



Economics 4491G, Section 550

Special Topics in Urban Economics

COURSE INFORMATION

Huron University College, Winter 2023

Classroom: HC-W17

Time: Mondays 3:30 – 5:30 and Wednesdays 2:30 – 3:30

INSTRUCTOR'S INFORMATION

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Please use your UWO email when communicating with me. This prevents your email from going to spam. Please also include the course code in the subject line.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar course will introduce students to specialized topics in urban and regional economics. We will begin by reviewing canonical models and concepts before engaging with contemporary empirical research in urban economics. Topics include local labour and housing markets, urban transportation, place-based policies, and relevant empirical tools. The goal is to develop skills needed to apply economic analysis to urban policy problems, pursue our own research, and communicate economic ideas and research findings.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Understand how to work with and apply foundational models in urban economics
- Gain exposure to empirical tools in urban economics and work with spatial data and maps
- Become familiar with academic literature and policy discussions in urban economics
- Learn to read economic literature critically, conduct original research, and communicate results

CLASS METHODS

This course will use a combination of lectures, presentations, and class discussion. We will learn data analysis and mapping skills in computer labs which require you bring a working laptop computer to class on specified days.

TEXTBOOK

Lectures and discussions will mostly follow readings posted on OWL, but much of the theory discussed in class modules 1 and 2 will follow:

- Brueckner, Jan K. *Lectures on urban economics*. MIT press, 2011.
- O'Sullivan, Arthur. *Urban economics, 8th or 9th edition*. McGraw-Hill.

The following texts may also be useful references for students choosing to dig deeper into empirical methods while engaging with course readings or working on their term paper:

- Angrist, Joshua D., and Jörn-Steffen Pischke. *Mastering 'metrics: The path from cause to effect*. Princeton university press, 2014.
- Wooldridge, Jeffrey M. *Introductory econometrics: A modern approach*. Cengage learning, 2015.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module	Topics and readings
Module 1:	Foundations of urban economics
	<i>Basic facts and explaining existence of cities:</i> <i>Main readings: Brueckner Ch.1; O'Sullivan Ch.2,3,4</i> <i>Additional reading: Duranton, G., & Puga, D. (2020). The economics of urban density. Journal of Economic Perspectives, 34(3), 3-26.</i>
	<i>Local labour markets and quality of life:</i> <i>Main readings: Brueckner Ch.11; O'Sullivan Ch.5</i> <i>Additional reading: Glaeser, E. (2013). A Review of Enrico Moretti's The New Geography of Jobs. Journal of Economic Literature, 51(3), 825-37.</i>
	<i>Urban spatial structure:</i> <i>Main readings: Brueckner Ch.2; O'Sullivan Ch.6;</i> <i>Monocentric Cities by Marvin Kraus. (Ch.6 in A companion to urban economics, 2008)</i>
Module 2:	Extensions, applications, and empirical methods
	<i>Extended urban model:</i> <i>Main readings: Brueckner Ch.3,4; O'Sullivan Ch6</i>
	<i>Local public goods, hedonic valuation, and segregation</i> <i>Main readings: Brueckner Ch.6.2,8.3,8.4</i>
	<i>Overview of relevant empirical methods</i>
	<i>Urban transportation (time permitting)</i> <i>Main readings: Brueckner Ch.5; O'Sullivan Ch10,11</i>

Module 3:	Intro to R & GIS computer labs
Module	Topics and readings
Module 4:	Discussions and paper presentations
	<i>Housing supply and regulation</i> <i>Main reading:</i> Glaeser, E., & Gyourko, J. (2018). The economic implications of housing supply. <i>Journal of Economic Perspectives</i> , 32(1), 3-30.
	<i>Urban resilience and cities post Covid-19</i> <i>Main reading:</i> Glaeser, Edward L. "Urban resilience." <i>Urban Studies</i> (2021).

COURSE EVALUATION

20% Problem sets

10% Computer lab assignment

10% Class participation and discussion paper reflections

15% Paper presentation

45% Term paper, preliminary report, and progress report

Problem sets

There will be two problem sets building on in-course material. These problem sets will be a mix of mathematical derivations, interpretation, and analysis. Students are encouraged to collaborate, solving problems in groups, but each must submit their own solutions.

Additional details, exact deadlines, and submission instructions will be posted on OWL.

Computer lab assignment

There will be one computer lab assignment in which students are expected to analyse data from the Canadian Population Census to describe the economic geography of a city of their choice.

This assignment will use skills learned in the R & GIS computer lab. You must attend labs with a working computer and software properly installed. Lab preparedness will be reflected in your participation grade.

Additional details, exact deadlines, and submission instructions will be posted on OWL.

Class participation and discussion paper reflections

Module 4 allocates two one-hour sessions to discussing contemporary issues in urban economics based on assigned readings. Every student will come to class familiar with the background reading and will submit a short (250 to 500 word) reflection on its main ideas before each discussion.

