

## URBAN POLICY

Political Science 228  
Haverford College

Spring 2026

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Hours: M 2:30-3:30; F 2-3  
(and by appointment)

### Course Description

Several decades of deindustrialization and suburbanization during the mid- to late-twentieth century left many of America's urban areas in dire straits. The loss of jobs and residents depleted the tax base and forced local officials to cut back on public services, thus causing a further decline in the quality of life. Vast stretches of cities were devastated, as social and economic problems proliferated.

Yet the news is not entirely bleak for the nation's urban centers. More recently, many local governments have responded to debilitating societal trends by formulating and implementing public policies that have made their cities more attractive places to live, work, and play. At the same time, other cities have continued to struggle. This course attempts to learn from the recent experiences of various cities in order to identify effective strategies for urban revitalization. We will examine policy initiatives in the key areas of economic development, housing and community development, education, law enforcement, transportation, sustainable development, and recreation to assess what works and what does not work. The course concludes by speculating on the future prospects of American cities.

### Course Requirements

Field trips to Philadelphia Center City (Saturday, February 7) West Philadelphia (March 21 or 22)	no grade
Class participation	20%
First paper (5 pages)	20%
Research paper (10-12 pages)	30%
Final paper (8-10 pages)	30%

Note: Papers submitted after the assigned due date will be penalized by one third of a grade (e.g., B+ to B) each day they are late.

### Required Texts

Gregg Colburn and Rebecca J. Walter, *Affordable Housing in the United States* (Routledge 2025)

Bill Keller, *What's Prison For? Punishment and Rehabilitation in the Age of Mass Incarceration*  
(Columbia Global Reports 2022)

John Kromer, *Fixing Broken Cities: New Investment Policies for a Changed World*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Routledge 2023)

All other assigned readings will be available on Moodle.

## Newspaper Reading

Our academic analysis of public policies designed to revitalize American cities will be enhanced if we simultaneously follow the reporting of relevant news in the media. To that end, students are expected to read at least one daily newspaper such as *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or *The Wall Street Journal* on a regular basis and be able to draw upon material in these newspapers in class discussions. Perusal of news articles about urban policy issues will assist you in identifying possible topics for your research paper and then think more carefully about how policies and programs are being formulated and implemented in various American cities.

## Journals, Websites, and Podcasts

In addition to monitoring newspaper reporting about urban policy, you should acquaint yourself with some of the major scholarly journals that focus on the condition of cities: *Urban Affairs Review*, *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *Housing Policy Debate*, *Economic Development Quarterly*, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, and *Urban Studies*. Other useful magazines are targeted to urban practitioners and policy makers such as *Governing* and *Planning*. All of these publications will be helpful in preparing your research paper.

An abundance of websites and podcasts related to urban policy might also be worth consulting. Prominent ones include:

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (<http://www.hud.gov>) and  
(<http://www.huduser.org>)  
U.S. Census Bureau ([www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov))  
Brookings Institution: Metropolitan Policy Program  
([www.brookings.edu/about/programs/metro/](http://www.brookings.edu/about/programs/metro/))  
Planetizen ([www.planetizen.com](http://www.planetizen.com))  
The Cyberhood ([www.thecyberhood.net](http://www.thecyberhood.net))  
Shelterforce ([www.shelterforce.org](http://www.shelterforce.org))  
National Urban League ([www.nul.iamempowered.com](http://www.nul.iamempowered.com))  
Economic Policy Institute ([www.epi.org](http://www.epi.org))  
National Housing Institute (<http://www.nhi.org>)  
International City/County Management Association ([www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org))  
American Planning Association ([www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org))  
National Civic League ([www.ncl.org](http://www.ncl.org))  
Right to the City.Org ([www.righttothecity.org](http://www.righttothecity.org))  
Poverty & Race Research Action Council ([www.prrac.org](http://www.prrac.org))  
PICO National Network ([www.piconetwork.org](http://www.piconetwork.org))  
Urban Institute ([www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org))  
The Atlantic: CityLab ([www.citylab.com](http://www.citylab.com))  
National Coalition for the Homeless ([www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org))  
National Low Income Housing Coalition ([www.nlihc.org](http://www.nlihc.org))  
CitiesSpeak Podcast (<https://www.nlc.org/news-insights/citiespeak-podcast/>)  
Urban Studies: Walking the Cities Podcast (<https://www.urbanstudiesjournal.com/podcast/>)  
American Planning Association Podcast (<https://www.planning.org/podcast/>)

