URBAN AND REGIONAL STUDIES, BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (B.S.)

Meghan Z. Gough, Ph.D.
Associate professor and program chair

The Bachelor of Science in Urban and Regional Studies requires 120 credits, including 40 credits within the major. The program is designed so that students may enter as late as their junior year and provides a solid foundation for professional work or advanced study aimed at addressing some of the most important challenges and issues facing the U.S. and other world regions, such as urban sprawl, economic marginalization, ethnic and racial conflict and environmental degradation. The program covers a wide range of topics related to these issues, including transportation, housing, land use, environmental management, regional and international development, human-environment interaction, globalization and socioeconomic change. Students can focus on the subject matter of their interest by choosing to concentrate in either urban planning, regional analysis, or regional and international development; alternatively, they may opt for a generalized course of study. Nine core courses and a lab (28 credits total) are required for all majors. These courses provide fundamental background knowledge in an array of disciplines that form the foundations of urban and regional studies, such as urban planning and design, human and physical geography, economics, environmental management, urban and public policy, and geographic information systems. Students complete their remaining 12 credits within one of the two concentrations or through a generalized course of study.

The program helps develop a theoretical and methodological background as well as analytical skills that can be used to address a wide range of issues and problems. Students acquire marketable skills in qualitative and quantitative analysis, computer usage, problem solving and communication — as well as a broad perspective on environment and society — that are essential for many occupations.

The generalized course of study option is designed for those students who have a broad interest in urban and regional studies. They can tailor this course of study to match not only intellectual interests but anticipated career goals. Students complete the core courses and then select the remaining 12 credits from any of the non-core courses listed below.

Learning outcomes

Upon completing this program, students will have acquired the following.

A multidisciplinary understanding of urban and regional dynamics and planning
Students will develop a multidisciplinary understanding of the characteristics of cities and other regions, the factors that shape them over time and the role of planning in influencing socioeconomic and environmental conditions therein. Among the key topics covered are:

- The urbanization process in the United States
- Urbanization and regional change in other cultures and historically
- Urban design and the built environment
- Economic geography
- Urban and regional demographics and sociology
- The relationship between the natural environment and urbanization and other land use change
- Local and regional politics
- The role of planning tools and strategies in addressing urban and regional problems, such as poverty, congestion and environmental degradation

Mastery of general and major-specific skills
Students will acquire the skills needed to function as well-rounded, educated citizens, including those required for careers or advanced study in urban and regional analysis, planning and community development. These include:

- Oral, written and graphic communication
- Social science and planning methods, including quantitative and qualitative analysis
- Research using government documents and other library sources
- Cause and effect reasoning
- Organized presentation of ideas
- Critical and independent thinking
- Computer proficiency
- The ability to work in groups
- Analysis of maps and other spatial data

Ethics and a sense of social and personal responsibility
Students will develop a strong ethical foundation and a sense of social and personal responsibility rooted in an understanding of and sensitivity to:

- The complex notions of the public good
- The potential social costs and other externalities of regional and economic change
- Human needs and requirements for becoming a more humane and egalitarian society
- The ethical dimensions of social conflict and ways in which it can be addressed
- Diverse cultural and class perspectives
- The ethical standards of professional behavior

Special requirements

Proof of competency with Excel software is a prerequisite for URSP 306; URSP 116 is a prerequisite for URSP 310; URSP 204 (or permission of instructor) is a prerequisite for URSP 332/ENVS 332; URSP 310 is a prerequisite for URSP 428; URSP 310, URSP 313 and senior standing are prerequisites for URSP 440; and URSP 102 and URSP 306 are prerequisites for URSP 502.

Degree requirements for Urban and Regional Studies, Bachelor of Science (B.S.)

General Education requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University Core Education Curriculum (minimum 21 credits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIV 111 Play course video for Focused Inquiry I</td>
<td>Focused Inquiry I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIV 112 Play course video for Focused Inquiry II</td>
<td>Focused Inquiry II</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIV 200</td>
<td>Inquiry and the Craft of Argument</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved humanities/fine arts</td>
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<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

University Core Education Curriculum (minimum 21 credits)
Approved natural/physical sciences 3-4
Approved quantitative literacy 3-4
Approved social/behavioral sciences 3-4

Total Hours 21-24

Course | Title | Hours
--- | --- | ---
HUMS 202 | Choices in a Consumer Society | 1
Approved H&S diverse and global communities | 3
Select six to eight credits of approved H&S general education electives | 6-8
Approved H&S human, social and political behavior (fulfills University Core social/behavioral sciences) | 
Approved H&S literature and civilization (fulfills University Core humanities/fine arts) | 
Approved H&S science and technology (fulfills University Core natural/physical sciences) | 
Experiential fine arts (course offered by the School of the Arts) | 1-3
Foreign language through the 102 level (by course or placement) | 0-8

