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## UP 545 Economic Development Policy and Planning

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Course Sessions: Mondays and Wednesdays 2 – 3:20 PM, Temple Hoyne Buell Hall, Room 223

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

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This course will ask you to absorb a lot of information about the theory, the practice and the expanding conceptual boundaries of economic development. The ultimate skill to take away from this class is the ability to understand how economies work and fail and, most important, how the conceptual foundation of economic development is shifting under our feet. Some discrete goals for the class:

**Understand textbook economic thinking, its popularity and its limits.** Supply and demand, preferences, costs, and scarcity are all extremely important. Even after a career of thinking about them, one observes new aspects of them, and new implications, almost daily. At the same time, these core economics concepts just can't tell us that much about how cities actually operate, grow and change. One of my ambitions for this course is for you to learn economics as a kind of language, a strategic way in which to convey (or fail to convey!) important ideas about cities, policy, power and decision making.

**Become a master of the uncharted territory we're entering.** Traditional economic and political-economic ideas about cities are breaking down left and right. Young people enter their adult lives with hideous educational debts that change their spending, ambitions and decisions. Economic growth no longer guarantees income growth. We have cars without drivers, dying industries, industries that "make" information rather than things, and a generation of Americans who reject (supposedly) secure jobs for underemployment and urban amenities. Covid and the CARES act have sped up these transformations, but the class will emphasize the continuity of our crisis with prior, structural and still unresolved economic shifts. Rather than treat these changes as curious exceptions to tried-and-true rules, this course will foreground them: Old ideas offer less and less information about urban economies, and you'll thrive professionally if you can be smarter than your peers about these changes.

**Learn something about urban politics, and its constraints.** Economic development decisions are at their core political decisions about how resources are used, for whom, and with which goals. A basic problem of (most) economic development textbooks and teaching is that it pretends that *identifying* good ideas is the same thing as *persuading people to enact them*. It's not. Nor is there a such thing as an "economic developer." Power looks different everywhere. Individual cities have budgets that are high or low, good or bad credit ratings, centralized or decentralized authority, strong or weak regional policymaking bodies, infrastructure that's good or lousy, powerful or weak community groups – the list goes on. At the end of this course, you

should be comfortable thinking about power in nuanced, contextual ways – ways that will help you to be smarter about what is and isn't possible in the short and long run.

**Understand linkages between economic development and other planning specializations.**

There aren't a lot of interesting or rewarding jobs that focus solely on economic development. But thinking about economic development as a component of housing, infrastructure, transportation, land use, place-making and (especially) sustainability. Understanding these linkages will make you a better, more flexible practitioner – someone who is both more likely to get a good job, and more likely to move up within a given organization once you're employed.

**Learn to use economistic language for good.** Benefit-cost analysis and labor statistics historically played a kind of disciplining role in urban policy – they allowed economists to fit cities and states with a kind of fiscal straightjacket that accounted housing, education and social infrastructure as *costs* rather than *inputs to economic growth*. The class exercises in particular will train you in expressing equity-forward measures as inputs to the growth that economists and politicians covet. You will use the language of growth to elevate, rather than beat down, social investment. It's a handy skill.

## COURSE SUMMARY

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Despite a dizzying proliferation of policies and celebrated cases, urban economic development remains a relatively new field. It evolved in response to urban population loss and economic contraction in the post-war era. In its earlier days, the practice of economic development was transactional and political: It revolved around deal-making and aggressive plans enacted by cities struggling to maintain footloose employers. The past twenty years have brought a wealth of technical refinement to the field. Today's economic development practitioners and analysts use sophisticated metrics and intensive data to answer questions about the effectiveness of their policies.

The hard science of evaluation suggests that traditional economic development programs designed to lure big employers have succeeded modestly, if at all. The subsequent search for new ideas has led to a lively period of innovation and a truly eclectic mix of programs. Today, urban economic development includes everything from living wage campaigns to the study of industry clusters, to urban agriculture, green jobs and arts-based development.