## Topics and Readings

### Week 1

- I. Introduction to Course
- II. The Urban Context

Edward Glaeser, "Introduction: Our Urban Species" in *Triumph of the City*  
Michael B. Katz, "What Is an American City?" in *Why Don't American Cities Burn?*

- III. Economic Development

### Week 2

- A. Downtown

- 1. The Downtown Business District

John Kromer, Ch. 2: "The Center City District: Rethinking Downtown and Post-Pandemic Futures" in *Fixing Broken Cities*

Center City District, State of Center City: 2025 (peruse) -- <https://centercityphila.org/research-reports/state-of-center-city>

Laureen D. Hom, "Revitalizing Chinatown for a New Generation: The Community Politics of the Business Improvement District," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 47 (2): 2025

John Kromer, Ch. 1: "The Ten-Year Tax Abatement: An Equitable Development Controversy and a Political Compromise" in *Fixing Broken Cities*

- 2. Arts, Entertainment, Sports, and Tourism

Martin Millspaugh, "The Inner Harbor Story," *Urban Land*, April 2003

Costas Spirou and Dennis R. Judd, "The Legacy Projects" and "Epilogue: A City of Bread and Circuses?" in *Building the City of Spectacle: Mayor Richard M. Daley and the Remaking of Chicago*

Rylan Graham, Meagan M. Ehlenz, and Albert T. Han, "Professional Sports Venues as Catalysts for Revitalization? Perspectives from Industry Experts," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, November 2023

### Week 3

- B. Uneven Development/Equitable Development

Richard C. Hula, "The Two Baltimores" in *Leadership and Urban Regeneration*, eds. Dennis R. Judd and Michael Parkinson

Douglas Rae, "Two Cheers for Very Unequal Incomes" in *Justice and the American Metropolis*, eds. Clarissa Rile Hayward and Todd Swanstrom

Rachel Weber, "Negotiating the 'Ideal Deal': Which Local Governments Have the Most Bargaining Leverage?" in *Reining in the Competition for Capital*, ed. Ann Markusen

C. The Creative Class

Richard Florida, "The Power of Place" in *The Rise of the Creative Class*  
Setha M. Low, "Why Does Public Space Matter?" (pp. 1-12) in *Why Public Space Matters*

**FIELD TRIP TO CENTER CITY PHILADELPHIA: Saturday, February 7 (alt. date:  
Sunday, February 8)**

Week 4

D. Neighborhoods

1. Deindustrialization/Reinvestment

William Julius Wilson, "The Economic Plight of Inner-City Black Males" in *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male*, ed. Elijah Anderson  
Paige Williams, "Gary, Indiana, and the Long Shadow of U.S. Steel," *The New Yorker*, February 17-24, 2025

2. Anchor Institutions

Eugenie L. Birch, "Anchor Institutions in the Northeast Megaregion: An Important but Not Fully Realized Resource" in *Revitalizing American Cities*, eds. Susan M. Wachter and Kimberly A. Zeuli  
John Kromer, Ch. 5: "Two Institution-Assisted Neighborhood Public School Ventures, a Generation Apart" in *Fixing Broken Cities*

