
Urban Studies (MA)

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THE PROGRAM

The 30-credit Master's Degree in Urban Studies (M.A.) is designed for students pursuing both scholarly and professional interests in the political, economic, and social dynamics of modern urban life. It offers a particular emphasis on urban problems, public policy, community organization, the urban workforce, the administration of public agencies, and the delivery of public services.

The field of Urban Studies draws on the perspectives and methods of social science disciplines such as sociology, economics, political science and anthropology to analyze the modern city. Urban Studies students explore how cities grow and evolve, govern themselves, distribute goods and services, serve the public, and employ their residents. In addition, by selecting one of three Urban Studies tracks (Public Policy and Administration, Health Care Policy and Administration or the Urban Workforce) students will gain advanced knowledge and skills in their particular area of interest.

Students in the Master's Degree in Urban Studies program have the opportunity to learn from and work with nationally known faculty from The City University of New York, as well as with expert practitioners in the fields of public and health care administration, municipal politics, workforce development, labor and community organizing.

Career Prospects

Graduates of the Master's Degree in Urban Studies program are prepared for a range of careers in city agencies and government offices as well as non-profit institutions serving urban populations.

The program is offered through CUNY SPS's Joseph S. Murphy Institute for Worker Education and Labor Studies.

Admission Criteria

In addition to the admission criteria for graduate degree programs, a background in labor, related fields, and/or social science is an advantage but not essential.

Program Requirements

30 credits are required for the Master's Degree in Urban Studies. Of these, 15 must come from the core Urban Studies requirements. Nine credits must be completed in the selected track. The remaining six credits are electives.

Core Requirements

Students must complete fifteen credits in the following courses:

- URB 600 - Classical Approaches to Urban Studies
- URB 601 - Urban Public Management
- URB 610 - Research Methods in Urban Studies
- PADM 611 - Social and Economic Policy in the United States
- URB 699 - Capstone Course

Tracks

Students must complete nine credits from one of the following three tracks:

Public Policy and Administration

- PADM 601 - Public Administration
- PADM 621 - Policy Analysis
- PADM 701 - Practices in Public Administration
- URB 620 - Urban Public Finance
- URB 621 - Delivery of Urban Public services

Health Care Policy and Administration

- HCA 600 - Health Care Administration
- HCA 601 - Health Disparities
- HCA 602 - The Politics of Health Care
- HCA 603 - Evaluation of Health Care Policy

The Urban Workforce

- LABR 603 - Labor-Management Relations
- LABR 607 - Labor and the Economy
- LABR 614 - Labor and Immigration
- LPOL 601 - Labor and Politics

Electives

Students must complete six credits from the following courses:

- URB 620 - Urban Public Finance
- URB 621 - Delivery of Urban Public services
- URB 630 - Urban Social Identity
- URB 635 - Community Organization
- URB 639 - Fieldwork
- URB 649 - Independent Study
- URB 651 - Special Topics
- HCA 600 - Health Care Administration
- HCA 601 - Health Disparities
- HCA 602 - The Politics of Health Care
- HCA 603 - Evaluation of Health Care Policy
- LABR 603 - Labor-Management Relations
- LABR 607 - Labor and the Economy
- LABR 614 - Labor and Immigration
- LPOL 601 - Labor and Politics
- PADM 601 - Public Administration
- PADM 621 - Policy Analysis
- PADM 701 - Practices in Public Administration
- LPOL 602 – Work, Culture and Politics in New York City

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

HCA 600

Health Care Administration

3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine critical issues confronting health care administration, focusing on the public and not-for-profit sectors. Readings and discussions will cover a broad range of topics and will include comparisons of public and private bureaucracies. Students will analyze theoretical questions of health care administration and will address the real-world experience of health care employees, both managers and staff. Students will examine and evaluate academic literature on current and future trends in health care human resources, including: evaluation of employee performance and motivation of employees; health care financing, including the impact of managed care and the role of third party payers; union-management relations and collective bargaining; quality improvement in health care; training and staff-development; the nursing shortage; organizational justice; and diversity management. Students will draw on both their practical experience and the scholarly literature discussed in the course to develop a research proposal that addresses an administrative challenge relevant to their work.

HCA 601

Health Disparities

3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine in detail the manifestations of health disparities and inequities in the U.S., with particular reference to their relevance to health care policy and practice in New York City. Evidence of inequities will be presented with regard to major health indicators, including: incidence and prevalence of disease; differential screening, diagnosis, treatment, and

outcome; exposures to risk factors and preventive measures; access to and utilization of health care services; issues relating to the clinical encounter; biases in health research; and health of selected populations. Disparities will be studied through the lenses of race, class, gender, age, residence, and sexual orientation, as well as through the interactions of these factors. A variety of theoretical frameworks will be critically evaluated for their contribution to the explanation of the existence and distribution of health disparities. Although the course will focus on contemporary health disparities, some historical issues will be presented, particularly as these relate to the development of a contemporary research agenda free from the biases of the past. Within each area, strategies and policies for reducing or eliminating the particular health disparity and inequity will be discussed and analyzed. At the end of the course, an analysis and evaluation of broader policy issues will be presented.