Ideally, this course would emphasize policy evaluation, and provide generalizable conclusions about which policies provide able responses to development problems. But firm answers of this type don't exist. Evidence of policy success is uneven, incomplete and contested. Furthermore, policies are rarely as portable as we imagine them to be – a successful job-training or diversification program in one city will fit poorly with another city's problems and policymaking bodies.

Judging individual policies is a complex act with no template to guide it. Indeed, one of the fundamental pleasures of economic development work is the creativity analysts must use to disentangle a policy from the many real-world factors that shape it. It is not enough to determine whether a program succeeds or fails on its own terms. The successful analyst must contextualize her evaluation with a consideration of local and regional political institutions, alternative scenarios, the size of a region's underlying economic problems, the disjuncture between policy design and policy implementation, and the potential for successfully reproducing a policy among

different industries, different worker populations, different economic conditions, and different cities.

The course prepares you for these challenges by emphasizing the institutional and practical elements of economic development. Each policy we consider makes sense as a response to a particular problem. But diagnosing economic problems is itself a contested act, and economic development organizations rarely implement policies as they are drawn up. The readings reflect this disjuncture, and our journey through economic development policy will embrace both the conceptual and practical components of economic plans. In addition to a broad knowledge of economic development policy and its challenges, you should take away from this course a broader understanding of the economic life of U.S. cities. Economic development policy cannot be accurately evaluated without a careful consideration of the unique challenges and political limitations cities face.

## COURSE FORMAT

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This course covers a lot of ground in one semester. We won't be able to cover everything on the syllabus in detail – some conversations will run over, and others won't get the time they deserve. That's OK – the goal is to learn as much as possible. To that end, I've organized the course to help you assimilate as much information as possible in a short amount of time. Two aspects of the course are essential to this goal.

First, the assignments will anchor your development of data skills, theoretical understanding and practical experience. Think about your final project early on and discuss it with me – it's incredibly important to your development. You'll build a body of facts, evidence and ideas about a topic important to you. Second, this course was essentially and deliberately designed as a discussion-based course. Two of you will take charge of the discussion for every class session. We are all going to talk. **Your active participation in these discussions is essential. The class schedule on Canvas lists the discussion topic for each class section. Use it to guide your reading and prepare a few thoughts, questions or comments.**

The course works best for students who have an intermediate-to-advanced understanding of local data and analytical techniques. Ideally, you will a) have completed UP 505 b) be currently enrolled in UP 505 or c) possess the basic data acquisition, manipulation and analysis skills needed to make sense of local economies. If you don't have that background, there might still be very good reasons for you to sign up for the course. Contact me, and I'll help you make a decision.

## COURSE MATERIALS

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The course has no required text. All readings are available on Canvas.

## ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

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To do their jobs well, economic development practitioners must a) identify sound plans and policies, and b) persuade those in power to implement them. As a corollary to these skills, practitioners are also tasked with c) identifying weaknesses in existing proposals and d) making the case against poorly conceived but politically popular plans.

The course assignments will help you develop these skills. All assignments are due by 11:59 pm on the listed due date. Project management is an incredibly valuable professional skill, and I encourage all of you to plan your work in a way that minimizes last-minute scrambles. Due dates for assignments are not flexible; make your travel plans and schedule other commitments accordingly. If Canvas crashes or is unavailable, please send your assignment to me via email attachment. In fairness to all students, ten points will be deducted for late assignments, with an additional ten points deducted for each subsequent day until it is received. No exceptions can be made without formal notice.

ASSIGNMENT	CONTRIBUTION
Attendance and Participation	10%
Leading Discussions	10%
Reading Responses	10%
Economic Development Institution Map	10%
Foxconned	15%
Alternatives to the Texas Miracle	20%
Final Project	25%

Participation and Attendance (10%): Your active participation is essential for success in this course. You are expected to attend all course sessions and engage with the course materials and your classmates. You are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to class and come to class prepared for discussion. Course sessions will include instructor and student-led discussions and small group exercises. You are strongly encouraged to share your perspectives, experiences, and questions, and respond to questions raised by the instructor and your classmates. If you cannot attend a session, please contact the instructor prior to that session. Absences will only be excused if you notify your instructor in advance that you cannot attend or have a documented medical or family emergency.

