I. COURSE CONTENT AND GOALS

This course focuses on the foundations of American urban development, from economic development to land use to housing patterns, and examines how and why urban housing markets operate as they do within American metropolitan regions. The course is particularly relevant for students interested in the fields of urban planning and policy.

There are three major learning goals for the course. By the end of the course, students should:

- Understand how economic and social processes relate to metropolitan land use
- Be able to apply quantitative methods to analyze metropolitan organization and change, and recognize methodological limitations (this is a Q2 course)
- Be familiar with important data sources used in urban research

In addition, we will engage specifically with our Twin Cities metropolitan area throughout the course, via application of themes and a field study assignment.

The course is organized by seven themes:

1. The Metropolitan Economy: How do we model metropolitan economies? How can we tell when an urban economy is healthy?
2. **Land Use and Population Patterns within the Metropolis**: How do we identify, describe, and explain geographical patterns of land use and populations within cities? How do we measure racial residential segregation?

3. **Geography of Urban Housing Supply**: How did the American housing inventory evolve under the influence of economic, social, and transportation constraints? What is the geography of the Twin Cities' housing supply, and why?

4. **Urban Housing Demand**: What social, demographic, and economic forces support housing demand? Why do Americans like to buy more housing than they need? How do housing submarkets operate in the Twin Cities?

5. **Geography of Urban Housing Markets**: How did American federal housing policy create racial segregation in cities? How did homeownership become an “engine of American inequality”? How do government policies promote and subsidize suburban development?

6. **Suburbanization and Land Use**: What are the causes and consequences of past suburban growth? Are people really moving back to the urban core now?

7. **Policy Debates**: What are some current policy responses to metropolitan development? What land use controls are available, and how are they being used?

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### II. READING MATERIALS

There is one required text for the course:


A renowned urbanist and author, Jacobs ponders big ideas about metropolitan economies in her writings. Various paperback editions of this classic book exist; any are fine.

All other required readings will be posted on our Moodle site.

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### III. STRUCTURE AND EXPECTATIONS

**Class format**

We continue to face challenges in all aspects of life – including teaching and learning – and we will need to demonstrate grace and flexibility in order to be successful. I am committed to being flexible and open to changing our course approach and expectations as we go, and I hope that you will be willing to do the same for me.

Class meetings will consist of lectures, in-class discussions, student presentations, and activities. You are expected to have completed all required reading before coming to class, and be prepared to discuss it. A productive discussion is one in which participants listen and learn from one another, that focuses on understanding an issue and making
connections (to other readings, to real life observations, etc.), and that advances our collective knowledge of a topic.

Your presence in class matters; attendance is important not only for your learning but also for building community with each other. However, I fully recognize that there will be times when you are not able to or do not feel comfortable attending class, whether because of public health concerns or any other reason. Resources will be provided to help you make up any absences.

**Technology guidelines**

We will rely heavily on our Moodle page to manage the course. This is where you will find detailed weekly schedules, readings, assignments, videos, links to any Zoom class sessions or office hours, and other information/announcements. You will submit assignments via Moodle dropboxes; this will allow me to provide feedback directly on the digital documents. I will also use the Moodle gradebook feature to post your scores. Please plan to log into the site regularly and pay attention to any “News Forum” posts.

Within the classroom, you are welcome to use laptops for academic purposes. Please do not use technology in a way that is disruptive to an academic space.

Email is the most efficient way to contact me; I strive to answer all course-related messages as soon as possible (and at most within 24 hours during the week).

**Assessment**

Assessment within the course is based upon your ability to demonstrate knowledge of how economic and social processes relate to metropolitan land use in the U.S., and to apply analytical methods to a selected metropolitan area and interpret the results.

Your grade will be based on the following:

- City analysis project #1: Economic health (100 pts) = 22%
- City analysis project #2: Racial segregation (135 pts) = 30%
- Take-home Exam #1: The metro economy (50 pts) = 11%
- Take-home Exam #2: Urban housing markets (65 pts) = 15%
- Field study assignment (in-person or virtual) (40 pts) = 9%
- Group presentation: Urban land use policy (55 pts) = 12%

Detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided. For the city analysis projects, you will select a U.S. metropolitan area for which you will obtain data and apply a standard quantitative technique to analyze the economic health (project #1) or racial residential segregation patterns (project #2) of that city. The field study assignment may be completed either in person or virtually (utilizing Google Street View) and may be done with a partner if desired.

Grade cut-off percentages are as follows: A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92.9%; B+ = 87-89.9%; B = 83-86.9%; B- = 80-82.9%; C+ = 77-79.9%; C = 73-76.9%; C- = 70-72.9%; D+ = 67-69.9%; D = 63-66.9%; D- = 60-62.9%; NC = <60%.
**Academic resources**

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center ([http://www.macalester.edu/max/](http://www.macalester.edu/max/)), located on the first floor of Kagin Commons, provides numerous academic resources from time management and study strategy workshops to quantitative material and writing assistance.

**Academic accommodations**

I recognize that course design may pose barriers to a student’s ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content. I honor academic accommodations as outlined via Disability Services, and in discussion regarding what is reasonable for this course. Students with long- or short-term disabilities should schedule an appointment by emailing disabilityservices@macalester.edu, or calling the Disability Services Office, 651-696-6275.

**Academic honesty**

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work; violations of academic integrity are serious offenses. If you have questions about Macalester's academic integrity policy, please refer to the Student Handbook ([http://www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/](http://www.macalester.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/)) or the Academic Programs website ([http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/](http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/)).

All sources used in preparing your work must be cited; this includes data sources. APA is the preferred citation style of the Geography Department; see the library’s citation guides and resources under the Research Guides menu at [https://libguides.macalester.edu/citation](https://libguides.macalester.edu/citation).

**Health and well-being**

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this semester and your career here. Staying well is even more complicated now with COVID-19, as well as ongoing systemic racism and other forms of oppression — this complex context requires flexibility, creativity, persistence, and support. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, financial, etc., and how they can have an academic impact. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please reach out to one of the resources listed at [http://bit.ly/2zcyuqU](http://bit.ly/2zcyuqU).

We will adhere to the [Mac Stays Safer Community Commitment](http://bit.ly/2zcyuqU), including the [Well-Fitted Mask Policy](http://bit.ly/2zcyuqU). If you do not feel well or are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19, please do not come to class.
IV. READING LIST

Required:


Ch. 3: “Home, Sweet Home: The House and the Yard”  
Ch. 11: “Federal Subsidy and the Suburban Dream: How Washington Changed the American Housing Market”


Ch. 9: “The Need for Small Blocks”