Total Hours 11-23

Collateral requirements

Course | Title | Hours
--- | --- | ---
STAT 210 | Basic Practice of Statistics | 3

Total Hours 3

Major requirements

Course | Title | Hours
--- | --- | ---
URSP 102 | Introduction to Human Geography | 3
URSP 116 | Introduction to the City | 3
URSP 204 | Physical Geography: Geomorphology and Soils | 3
URSZ 204 | Physical Geography Laboratory: Geomorphology and Soils | 1
URSP 306 | Economic Geography | 3
URSP 310 | Introduction to Urban and Regional Planning | 3
URSP 313 | Research and Field Methods in Urban and Regional Studies | 3
URSP/ENVS 332 | Environmental Management | 3
URSP 360 | Community and Regional Analysis and GIS | 3
URSP 428 | Land Use and Infrastructure Planning | 3
URSP 440 | Senior Capstone Seminar in Urban and Regional Studies | 3
Urban and regional studies electives (Select nine additional credits from any URSP courses.) | 9

Total Hours 40

Open electives

Course | Title | Hours
--- | --- | ---
Select 31-45 open elective credits | 31-45

Total minimum requirement 120 credits

What follows is a sample plan that meets the prescribed requirements within a four-year course of study at VCU. Please contact your adviser before beginning course work toward a degree.

Freshman year

Fall semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UNIV 101</td>
<td>Introduction to the University</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNIV 111</td>
<td>Play course video for Focused Inquiry I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMS 202</td>
<td>Choices in a Consumer Society</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIV 200</td>
<td>Inquiry and the Craft of Argument</td>
<td>3</td>
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Term Hours: 16

Spring semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URSP 102</td>
<td>Introduction to Human Geography</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URSP 116</td>
<td>Introduction to the City</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URSP 204 &amp; URSZ 204</td>
<td>Physical Geography: Geomorphology and Soils and Physical Geography Laboratory: Geomorphology and Soils</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved General Education elective</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Approved human, social and political behavior</td>
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Term Hours: 14

Sophomore year

Fall semester

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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAT 210</td>
<td>Basic Practice of Statistics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIV 200</td>
<td>Inquiry and the Craft of Argument</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved General Education elective</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Approved literature and civilization</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language (101-level)</td>
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Term Hours: 16

Spring semester

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URSP 306</td>
<td>Economic Geography</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URSP 310</td>
<td>Introduction to Urban and Regional Planning</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved science and technology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language (102-level)</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban and regional studies general elective</td>
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Term Hours: 16

Junior year

Fall semester

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Hours</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URSP 313</td>
<td>Research and Field Methods in Urban and Regional Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential fine arts</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open elective</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Term Hours: 16
The course exposes students to a variety of themes in urban studies through the medium of film. Focusing on a selection of films and related readings, the course exposes students to critiques of the socioeconomic, historical, political and structural aspects of cities and regions. The works of noted social reformers, political reformers, and social critics will be examined through lectures, readings, films, slides, discussions and field trips (when feasible).

URSP 245. Housing and Community Revitalization. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. The purpose of this course is to examine housing issues as a major determinant of the make-up and the quality of community life in modern American society. Attention is given to the public and private forces that influence various components of the housing issue, such as: demand for housing; housing availability to various economic and social groups; housing design and quality (including new construction, rehabilitation, historic preservation, and adaptive re-use); housing finance and the relationship of housing to planning in metropolitan areas.

URSP 261. Design of the City. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Architecture, space and activities play a special role in the overall design of the city. These elements are analyzed to understand their interrelationships and importance to a city’s visual character. Architectural styles, civic art, effects of space on the individual and methods for designing cities will be discussed. The class is for those who want to understand urban design elements and for those who will be involved in city design.

URSP 303. World Regions. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An examination of the various regions of the earth, including land forms, climate, resources, peoples, agriculture and urban conditions. Regions to be selected each semester from Anglo-America, Latin America, western Europe, Eastern Europe, the former USSR, Middle East and North Africa, Africa (south of the Sahara), Indian subcontinent, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. May be taken only once for credit. Crosslisted as: INTL 303.

URSP 304. Urban Social Systems. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A study of the growth and development of neighborhoods, cities and metropolitan systems. Analyzes origins of community interests and factors that affect the ability of communities to further their interests. Particular attention is given to how patterns of service delivery and the placement of public facilities affect community interest and whether federal or municipal departments are able to set adequate community service standards.