Each paper reflection will count for two percent of your participation grade and the objective is to encourage everyone to be prepared for insightful discussions.

A detailed schedule of discussions will be available in advance and posted on OWL.

Paper presentation

Each student will select an article to present from a provided list. Presentations will be approximately twenty minutes long and will summarize the chosen article focusing on results and policy implications. Students should be prepared to answer questions about their presentation. Additional details and instructions will be posted on OWL.

Term paper

Each student will submit either a policy briefing, research proposal, or literature survey on a topic of your choice in urban economics. The final submission will be 2,000 to 3,000 words (8 to 12 pages double spaced) and due at the end of the semester.

Be careful to choose a specific topic and organize your paper around a central idea or thesis. All papers will review some relevant academic literature and may proceed in several different ways depending on your interests:

- A *policy briefing* summarises and distills what is known about the topic at hand to inform policy makers. This means picking a specific context or jurisdiction and describing the urban policy landscape or policy issues. You will then use theory and evidence from urban economics to criticize or praise existing policies and propose new or improved public policies where applicable.
- A *research proposal* finds a gap or unanswered question and proposes a novel analysis to fill that gap. This means describing any hypothesis you would test, any theory you would develop, and any data and methods you would use. You do not need to complete the proposed analysis, but making some progress is useful and you must demonstrate its feasibility.
- A *literature survey* is deep dive into the literature on a particular topic with the goal of informing its readers. Literatures surveys must be opinionated and offer a critical summary of existing research. The readings associated with module 4 discussions are excellent examples of literature surveys.

You will select your topic early and submit a 250 to 500 word *preliminary report* worth 2% of your final grade by the end of day on **Monday, February 13**. This preliminary report will briefly

describe the topic you intend to study and whether you will write a policy briefing, research proposal, or literature survey. This will allow me to provide feedback early in the process.

You will work on your term paper continuously after selecting a topic and submit a 350 to 750 word *progress report* worth 3% of your final grade by the end of day on **Monday, March 6**. This progress report should describe at least one of each of the following: a concept from class that is important for your paper, a challenge you encountered and strategy for overcoming it, an important task completed so far. You should conclude your progress report with your plans for proceeding.

For example, if my topic were understanding the effect of urban living on health outcomes, one challenge would be that I need to collect evidence on various health outcomes and factors influencing health. One solution would be a systematic review of literature on outcomes such as obesity (Eid et al 2008) and smoking (Darden 2021) and exposure to hazards such as air pollution (Simeonova et al 2021). To proceed, I would plan to find additional papers to serve as evidence which I will synthesise to form a conclusion regarding the effect of urban living on health.

Additional details and instructions for the term paper, preliminary report, and progress report will be posted on OWL.



Appendix to Course Outlines: Academic Policies & Regulations Fall/Winter 2022-2023

Huron will continue to follow the guidance of public health and government officials. It is anticipated that there will be no disruptions to in-person instruction. This is subject to change.

Student Code of Conduct

Membership in the community of Huron University College and Western University implies acceptance by every student of the principle of respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study, work and live within it. Upon registration, students assume the responsibilities that such registration entails. While in the physical or online classroom, students are expected to behave in a manner that supports the learning environment of others. Please review the Student Code of Conduct at:

<https://huronatwestern.ca/sites/default/files/Res%20Life/Student%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20-%20Revised%20September%202019.pdf>.

Prerequisite and Antirequisite Information

Students are responsible for ensuring that they have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that they have not completed any course antirequisites. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

Attendance Regulations for Examinations

A student is entitled to be examined in courses in which registration is maintained, subject to the following limitations:

- 1) A student may be debarred from writing the final examination for failure to maintain satisfactory academic standing throughout the year.
- 2) Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course. The Dean of the Faculty offering the course will communicate that decision to the Dean of the Faculty of registration.

Review the policy on Attendance Regulations for Examinations here: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website: [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#). The appeals process is also outlined in this

policy as well as more generally at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/appealsundergrad.pdf.

Turnitin.com

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

It is not appropriate to use electronic devices (such as, but not limited to, laptops, tablets, cell phones) in the classroom for non-classroom activities. Such activity is disruptive and distracting to other students and to the instructor, and can inhibit learning. Students are expected to respect the classroom environment and to refrain from inappropriate use of technology and other electronic devices in class.

Statement on Use of Personal Response Systems (“Clickers”)

Personal Response Systems (“clickers”) may be used in some classes. If clickers are to be used in a class, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the device is activated and functional. Students must see their instructor if they have any concerns about whether the clicker is malfunctioning. Students must use only their own clicker. If clicker records are used to compute a portion of the course grade:

- the use of somebody else’s clicker in class constitutes a scholastic offence
- the possession of a clicker belonging to another student will be interpreted as an attempt to commit a scholastic offence.