Leading Discussion (10%): Everyone will lead two class discussions over the semester. Students will present an overview of the week's reading/s and then lead the class in a discussion. Discussion prompts should draw on the discussion board posts and build on the material contained in the other readings for the week. A sign-up sheet and more instructions will be posted on Canvas after the course enrollment is finalized.

Reading responses and replies (10%): Over the semester, you will post ten reading responses and ten replies on the course discussion board. Responses should be based on the assigned readings and other supplementary material. Your responses should be about 300-400 words and must be posted before class. In your responses, you should write about something that was important to you, whether you agreed with the author(s) or not and explain why; list the main argument of the reading(s) and react to them with one of your own; and explain how one or more the readings relate to each other, to you, and to the world. End your post with one open-ended discussion question for the class that emerges from the issues you raised in your response.

Your reply to a class member's reading response should be about 150-200 words. Pick someone's response that interests, provokes thoughts, even disagreement, and/or enlightens a subject for you. Please spellcheck your work and make sure it makes sense. As always, be respectful of other peoples' opinions.

**Conversions from Numeric to Letter Grades**

Numeric grades will be converted into letter grades using the scale outlined below. The course will not be graded on a curve.

<b>Numerical Grade</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>		<b>Numerical Grade</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
> 92.5	A		> 70.0	C-
> 90.0	A-		> 67.5	D+
> 87.5	B+		> 62.5	D
> 82.5	B		> 60.0	D-
> 80.0	B-		< 60.0	F
> 77.5	C+			

Detailed instructions for completing each assignment will be provided. Submitted assignments will be graded and returned promptly with detailed feedback. The general grading rubric is as follows:

- An assignment at the A level demonstrates original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis, and is clearly written or presented. Outstanding work.
- An assignment at the B level presents above average analysis with appropriate evidence to support the ideas and is clearly written or presented. Very good work.
- An assignment at the C level shows a basic level of understanding, with analysis limited to the most obvious arguments. Writing is competent. Adequate work.
- An assignment at the D level misunderstands or misrepresents the material or is so poorly written or presented as to obscure the analysis. Inadequate work.

In academic discourse, your opinions must be supported with appropriate evidence and logical arguments. Your grade will reflect the quality of your work and fulfillment of the expectations outlined in this syllabus.

## College and Campus Policies and Resources

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**Diversity:** UIUC is committed to equal opportunity for all persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, creed, age, ancestry, national origin, handicap, sexual orientation, political affiliation, marital status, developmental disability, or arrest or conviction record. We value diversity in all of its definitions, including who we are, how we think, and what we do. We cultivate an accessible, inclusive, and equitable culture where everyone can pursue their passions and reach their potential in an intellectually stimulating and respectful environment. We will continue to create an inclusive campus culture where different perspectives are respected, and individuals feel valued.

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) is committed to creating an environment of inclusion and opportunity that is rooted in the very goals and responsibilities of practicing planners. Conduct that interferes with the rights of another or creates an atmosphere of intimidation or disrespect is inconsistent with the environment of learning and cooperation that the program requires. By enrolling a course, students agree to be responsible for maintaining a respectful environment in all DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. We will be governed by the University Student Code. Please see the [Student Code Article 1—Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) for further details.

**Disability Services:** To obtain disability-related academic adjustments, students with disabilities must contact the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES). Please refer to the Disability Resource Guide (<http://disability.illinois.edu/disability-resource-guide>) for more information and inform the instructor of any requests at the beginning of the semester.

**Academic Integrity:** [The UIUC Student Code](#) requires all students to support academic integrity and abide by its provisions, which prohibit cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitation of these and related infractions. According to Section § 1-401, “students have been given notice of this rule by virtue of its publication” and “regardless of whether a student has actually read this rule, a student is charged with knowledge of it.” The provisions of the Student Code are applicable to this course. In written work, all ideas (as well as data or other information) that are not your own must be cited.