**RESEARCH PAPER TOPIC DUE**

Week 5

3. Workforce and Small Business Development

Devah Pager, "Blacklisted: Hiring Discrimination in an Era of Mass Incarceration," in *Against the Wall: Poor, Young, Black, and Male*, ed. Elijah Anderson  
Thomas H. Douthat and Nancy Green Leigh, "First Source Hiring: An Essential Tool for Linking the Poor to Employment or a 'Dead Letter' Progressive Policy?" *Urban Affairs Review*, November 2017  
Marla Nelson and Laura Wolf-Powers, "Chains and Ladders: Exploring the Opportunities for Workforce Development and Poverty Reduction in the Hospital Sector," *Economic Development Quarterly*, February 2010

4. Novel Initiatives

Richard Florida, "What America Can Learn from Tulsa," *Washington Monthly*, April-June 2025  
Taylor Lawing, et al., "Public Grocery Stores: A Guide for Policymakers" (pp. 6-16), Vanderbilt Policy Accelerator for Political Economy & Regulation, March 18, 2024  
Nicole Gelinas, "The Problem with Grocery Stores Isn't Profits: It's Reality," *The New York Times*,

July 23, 2025

## FIRST PAPER DUE

### IV. Housing and Community Development

#### Week 6

##### A. Context

Gregg Colburn and Rebecca J. Walter, "Introduction" and "Understanding Affordable Housing" (pp. 1-80) in *Affordable Housing in the United States*

##### B. Housing Policies: An Overview

Gregg Colburn and Rebecca J. Walter, "Providing Access to Affordable Housing" (pp. 83-156) in *Affordable Housing in the United States*

Gregg Colburn and Rebecca J. Walter, "Case Studies" (pp. 157-190) in *Affordable Housing in the United States*

##### C. Public Housing and Housing Vouchers

Mark L. Joseph, "Promoting Poverty Deconcentration and Racial Desegregation through Mixed-Income Development" in *Facing Segregation: Housing Policy for a Stronger Society*, eds. Molly W. Metzger and Henry S. Webber

Stacy Seicshnaydre, "Missed Opportunity: Furthering Fair Housing in the Housing Choice Voucher Program," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, vol 79 (3): 2016

#### Week 7

##### D. Community Revitalization

###### 1. Middle Neighborhoods

Alan Mallach and Todd Swanstrom, "The Crisis of the Urban Middle Neighborhood" in *The Changing American Neighborhood: The Meaning of Place in the Twenty-First Century*

###### 2. Distressed Neighborhoods

Rachel G. Bratt, "Community Development Corporations: Challenges in Supporting a Right to Housing" in *A Right to Housing: Foundation for a New Social Agenda*, eds. Rachel G. Bratt, Michael E. Stone, and Chester Hartman

Todd Swanstrom, "The Incompleteness of Comprehensive Community Revitalization" in *Urban Policy in the Time of Obama*, ed. James DeFilippis

### 3. Community Revitalization: The Case of Philadelphia

John Kromer, Ch.3: “The Transition Zone: Remaking a Neighborhood and Revisiting, 25 Years Later” in *Fixing Broken Cities*

John Kromer, Ch. 4: “The Neighborhood Transformation Initiative: An Ambitious Policy, a Land Management Problem, and Organizational Development Success” in *Fixing Broken Cities*

Guest speaker: John Kromer, Director of Housing, City of Philadelphia, 1992-2001, and Instructor, Fels Institute of Government, University of Pennsylvania

Week 8

### **SPRING BREAK**

Week 9

#### E. The Affordable Housing Crisis

Jerusalem Demsas, “The Obvious Answer to Homelessness,” *The Atlantic*, January/February 2023

Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson, “Grow” in *Abundance*

Brian Shearer, “To Create Abundant Housing, Ignore the YIMBY Playbook,” *Washington Monthly*, November-December 2025

#### F. Gentrification

Alan Mallach and Todd Swanstrom, “Deconstructing Gentrification” in *The Changing American Neighborhood: The Meaning of Place in the Twenty-First Century*

Renia Ehrenfeucht and Marla Nelson, “Just Revitalization in Shrinking and Shrunken Cities? Observations on Gentrification from New Orleans and Cincinnati,” *Journal of Urban Affairs*, April 2020