Academic Consideration for Missed Work

All students pursuing academic consideration, regardless of type, must contact their instructors no less than 24 hours following the end of the period of absence to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic responsibilities missed during their absence. **Students are reminded that they should consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying submission of work, and are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances.**

Students who have conditions for which academic accommodation is appropriate, such as disabilities or ongoing or chronic health conditions, should work with Accessible Education Services to determine appropriate forms of accommodation. Further details concerning policies and procedures may be found at: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>.

Policy on Academic Consideration for a Medical/ Non-Medical Absence

- (a) **Consideration on Medical Grounds for assignments worth *less than 10%* of final grade: Consult Instructor Directly and Contact Academic Advising**

When seeking consideration on **medical grounds** for assignments worth *less than 10%* of the final course grade, the student should contact the instructor directly. The student need only share broad

outlines of the medical situation. The instructor **may** require the student to submit documentation to the academic advisors, in which case she or he will advise the student and inform the academic advisors to expect documentation. If documentation is requested, the student will need to complete and submit the [Student Medical Certificate](#). The instructor may **not** collect medical documentation. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation.

b) Medical Grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of final grade: Go Directly to Academic Advising

University Senate policy, which can be found at [Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#) requires that all student requests for accommodation on medical grounds for assignments worth 10% or more of the final grade be made directly to the academic advising office of the home faculty (for Huron students, the “home faculty” is Huron), with supporting documentation in the form (minimally) of the Senate-approved Student Medical Certificate found at: https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

The documentation is submitted in confidence and will not be shown to instructors. The advisors will contact the instructor when the medical documentation is received, and will outline the severity and duration of the medical challenge as expressed on the Student Medical Certificate and in any other supporting documentation. The student will be informed that the instructor has been notified of the presence of medical documentation, and will be instructed to work as quickly as possible with the instructor on an agreement for accommodation. The instructor will not normally deny accommodation where appropriate medical documentation is in place and where the duration it describes aligns with the due date(s) of assignment(s). Before denying a request for accommodation on medical grounds, the instructor will consult with the Dean. The instructor’s decision is appealable to the Dean.

c) Consideration on Non-Medical Grounds: Consult Huron Support Services/Academic Advising, or email huronsss@uwo.ca

Students seeking academic consideration for a **non-medical** absence (e.g. varsity sports, religious, compassionate, or bereavement) will be required to provide appropriate documentation. All consideration requests must include a completed [Consideration Request Form](#). Late penalties may apply at the discretion of the instructor.

Please review the full policy on Academic Consideration for medical and non-medical absence at: [accommodation_medical.pdf \(uwo.ca\)](#). Consult [Huron Academic Advising](#) at huronsss@uwo.ca for any further questions or information.

Support Services

For advice on course selections, degree requirements, and for assistance with requests for medical accommodation, students should email an Academic Advisor in Huron’s Student Support Services at

huronsss@uwo.ca. An outline of the range of services offered is found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/>.

Department Chairs, Program Directors and Coordinators are also able to answer questions about individual programs. Contact information can be found on the Huron website at: <https://huronatwestern.ca/contact/faculty-staff-directory/>.

If you think that you are too far behind to catch up or that your workload is not manageable, you should consult your Academic Advisor. If you are considering reducing your workload by dropping one or more courses, this must be done by the appropriate deadlines. Please refer to the Advising website, <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/academic-advising/> or review the list of official Sessional Dates on the Academic Calendar, available here: <http://www.westerncalendar.uwo.ca/SessionalDates.cfm>.

You should consult with the course instructor and the Academic Advisor who can help you consider alternatives to dropping one or more courses. Note that dropping a course may affect OSAP and/or Scholarship/Bursary eligibility.

Huron Student Support Services: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/> Office of the Registrar: <https://registrar.uwo.ca/>
Student Quick Reference Guide: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/student-services/#1> Academic Support & Engagement: <http://academicsupport.uwo.ca/>
Huron University College Student Council: <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life/beyond-classroom/hucsc/>
Western USC: <http://westernusc.ca/your-services/#studentservices>

Wellness and Health Supports at Huron and Western

University students may encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. Huron offers a variety of services that are here to support your success and wellbeing. All Huron staff and faculty have received training on responding to disclosures of Gender-Based Sexual Violence (GBSV); students should know that the Community Safety Office is a resource for survivors, providing support and, if desired, guidance while referring them to the further supports that they may require. Please visit <https://huronatwestern.ca/student-life-campus/student-services/wellness-safety> for more information or contact staff directly:

Wellness Services:

huronwellness@huron.uwo.ca Community

Safety Office: safety@huron.uwo.ca

Additional supports for Health and Wellness may be found and accessed at Western through, <https://www.uwo.ca/health/>.

Western Calendar - Policy Pages -

[Academic Calendar - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](#)