
Hours: Tu 4:30 PM – 7:10 PM

Location: EXPL 2310

Website: <https://mymason.gmu.edu>

Sect/Credits: UG:001, G:001 / 3 credit hours

Instructor: Nathan Burtch

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Instructor office: EXPL 2413

Office hours: MWF 12 – 1 PM Via Zoom

General Information

Catalog description: Reviews spatial, policy, and administration principles that guide urban planning activities in the United States. Outlines differences between theory and practice and provides tools, methods, and perspectives commonly incorporated into practice of urban planning and policy analysis.

Course overview: This course is intended as a general introduction to the field of urban planning. The history, practice, and theory of urban planning will be discussed, as well as a few of the different ‘flavors’ of urban planning subfields. Planning has been historically seen as a technical and applied career; this will be introduced by means of a course project intended to see the interdisciplinary and multifaceted approaches needed to be a planning practitioner. Planning is interdisciplinary and multifaceted because cities and urban areas themselves are complicated human constructs, necessitating an examination of the history, geography, sociology, politics, and economics of urban places and urban people. This course will focus upon the foundations of planning as seen in the North American (primarily the United States) context.

The format of the course is largely lecture based. There will also be occasional films, guest speakers, demonstrations, and/or class discussions. You are expected to participate and ask questions.

Online course: GGS 357 | GGS 590 | GOVT 357 is presented as a synchronous online course. “Synchronous” means that there are specific timed gatherings for this course; just like with an on-campus course, but with meeting through web-conferencing software. In addition to these live meetings, most weeks the professor will publish pre-recorded lectures that should be viewed before class begins. By shifting some lecture to recordings, more time during the class meetings can be devoted to discussion, which is an important class component.

Choose a metropolitan region: Students will examine one metropolitan region in the United States in detail through a course project. A list of the 100 largest US Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) is on our Blackboard site. Only one person per course will be able to choose each particular MSA. There will be no requirements of physically visiting the city, so feel free to choose from any throughout the country. Details will be provided on the first day of class.

Target audience: This course is co-listed at the 300/500 level. It is therefore intended for both undergraduate and graduate students interested in urban areas and the practice of planning.

Applicable learning outcomes: Successful completion of this course will teach students:

1. Explain characteristic features of a metropolis and explore how persistent problems, institutional transformations, and creative expression may emerge from this environment.

2. Demonstrate their ability to interpret, evaluate, compare, and critique the views and experiences of particular social, economic, and cultural groups in the metropolis.
3. Articulate how an individual or a group may have access to influencing public decisions in the metropolis, how they may pursue collective ends, or how they may contribute to community well-being.
4. Apply critical analysis to a specific topic or question in order to delineate constituent elements of the situation, to define challenges that are faced, and to examine the potential for constructive resolution or development.

Prerequisites: It is recommended that undergraduates have a minimum of 30 completed credits.

Enrollment and repeat policy: This course follows the general Mason policy that an undergraduate course can be repeated for grade up to three times. Understand that each academic unit can have more restrictive limits on specific courses. Students that repeat the course must submit all newly completed work. Any repeat students must choose a new metropolitan area for their project focus. The GGS 590 designation is a Selected Topics in Geography course, meaning that students can take up to 12 credits of GGS 590.

Course Materials

Required text: Levy, John M. 2017. Contemporary urban planning. 11th ed. New York: Routledge. ISBN 13: 978-1-138-66638-2

The course textbook is available from various outlets in various forms. It is available through the Mason bookstore or through your online provider of choice. The publisher sells an e-book version (<https://routledgetextbooks.com/textbooks/9781138666382/default.php>) and should also be available through the bookstore. The e-book version is the same as the hard copy, but there are various short-term purchase options that are less expensive. In addition, there may be other readings posted on Blackboard for you to complete.

GGG computer lab and virtual computing: *Due to social distancing policies in Mason's Safe Return to Campus, the lab in EXPL 2102 is closed for the Fall 2020 semester.*

Mason provides access to Mason Labs virtual computing through your web browser. In order to access it, you will need to install both a Mason VPN (<https://its.gmu.edu/service/virtual-private-network-vpn/>) and the Citrix Workspace app (<https://www.citrix.com/downloads/workspace-app/>). After logging into the VPN, you can then access <https://mymasonapps.gmu.edu/> using your Mason directory ID. Once inside, you will be able to access Mason Labs and have a virtual connection to a Mason lab computer with some specialized software. You can connect to the Microsoft One Drive cloud storage that each Mason student has or connect to local storage drives.

