Course Syllabus

Department of Economics
ECON 312 Section A02
Urban Land Economics
September 2023
CRN: 11165
Brightspace Link  https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home/316409

Instructor: Michael Janes
E-Mail: mjanes@uvic.ca
Office: BEC 316

UVic Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and respect the lək̓ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Every student is responsible for reading and understanding the content of this course outline.

Course Description
This course provides a general introduction to urban land economics. We will use economic analysis to explain why cities exist and where they develop, how cities grow, and how economic activity is distributed within urban areas. We will examine determinants of land prices and rents, consider market failures associated with land use and discuss appropriate policy remedies. We will explore urban problems such as poverty, high housing costs, segregation, congestion, pollution, and crime. Throughout the course, current issues relevant to Canadian cities will be discussed. In addition, some international cases will be discussed.

Note: Credit will be granted for only one of ECON 312, ECON 412, and ADMIN 445.
Prerequisites: One of ECON 103, ECON 103C, ECON 180.

Class Information

Lecture time: 6:30-9:20pm, Mondays
Location: Cornett Building A221  
Office Hours: Mondays before class (5:15-6:15pm)  
Teaching Assistant:  
TA Office Hours: NA (will help with course admin)

Texts/Materials

1. Required Textbook: The textbook for the course is “Lectures on Urban Economics” by Jan Brueckner. The UVic library has a license for this text, so you can read it for free online by searching here: [https://www.uvic.ca/library/](https://www.uvic.ca/library/) under “Books and Media”. Put the book’s title in quotes and search for it. It is also available online for purchase as a hard-copy or e-book (viewable on a Kindle, the Kindle App for iOS, or other e-readers). Note that if you want to “rent” the textbook for 4 months (rather than purchase it outright), you can do so at the link here: [https://mitpress.ublish.com/book/lectures-urban-economics#purchase](https://mitpress.ublish.com/book/lectures-urban-economics#purchase) (pricing may be in US dollars). But you may be able to use it entirely for free through the UVic library.

Course Content

You are advised to read ahead in order to prepare for lectures. Brightspace questions will be assigned deadlines that should keep you ahead of lecture on your reading.

Lectures Outline (subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Text Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do Cities Exist?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Spatial Structure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modification of the Urban Model</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Sprawl and Land-Use Controls (ONLINE LECTURE)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday (no class)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freeway Congestion</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Midterm 1 (October 16) Topics 1-4</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Demand and Tenure Choice</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Policy</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Public Goods and Services</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Grading Scheme

Brightspace questions on readings: 10%
Midterm 1 (October 16 6:30-8:00pm): 25%
Midterm 2 (November 6 6:30-8:00pm): 25%
Final Exam: 40%

**Problem Sets:** A series of ungraded problem sets will be distributed throughout the course. While these will not be graded, you are strongly encouraged to work through the problem sets to develop and gauge your understanding of the material. Most students will find that careful practice solving problems significantly increases their understanding of the material. Students are encouraged to work on these problems in groups after first attempting them individually.

**Brightspace questions on readings (quizzes):** These are designed to keep you engaged with the material throughout the course (as opposed to only tuning in around Exams). Quizzes are untimed and are open for you to take for at least a couple days and up to a few days. Makeup quizzes will not be offered. I will drop your two lowest quiz scores, which allows you—if you wish—to miss 2 quizzes for whatever reason (including illness). Given that generous policy and the fact that any one quiz is only worth a small fraction of your grade, please do not ask me for opportunities to make up a missed quiz.

**Midterms:** The midterm exam(s) are scheduled as follows:

Midterm #1: Monday October 16 (during lecture period)
Midterm #2: Monday November 6 (during lecture period)
Final Exam: Scheduled by the Registrar

Midterms are not mandatory and therefore not deferrable. Students who fail to complete a midterm will receive a score of zero for it.

**Final exam:** Scheduled by the University. Details of the final exam will be provided later in the term. The final exam is a mandatory component of the course and is therefore deferrable using a Request for Academic Concession.

**Course Website**
Lecture notes, problem sets, answer keys, additional readings, and other useful information will be
posted on Brightspace

Important announcements will be posted on Brightspace. Students are advised to check frequently.

**Course Experience Survey (CES)**

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term you will have the opportunity to complete a confidential course experience survey (CES) regarding your learning experience. The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey, you will receive an email inviting you to do so. If you do not receive an email invitation, you can go directly to [http://ces.uvic.ca](http://ces.uvic.ca). You will need to use your UVic NetLink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet or mobile device. I will remind you nearer the time, but please be thinking about this important activity, especially the following three questions, during the course:

1. What strengths did your instructor demonstrate that helped you learn in this course?
2. Please provide specific suggestions as to how the instructor could have helped you learn more effectively.
3. Please provide specific suggestions as to how this course could be improved.