**Support resources and supporting fellow students in distress:** As members of the Illinois community, we each have a responsibility to express care and concern for one another. We know that students sometimes face challenges that can impact academic performance (examples include mental health concerns, food insecurity, homelessness, personal emergencies). Should you find that you or a fellow student are managing such a challenge and that it is interfering with your coursework, you are encouraged to contact the professor or the [Student Assistance Center \(SAC\)](#) in the Office of the Dean of Students for support and referrals to campus and/or community resources. The SAC has a Dean on Duty available to see students who walk in, call, or email the office during business hours. For mental health emergencies, you can call 911 or walk-in to the Counseling Center; no appointment is needed. The University [Mental Health Resources](#) website can help you decide what kind of assistance you might need and how to get connected to services for **mental health, wellness, access, and accommodation**. The resources on this website reflect many different approaches, ranging from personal counseling to forming groups to address issues in your school or work environment.

**Technology access:** The [Technology Loan Program](#) is a partnership established across the campus IT community to loan technology hardware to eligible students who have unmet needs. This includes loaning computers and internet hotspot technologies to support online learning and work-from-home activities for the duration of the Covid-19 crisis. Students in need are encouraged to contact the [Student Assistance Center](#) (SAC) at 217-333-0050 or [helpdean@illinois.edu](mailto:helpdean@illinois.edu). The SAC helps students understand university policies and procedures, connects them to campus resources, and supports students in crisis.

**Attendance:** It is the instructor's decision as to when a student's absences become excessive and should be reported. If in the opinion of an instructor, the attendance of a student becomes so irregular that his or her scholarship is likely to be impaired, the instructor may submit an [irregular attendance form](#) to the Associate Dean of the student's college. A copy is forwarded to the student, who should contact the instructor immediately to work out a solution. If irregular attendance continues without excuse, the instructor may request the student be withdrawn from the course. This request for withdrawal would result in a grade of F for the course. Extenuating circumstances will always be considered when supporting evidence is presented. See [Rule 1-501](#) and [Rule 1-502](#) in the Student Code for more information.

**Special Circumstances:** Please communicate any expected or unexpected absences with the instructor as early as possible. If you will be absent for a class period, you must alert the instructor before class to potentially receive an excused absence. Every effort will be made to work with students with unusual or unexpected obligations outside the course (family emergencies, health issues, participation in University sanctioned activities, etc.).

**Safety and Security in the Classroom:** Emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time. It is important that we take a minute to prepare for a situation in which our safety or even our lives could depend on our ability to react quickly. When we're faced with any kind of emergency – like fire, severe weather, or if someone is trying to hurt you – we have three options: Run, hide or fight. For more information, please refer to the General Emergency Response Recommendations at <http://www.senate.illinois.edu/emergencyresponse.pdf>.

**Sexual Misconduct Reporting Obligation:** The University of Illinois is committed to combating sexual misconduct. Faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct to the University's Title IX and Disability Office. In turn, an individual with the Title IX and Disability Office will provide information about rights and options, including accommodations, support services, the campus disciplinary process, and law enforcement options. A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors, confidential advisors, and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality can be found here: <https://wecare.illinois.edu/resources/students/#confidential>. Other information about resources and reporting is available here: <http://wecare.illinois.edu>.

**Writers Workshop:** The Writers Workshop contributes to the intellectual and creative activities of the University of Illinois by providing support for all writers in the campus community-- undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. The Writers Workshop provides individual and small-group consultations, hosts workshops on academic and professional writing concerns, sponsors writing groups and writing retreats, and visits classrooms upon request to

introduce our resources or to provide a tailored, interactive presentation. See <http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/> for more info.

## **SCHEDULE**

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Even long-term and devoted practitioners often struggle to answer the basic question of what development is. We begin the course by reviewing basic dilemmas – about the difference between development and growth, about creating prosperous people or prosperous places. You are unlikely to arrive at a firm answer to these questions – few people ever do! But you will benefit greatly from thinking through and recognizing these basic fault lines in how people conceptualize the goals and means of development. The schedule, readings and plan for each class session will be posted on the Canvas homepage.