Software, hardware, and data: Two assignments in this course will make use of specific software packages. Details on the usage and access of this software will be provided. This course will have synchronous online meetings via web-conferencing software. Zoom will be the primary meeting software used, with Blackboard Collaborate Ultra used as a backup system. **Students are required to have a device with a functional camera and microphone.** Students will not be required to have a webcam on for the entirety of the class, but it is expected during discussions and questions.

When necessary, students can connect through a telephone call, but a web-based video connection is the expected norm.

The online nature of this class necessitates that students have the technological bandwidth to stream data; students should have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system and a stable broadband Internet connection (consistent 1.5 Mbps or higher download and upload speed; you can use <https://www.speedtest.net/> to check the speed of your connection)

Online materials and email: This course will make extensive use of Blackboard at Mason. Course materials such as assignments will be available only in electronic version on Blackboard. Also, students will be expected to submit assignments online through Blackboard. **Only Word document (.docx or .doc) or Adobe PDF (.pdf) file formats will be accepted**, with some exceptions. Grades will be posted on Blackboard as well. Make sure you are familiar and comfortable with the Blackboard interface.

Students are required to have a MasonLive/Email account, which will allow you access to Blackboard and lab computers. Please use this university email account when contacting the professor regarding this class; your professor will not respond to messages sent from a non-Mason email address.

Grading

Exams (40%): There will be two exams in this course. Exams will be composed of short to medium length essays and multiple-choice questions. Exams will cover topics from lectures only but completing readings will help. Each exam will be weighted equally (20% of the overall grade). The exams are not cumulative, but planning is inherently cumulative so your accumulated knowledge in the class will be useful as course topics build upon each other.

Course project (35% UG, 30% G): Over the course of the semester, students will critically analyze a major metropolitan region within in the United States. A list of the 100 most populous metropolitan regions has been posted to Blackboard. You will hand in drafts of each section of the project during the semester (see Assignments), each focused on a different aspect of the urban system. The project includes both a written document and a presentation.

Current events and issues discussions (15% UG, 10% G): Each student will find articles to discuss with the class during the semester regarding current events, debates, policies, and issues of cities and planning. These can be articles from traditional media sources (newspapers) or online media and can include opinion pieces. These must be relatively current. If you find an article you wish to present to the class, you will need to post the article to the course discussion board by Monday before class. Students are expected to read the article before class and discuss the issue in class. A grading rubric (number of articles, how participation is assessed, etc.) will be discussed early in class once class size has been established.

Assignments (10%): To keep students moving at a solid pace towards the course project, different sections will be due approximately every two weeks. The due dates are posted in the course calendar. These are draft sections; students will receive comments on how to improve the section for the final project. Students are expected to expand upon these drafts for the final submission of the project.

Late work will not be reviewed by the professor. Each assignment will be graded out of 4 points (4 – Excellent; 3 – Satisfactory; 2 – Unsatisfactory; 0 – Late or not completed).

Undergraduate grading scale:

<i>Grades</i>	<i>Percentage Required</i>	<i>Grades</i>	<i>Percentage Required</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Grade</i>
A+	96 to 100	C+	76 to 79.9	Exams (2)	40%
A	93 to 95.9	C	73 to 75.9	Project	35%
A-	90 to 92.9	C-	70 to 72.9	Assignments	10%
B+	86 to 89.9	D	60 to 69.9	Curr. Events	15%
B	83 to 85.9	F	<60		
B-	80 to 82.9				

Graduate research (10% G): To get graduate credit for this course, graduate students will be required to complete an additional graduate research component. Graduate students will investigate an urban planning topic related to either their own graduate research (if applicable), or to another topic of interest. This research project will consist of an annotated bibliography of relevant literature. You will need to arrange to meet with the instructor during the semester to discuss the topic that you will cover. More details will be provided on Blackboard during the semester.