**Student Code of Conduct**

The Humanities, Science, and Social Sciences Faculties have adopted this [Student code of conduct]. Please, review

**Policies**

This course adheres to the [Undergraduate Course Policies] of the Department of Economics that deal with the following issues:

- Academic integrity (plagiarism and cheating)
- Attendance
- Grading
- Academic concessions
- Travel plans
- Students with a disability
- Policy on inclusivity and diversity

Further information related to policies:

**Examinations**

Attendance at all scheduled examinations is essential to do well in the course. Write them in your calendar now. Consideration for missed examinations will be given only on the basis of documented illness, accident or family affliction, and for no other reasons. Students who miss an exam must contact the instructor within 12 hours of the exam informing of their absence and to make arrangements for a makeup exam; otherwise they will receive a zero for the missed exam. Students
who miss an exam must remain in regular (i.e. more than daily) communication with the instructor about scheduling a makeup and must be flexible with their time in rescheduling, otherwise they will forfeit their right to a makeup exam and receive a zero for the missed exam. In the event of a missed final examination, students are advised to follow the procedures outlined in the University Calendar: University Examination Policies

Electronic devices: During exams, only non-programmable calculators are permitted. All other electronic devices must be turned off and stored out of view.

Waitlist Policies

- Enrolment limits are determined by classroom capacity. Instructors have no discretion to raise the cap or admit waitlisted students. While waiting for enrolled students to drop, waitlisted students must attend all classes and submit assignments according to the normal deadline.
- Enrolled students who do not show up in the first three lectures may lose their place in the course. Enrolled students who decide not to take the course are responsible for initiating their dropping out of the course, and are urged to do so as promptly as possible out of courtesy toward waitlisted students.

Classroom Etiquette

Behave politely and professionally to the teaching staff and your fellow students.

Language

English is the language of instruction at the University and for all aspects of this course. Dictionaries are not allowed in examinations, unless the exam is open book.

Use of AI

The use of AI is not permitted in this course unless explicitly stated as allowed on a given assignment. Should you violate this rule, you will have violated UVic’s Policy on Academic Integrity and a complaint against you under this policy will be filed accordingly.

Academic Integrity

Please browse What is Plagiarism for the definition of plagiarism. Academic integrity requires commitment to the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students are expected to observe the same standards of scholarly integrity as their academic and professional counterparts. A student who is found to have engaged in unethical academic behaviour, including the practices described in the Policy on Academic Integrity in the University Calendar, is subject to penalty by the University. I respect students who are honest, regardless of their performance in the course, and to protect them from unscrupulous classmates I will ruthlessly prosecute anyone I catch plagiarizing or cheating in any other way. Period. If you have any question about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism, I’m very happy to explain this. Check with me before taking a chance.

Failing grades

I respect your choice to exert minimal effort in this class due to priorities elsewhere in your life. However, university policy sets the bar to pass a course very low, and I have no sympathy
for those who fail to clear that bar. Optimize carefully, should you choose to engage in risky cost-minimizing behavior! Students regularly fail this courses. This is not meant as a threat, but as a warning that careless coasting can lead to disaster.

**Policy on Gifts**
Some students have very kindly given me gifts in the past. While I truly appreciate the gesture, I would like to discourage this. I never want a student to get the impression that they need to curry favor with me in order to get a good grade. In fact, a gift would never affect a student’s grade, but it’s best to avoid any appearance to the contrary. So please don’t give me gifts. In any case, the kindest gesture of thanks you can ever make is to drop by or send an email sometime after grades are in and tell me you appreciated the course. That never fails to make my day.

**E-mail Policy**

- You may contact me at my UVic email address. Please include both your legal name (the name in the university records) and course title in the subject of your email. Without such information, it is sometimes hard for the instructor to understand the nature of your queries. Please avoid inappropriate nicknames, email ids and signatures. Text message lingo should not be used.

- You should contact me by email primarily on matters that relate to your personal participation, e.g. you have a medical condition that prevents you from taking an exam. It is best to raise questions related to course materials in class or in person during office hours. You may ask simple short questions via email; however, I may answer directly or I may reply telling you that I will cover that in class or it is best to explain the question in person. E-mail is a terribly inefficient way of communicating with these types of issues. General administrative matters such as the arrangement and the format for the assignments or exams will ONLY be discussed in class and no answers will be provided via email on these issues.

- A good rule of thumb for emails is, “Only send it if it’s really important.” For example, if I post an answer key with an error on it 2 days before an exam (or promised you an answer key by a certain date and forgot to post it), definitely email me. Email is arguably too cheap relative to what would be socially optimal. People send emails without thinking because it’s cheap (to them) to do so. Unfortunately, emails impose a cost on the recipient who has to read them and respond to them. It becomes very tempting to send me an email asking “What will be covered on the midterm?” even though that very point will with 100% certainty be covered in lecture. So, I only respond to emails that really “needed” to be sent, and I get to decide what’s “needed.” Basically, if you could have figured out the answer to your question by 1) reading the syllabus; 2) reading the website; or 3) attending lecture, I won’t answer it. So check those sources, and if you missed lecture, ask a classmate who was there. If it’s a question on material (and hence was covered in lecture) you’re more than welcome to ask it, but come to office hours to do so. Email is terrible for explaining most economics.