	Nov 29 (M)	Beyond the Big Sort? Regional Government	Text Ch 11	
	Dec 1 (W)	Making the case for planning – Cities and Wicked Problems	Text Ch 12	
	Dec 3 (F)	Guest speaker: Natalie Westburg '15		
15	Dec 6 (M)	Planning and the future of cities – toward a new urbanism?		Culminating Project due
	Dec 8 (W)	Screening of Culminating Projects		
	Dec 10 (F)	Screening of Culminating Projects		
	Dec 14 (T)	Quiz for parts III & IV 10:30am – 12:30 pm		