Graduate grading scale:

<i>Grades</i>	<i>Percentage Required</i>	<i>Grades</i>	<i>Percentage Required</i>	<i>Assignment</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Grade</i>
A+	96 to 100	B	83 to 85.9	Exams (2)	40%
A	93 to 95.9	B-	80 to 82.9	Project	30%
A-	90 to 92.9	C	70 to 79.9	Assignments	10%
B+	86 to 89.9	F	<70	Curr. Events	10%
				Grad research	10%

Note on attendance: Regular attendance is an expectation. Those that make a habit of missing class tend to do worse in this course than those that do attend. It is in your best interest to come to class and participate as attendance will lead to a better understanding of course concepts. Students are responsible for any announcement given by the instructor during class regardless of their personal attendance.

Students that must miss classes because of religious observances or participation in University activities should provide documentation to the professor within the first two weeks of the course. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for work missed on those days. It is expected that if a student has one of these excused absences on a day in which an assignment is due that the student submits the assignment early.

Make-up and late assignment policies: Assignment due dates are explicitly stated. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** Technical excuses ("computer system error", "didn't submit correctly on Blackboard", etc.) will not be accepted as reasons for late work. You are expected to start the work early. **Never underestimate the time you will spend on the assignments.**

If you are ill or physically indisposed and cannot submit work on time, you must notify the instructor before class for you to have a chance to make up the work. **Special dispensation is available for students with difficulties due to COVID-19 illness or quarantine**; please contact the instructor to make any special accommodations in this regard. **Make-up exams will be given only for University approved excused absences.** This policy may seem strict, but it is in your best interest to turn in everything on time to avoid falling irrecoverably behind. Please contact the instructor if you are struggling and you will receive aid as best as the instructor can provide. Also, if you cannot complete the assignment on time, it is better to turn in partially completed work than nothing at all.

Administrative

Academic integrity: *The following statement is adapted from the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning.* No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code, which you can read fully at the Office for Academic Integrity (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>). The Honor Code Pledge reads as follows:

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University Community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set for this Honor Code: Student Members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

The Mason Honor Code defines cheating, plagiarism, stealing, and lying. It is expected that you understand these definitions. If you have any doubts about what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, stealing, or lying in the academic context, please see your professor. **Acts of academic dishonesty in this course may be penalized with failure of either the work in question or the entire course.**

While collaboration and group learning is encouraged in this course, each student **absolutely must** turn in their own work, from their own computer, and any discussion must be theirs alone, and not attributable to another person or group, *except where noted* (for example, quoting authors as a small portion of your scholarly work). This also applies to online sources; you cannot copy the words of anyone else for any graded part of this course. It is not enough to exchange a few synonyms within a sentence! You must write, summarize, and analyze with your own words and ideas.

Course materials and student privacy: All course materials posted to Blackboard or other course sites are private; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) **must not be shared** with anyone not enrolled in this class. Video recordings of class meetings that include audio or visual information from other students are private and must not be shared. Live video conference meetings (e.g. Collaborate or Zoom) that include audio or visual information from other students must be viewed privately and not shared with others in your household. Some or all of our synchronous meetings in this class will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester. **Sharing of instructor-created materials** (lectures, notes, videos, assignments, exams, etc.) to others not currently enrolled

in this specific section of this class, **including to public or private online “study” sites, is considered a violation of Mason’s Honor Code.**

Disability statement: This course complies with Mason policies for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Disability Services (DS). DS can be contacted by phone at (703) 993-2474, or in person at SUB I Suite 2500, or online by the link at the end of this section. Students who suspect that they have a disability, temporary or permanent, but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. A memo from DS authorizing your accommodation is needed before any accommodation can be made. The memo should be furnished to the professor preferably within the first two weeks of class or as soon as an accommodation is made. Please visit <https://ds.gmu.edu/> for more information.

Gender identity, pronoun use, and proper address: Students are welcome to share their chosen name and gender pronouns with the instructor and discuss how the instructor can best address you in class and via email. As well, students should be aware that they can use Mason-provided tools to update their chosen name and pronouns; these changes will appear in Blackboard class sites among other places. See <https://registrar.gmu.edu/updating-chosen-name-pronouns/> for more information. Your instructor uses *he/him/his* pronouns. When addressing your instructor in writing or verbally, please use “Dr. Burtch” or “Prof. Burtch.” The surname ‘Burtch’ is pronounced the same as ‘birch.’

