

# The Economics of Urbanisation



SYLLABUS

VU Amsterdam Summer School

22-26 July 2024

# ***The Economics of Urbanisation***

Date: 22-26 July 2024

Location: Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam Room (room TBC)

Hours: 36 (of which 25 are contact hours and 11 are independent work)

ECTS credits: 2 ECTS



## **Contact info**

- Course coordinator: Stuart Donovan, [s.b.donovan@vu.nl](mailto:s.b.donovan@vu.nl)
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## Course Description

Over half the world's population now live in cities and, within a few decades, the population of urban areas will exceed the entire global population today. Ongoing urbanisation presents opportunities and challenges that are of interest to policy makers and researchers.

In this course, you will learn about the economic forces that underpin urbanisation and shape cities. Along the way, you will be equipped with knowledge and skills that help answer questions such as:

- Why does an increasing share of the global population live in cities?
- What do some cities thrive, while others struggle?
- What can cities do to improve their prospects?

To gain insight into these questions, students will participate in lectures, self-directed work, and field visits that shed light on the past and future development of Amsterdam.

Amsterdam provides a unique base to learn about cities. From humble beginnings as a bridge over the river Amstel, Amsterdam rose to prominence during the 17th century as it became a centre of international trade. Today, Amsterdam forms part of a large, prosperous, and inter-connected core metropolitan region that sits at the very heart of Europe.

This summer course is delivered by the Department of Spatial Economics at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, whose 60 staff members are actively engaged in multi-disciplinary academic research and policy development. Publications by the Department's staff are internationally recognised and rank in the top 5% of institutions worldwide in relevant economic disciplines. Many staff also have prominent advisory roles for government and media institutions, linking research to practice.

## Learning Objectives

- Have a solid understanding of the economic mechanisms that drive urbanisation and determine why some cities are more successful than others.
- Gain insight into the policy challenges facing urban areas and the sorts of policy instruments that can be used to tackle these challenges.
- Develop experience in conducting and presenting applied research, including evaluation methodologies used in benefit-cost analysis.

## Field Visits:

[Amsterdam Zuidas Information Centre](#) Friday 26 July (TBC)

## Content

*Content:* Lecture slides and background reading (primarily academic papers).

## Assessment

*Participation (25%):* As determined by class attendance and participation. To pass the course, students must score at least 75% on the participation component. Where students are present for part of class, for example because they are late, then partial credit for that class may be awarded.

*Policy paper (75%):* Students are asked to deliver an economic policy paper on an issue of their choice that is facing a region or city of their choice. The intended audience for the policy paper is senior managers and elected representatives in the region/city. The policy paper should communicate key economic aspects of the issue, such as efficiency and/or distributional considerations, and present

options for how it might be addressed, along with a discussion of their relative merits, e.g. quantitative or preferably qualitative assessment of benefits and costs. Further information on the policy paper will be provided to Students prior to the beginning of the course.

### Timelines

The table below summarizes assessment components along with associated weights and due dates.

Assessment component	Weight	Due dates
1. Participation	25%	Friday 26 July
2. Policy paper	75%	Sunday 4 August

Individual deliverables will be graded on a percentage basis, divided by ten, and rounded to one decimal place. For example, if you score 57% on the policy paper, then your grade for this element is 5.7. Grades for each individual element will then be combined using the weights shown in the table above and finally rounded to the nearest 0.5. For example, if your final weighted score is 7.2, then you will receive a grade of 7.0 for the course. To pass the course students must have:

- A minimum of 5.0 for the final weighted-average score;
- A minimum of 7.5 for attendance/participation; and

The International Office is able convert the final weighted-average grade under the Dutch system into the international A-F grading system. Detailed information for assessment components will be provided to students during the course.

### Course schedule

The following table summarizes the course schedule. Notes:

- This course schedule may change over time. When this occurs, the course coordinator will upload an updated syllabus to the course page on Canvas and notify students.
- This schedule provides for 25 contact hours and 4 hours of individual work. In addition to the latter, students are expected schedule another 7 hours of individual work.

Day	Date	Name	Start	End
Monday	22-Jul	Campus introduction	09:00	10:00
		L1: Course introduction	10:00	11:00
		L2: Amsterdam: Past and present	11:00	12:30
		Lunch	12:30	13:15
		L3: Countries, regions, & cities	13:15	15:00
		Pub Quiz (on campus)	15:00	-
Tuesday	23-Jul	Content Q&A	8:30	9:00
		L4: Monocentric city	9:00	10:30
		Morning break	10:30	10:45
		L5: Spatial equilibrium	10:45	12:30
		Lunch	12:30	13:15
		L6: Agglomeration economies	13:15	14:45
		Afternoon break	14:45	15:00
		L7: Transport economics	15:00	16:30
Wednesday	24-Jul	Content Q&A	08:30	09:00
		L8: Housing development	09:00	10:30
		Morning break	10:30	10:45
		L9: Heterogeneity and sorting	10:45	12:30
		Lunch (social program)	12:30	13:15
Thursday	25-Jul	Content Q&A	8:30	9:00
		L10: Environmental sustainability	9:00	10:30
		Morning break	10:30	10:45
		L11: Social sustainability	10:45	12:30
		Lunch	12:30	13:15
		L12: Technology and policy	13:15	14:45
		Afternoon break	14:45	15:00
		L13: Economic policy analysis	15:00	16:30
Friday	26-Jul	Content Q&A	8:30	9:00
		L14: Course summary	9:00	10:00
		Morning break	10:00	10:15
		Site visit: Amsterdam Zuidas	10:15	12:15