URSP 307. Planning Theory and Practice. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Provides an overview of the history of planning, political economy of planning, role of planners, and its relation to governmental planning in the U.S. with emphasis on urban and regional planning. Surveys the history of planning, current planning practice and the ethical responsibilities of planners.
URSP 312. History of Human Settlement. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A cultural and historical geography of human migration and settlement over the earth. Topics may include agricultural and urban systems, exploration, colonization and imperialism, and changing relationships with the environment, during and since the Middle Ages. Crosslisted as: ANTH 312.

URSP 313. Research and Field Methods in Urban and Regional Studies. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: STAT 210. Introduces students to a variety of field and research techniques used to gather and analyze information to study urban and regional issues. Key topics include designing a research project, developing and implementing surveys, conducting focus groups and observation, analyzing data statistically; interpreting and reporting results, and utilizing secondary information.

URSP 315. The Evolution of American Cities. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. A general survey of how cities developed in the United States and the factors that contributed to the process of urbanization. Emphasis is placed on the public attitudes and values that have dominated particular periods of history and how these values affected the efforts to urbanize. The American city is examined as a vital force in the economic, social and political development of modern America, as the major location for conflict between people of all persuasions, and as the home of much of what is meant by American "civilization."

URSP 316. Urban Life in Modern America. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Restricted to nonmajors. Examines how a modern city functions, the public services rendered within the city and the impact of public policy on the city. The city is treated as a system consisting of economic, social and political activities that influence and are influenced by the physical/demographic environment. Each activity is studied separately with the cause-effect relationships among the activities highlighted by an analysis of public service delivery and, more generally, urban public policy.

URSP 321. Urban Economics. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: ECON 203 with a minimum grade of B or ECON 210. An introduction to urban economics, with an emphasis on the economics of agglomeration and the role of externalities in the urban economy. Economic analysis of the provision of urban public services and urban public financing, especially in politically fragmented areas. Crosslisted as: ECON 321.

URSP 322. Urban Finance. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: GEOD/URSP 306. Treats the local government from a practical management perspective as an organization in a political-economic environment. The nature of city expenditures and sources of revenues are explored. Budgeting and taxing decision-making processes are explored in depth. Economic impacts of these decisions on citizens are analyzed and implications for practice drawn.

URSP 331. Geography of Latin America and the Caribbean. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Examines the physical and human geography of Latin America and the Caribbean from an interdisciplinary perspective. A systems approach is used to concentrate on particular topics, themes and patterns that have broader relevance to the overall region or subregions (e.g. Central America, the Lesser Antilles, the Andes, Amazonia) rather than on the details of each country. However, in relation to some topics, case studies are used that may focus on a particular country.
URSP 398. Independent Study. 2-3 Hours.
Semester courses; 2 or 3 lecture hours. 2 or 3 credits. Prerequisite: junior or senior standing is required. Under supervision of a faculty adviser, whose consent is required to register, study a topic of concern to the student. Examines the role of cities in development of a variety of geographical regions outside of North America.

URSP 413. Policy Implementation. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. An examination of the administrative setting of government and its policy impacts on public programs, policy design and redesign, and evaluation and monitoring.

URSP 425. Labor, Employment and Regional Development. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Examines the role of employment and the workforce in regional development from social, economic and geographic perspectives. Explores the factors impacting U.S. employment patterns, such as the green economy, immigration and technological change, and their implications for workers and regional economies. Also examines policy approaches to address labor and workforce issues with special consideration of disadvantaged groups and communities.

URSP 428. Land Use and Infrastructure Planning. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisite: URSP 310. Explores how the integration of land use, transportation and other infrastructures (e.g., water supply, waste water and storm water) in urban and regional planning can improve development patterns to ensure sustainability and livability. Examines specific professional planning techniques such as site plan review, subdivision permitting and capital improvements planning.

URSP 440. Senior Capstone Seminar in Urban and Regional Studies. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: URSP 310 and URSP 313. Enrollment also restricted to students with senior standing. Requires students to synthesize knowledge gained in previous major courses and apply it through one or more field-based exercises. Also explores issues related to career planning.

URSP 461. Applied Planning Studio. 3 Hours.
Semester course; 3 lecture hours. 3 credits. Prerequisites: all core courses in the urban and regional studies program. Applying the principles and theories of urban studies, students work as a group in the preparation of a plan to address a real community problem.

Urban studies lab

URSZ 203. Physical Geography Laboratory: Weather, Climate and Biogeography. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 2 laboratory hours. 1 credit. Pre- or corequisite: URSP 203. Problem-solving and map-reading exercises related to earth-sun relationships, atmosphere, weather and climate, vegetation and soils.

URSZ 204. Physical Geography Laboratory: Geomorphology and Soils. 1 Hour.
Semester course; 2 laboratory hours. 1 credit. Pre- or corequisite: URSP 204. Problem-solving and map-reading exercises related to earth materials, tectonics, weathering, erosion and landforms.