Film in class: “Class Divide”

### **SELF-GUIDED FIELD TRIP TO WEST PHILADELPHIA: Weekend of March 21-22**

## V. Education

Week 10

#### A. Racial Isolation

Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, “What Americans Want from Public Schools” and “School Desegregation” in *The American Dream and the Public Schools*

Neil Kraus, “When Political Support Is Not Enough to Reform Urban Schools” in *Majoritarian Cities: Policy Making and Inequality in Urban Politics*

## B. School Finance

Jennifer Hochschild and Nathan Scovronick, "School Finance Reform" in *The American Dream and the Public Schools*

## Week 11

## C. Charter Schools

Richard D. Kahlenberg and Halley Potter, "The Dramatic Evolution of the Charter School Idea" and "The Disappointing Results in Many Charter Schools," in *A Smarter Charter: Finding What Works for Charter Schools and Public Education*

Julia A. McWilliams, "A Dying Business" (pp. 1-16) and "Charter School Expansion and Competition" in *Compete or Close: Traditional Neighborhood Schools Under Pressure*

## D. High-Stakes Testing and Accountability

Diane Ravitch, Denise Forte, Princess Moss, and Paul Reville, "Policy Dialogue: Twenty Years of Test-Based Accountability," *History of Education Quarterly*, vol 62 (2022)  
Film in class: "Tested"

## Week 12

## VII. Law Enforcement

### A. Crime

Henry Ruth and Kevin R. Reitz, "Crime and Punishment: A Brief American History" in *The Challenge of Crime: Rethinking Our Response*

Kevin Baker, "'Welcome to Fear City': The Inside Story of New York's Civil War, 40 Years On," *The Guardian*, May 18, 2015

George L. Kelling and William J. Bratton, "Declining Crime Rates: Insiders' Views of the New York Story," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Summer 1998

### B. Policing

Tom S. Clark, Adam N. Glynn, and Michael Leo Owens, "Introduction" in *Deadly Force: Police Shootings in Urban America*

John R. Logan and Deirdre Oakley, "Black Lives and Policing: The Larger Context of Ghettoization," *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol. 39 (8), 2017

Nathalie Baptiste, "Urban Policing without Brutality," *American Prospect*, Summer 2015

Mychal Denzel Smith, "Police Reform Is Not Enough," *Atlantic*, September 2020

Week 13

C. Incarceration

Bill Keller, *What's Prison For? Punishment and Rehabilitation in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, pp. 17-134

**RESEARCH PAPER DUE**

Week 14

VII. Transportation

James Q. Wilson, "Cars and Their Enemies," *Commentary*, July 1997

David Dayen, "The Great Los Angeles Revolt Against Cars," *American Prospect*, Summer 2017

Jonathan Mahler, "The Case for the Subway: It Built the City and the City Must Rebuild It to Survive," *New York Times Magazine*, January 7, 2018

Emily Badger, et al., "27 Million Fewer Car Trips: Life After a Year of Congestion Pricing," *New York Times*, January 5, 2026

Emily Badger, Larry Buchanan, and Stefanos Chen, "Can Faster Buses Really Be Free?" *New York Times*, October 26, 2025

Karen Chapple and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Transit-Oriented Development as a Panacea for Rationalist Planning: The Bright and Dark Sides" in *Transit-Oriented Displacement or Community Dividends? Understanding the Effects of Smarter Growth on Communities*

Week 15

VIII. Parks, Recreation, and Ecology

Christopher G. Boone and Ali Modarres, "Green Spaces, Green Governance, and Planning" in *City and Environment*

Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "What Brings Children to Parks?" *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Winter 2010

Michael Kimmelman, "Remaking the River That Remade L.A.," *The New York Times Magazine*, November 13, 2022

Week 15

IX. The Future of Cities

Kevin Layden, et al., "Understanding the Pursuit of Happiness in Ten Major Cities," *Urban Affairs Review*, November 2011

**FINAL PAPER DUE AT END OF EXAM PERIOD**