Mason diversity statement: From <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/professional-development/mason-diversity-statement>

George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

Mason policy on sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, and interpersonal violence: As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [university policy 1412](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact the [Student Support and Advocacy Center](#) (703-380-1434), [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (703-993-2380), [Student Health Services](#), or [Mason’s Title IX Coordinator](#) (703-993-8730; titleix@gmu.edu).

Use of electronic devices: Your professor encourages the use of devices that both aid your learning ability and do not distract from the learning of others. Except for mobile phones and audio/video recorders, you are free to use any electronic device that fulfills both of those conditions. All electronic devices should be muted or silenced. Please be respectful of the class and avoid use of social media during class which can distract both you and your classmates. You are expected to

adhere to Mason's student code of conduct; disruptive behavior will result in classroom removal. Audio/video recording requires the consent of the professor.

University-wide closures and class cancellations/delays: There may be times during the semester in which George Mason University announces university-wide closures or delays. Should inclement weather or another emergency force Mason to close, causing our class to cancel meeting times, we will not meet. Check the Mason website and our own Blackboard site for updates. Other cancellations or delays to class will be announced via Blackboard by your professor. In the event that this course has missed meeting times, the course schedule, assignment deadlines, and other course alterations will be decided upon and announced via Blackboard and email by the professor. You are expected to stay abreast of any changes.

Instructor availability: Please do not hesitate to contact your instructor if you have questions about course topics or assignments. Your instructor will do his best to answer all weekday emails within 24 hours, and weekend emails within 48 hours. Should you not receive a response within that time frame, you may send a gentle reminder via email. Do try to avoid last-minute emails, as your instructor may not have email accessible immediately before deadlines. It is generally a good practice to avoid sending an email at the first sign of trouble with an assignment; often you will find the proper solution by giving yourself an hour or two to problem solve! Please make use of the office hours listed at the top of this document. Generally, issues can be clarified quickly in person or in a live online chat.

Your instructor **does not** post or distribute lecture slides for this course. However, your instructor is more than happy to give you a condensed version of the lecture during office hours, in which you can see definitions for key terms, theoretical distinctions, and access to any extra materials covered in class, as long as this privilege is not abused. In other words, these will not be a regular replacement for class attendance. You will need to arrange these meetings with your instructor, as office hours must be available for all students.

GGG 357 | GGS 590 | GOVT 357 course schedule

Dates	Lecture Topics	Coursework Due
Unit 1: The background of urban planning		
Week 1 Aug 25	Intro: Why do we plan? / What is urban and metropolitan?	Read Chapter 1
Week 2 Sep 1	US urbanization and suburbanization	Read Chapter 2
Week 3 Sep 8	Planning history; solving urban problems	Read Chapters 3, 4
Week 4 Sep 15	Planning law and rights / Mapping the city (online lecture/tutorial)	Read Chapter 5 Assignment 1: History
Unit 2: The practice of planning		
Week 5 Sep 22	Comprehensive planning / Politics of planning and power	Read Chapter 6, 8, 19
Week 6 Sep 29	Land use planning; investment and zoning / Demographics (online lecture/tutorial)	Read Chapter 9 Assignment 2: Maps
Week 7 Oct 6	Social issues in planning / Exam 1	Read Chapters 7 Assignment 2.5: Bibliography
Week 8 Oct 13	<i>Fall Break – No class</i>	
Unit 3: Example fields of planning		
Week 9 Oct 20	Urban design	Read Chapter 10 Assignment 3: Demography
Week 10 Oct 27	Urban renewal and community development	Read Chapter 11
Week 11 Nov 3	Environmental planning	Read Chapter 15 Assignment 4: Neighborhoods
Week 12 Nov 10	Guest speaker: Green sustainable development	
Week 13 Nov 17	Transportation planning	Read Chapter 12 Assignment 5: Environment
Week 14 Nov 24	Economic development	Read Chapter 13
Week 15 Dec 1	Design charrette / Smart growth and growth management	Read Chapter 14 Assignment 6: Transportation Grad project: Due 12-4
Week 16 Dec 15	Tuesday, Dec 15, 4:30 – 7:15 PM Exam 2 Course presentations	Final project: Due 12-11 Final project presentation: Due 12-15

Note: The GGS 357 | GGS 590 | GOVT 357 course schedule is tentative and is subject to revision by the instructor