HCA 602 The Politics of Health Care 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will approach the politics of health care in the U.S. by examining and analyzing the interests of the major stakeholders in the system of care delivery. These stakeholders will include the federal, state and local governments; hospitals; insurance companies; the pharmaceutical, tobacco, and food industries; organized labor; health providers and professional organizations, the public health movement, and consumer health movements. Among the issues to be considered are financial gain, control of health care resources, and process and power in decision making. The historical conditions that set the stage for the current role of each stakeholder will be discussed. Relationships among the various stakeholders will be assessed as will their contributions to fostering or thwarting universal access to care, equitable health treatment, health promotion and disease prevention, and health research free from bias. At the conclusion of the class, several case studies that demonstrate how politics actually works in the practice of setting health care policy will be presented.

HCA 603 Evaluation of Health Care Policy 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will present a variety of compelling issues and problems that confront the U.S. health care system today. It will examine policies that have been enacted or promulgated to address each of these issues as well as present alternative policies that address access to care and equity in services. These policies will include legislation at the federal, state, and local levels; regulations and guidelines issued by agencies at each governmental level; and positions or strategies offered by advocacy groups. Each policy will be examined in terms of how it came to be and whose interest or interests it serves. Policies will also be analyzed and evaluated in terms of their effectiveness as solutions to the problems they address, their feasibility, and their relationship to the concepts of health as a basic human right, equity in health care delivery, and health promotion and disease prevention. Throughout the course, specific examples of policies that have been successful and unsuccessful to varying degrees in achieving these goals will be discussed and evaluated. In each policy discussion, analysis of how competing forces shape policies will be provided, such as how market forces compete with public need and how profit-making businesses and institutions affect health policy.

LABR 603 Labor-Management Relations 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course covers the development of labor relations in the United States, from the period preceding collective bargaining through the emergence of theories of management and corresponding stages of labor relations practice in the 20th century. The latter include the rise of contract unions, industrial relations in an era of unionization and collective bargaining, the crisis resulting from increased competition and globalization, and the subsequent transformation of American labor-management relations. Students will develop a comparative and international perspective by studying labor-management relations across advanced capitalist economies. Finally, the course will consider the future of labor-management relations, exploring the potential for adversarial or cooperative relationships and considering alternative models of worker representation.

LABR 607 Labor and the Economy 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course is designed to give students of contemporary labor an essential knowledge of micro- and macro economic theories that explain conditions of work, workers, and labor institutions. The course provides an overview of capitalism as an economic system, focusing on the principles and logic that underlie American capitalism in particular. Students will consider classical, neo-classical, and neo-Marxist theories and will explore the role of production and profits: competition and concentration; wages and work; technology; and control and conflict at the workplace. The operation of markets will be examined through the paradigms of supply and demand, competition, coordination, and market failures and limitations. Macroeconomic issues will be evaluated in terms of the "Keynesian Revolution," its challenges to the paradigms of economic thought, and the subsequent rise of government regulation of the economy through taxation, monetary policy, and government spending. Students will examine contemporary issues of particular concern to workers and unions, including

inflation, trade, internationalization, and globalization. They will examine how unions affect wages, productivity, and profitability. Special attention will be given to the political economy of discrimination and inequality, seeking to explore how disparities of income and the distribution of wealth are affected by race, gender, and class.

LABR 614 Labor and Immigration 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course explores the dynamics of immigration to the U.S., past and present, with a particular focus on its implications for the labor movement. The course covers a range of topics that are vital to understanding the impact of immigration on labor, such as: the “push” and “pull” factors that shape migration flows; the characteristics of the distinctive waves of migration to the U.S. over the past two centuries; the varying skill levels and world views of immigrants from different parts of the world; the historical and contemporary tensions between immigrants and U.S.-born workers; the role of immigrant social networks in chain migration and in immigrant labor organizing; changing notions of citizenship and the emergence of “illegal” immigration; the changing gender composition of the immigrant workforce; changing employer policies toward immigrant labor; the development of the modern immigrant rights movement; and the politics of the current immigration reform debate. Students will explore the ways in which the labor movement has responded to immigration in the past and currently, and examine the conditions under which efforts to organize immigrant workers have been successful and those under which they have failed. The growth of worker centers as alternative models for immigrant organizing will also be examined.

LPOL 601 Labor and Politics 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine contemporary approaches to political action employed by unions, including comparative studies of relationships between unions and political parties in the U.S. and Europe. In addition to studying traditional approaches to electoral politics, the course will examine alternative forms of political behavior, including third-party movements, labor-party initiatives, independent politics, and direct action. Students will analyze the logic and practice of these various political strategies, evaluating their strengths and limitations. The course will provide a historical context, beginning in the United States with reform labor unionism and syndicalism. Students will discuss conservative principles of “pure and simple” unionism and “pure and simple politics” as well as more radical attempts to build a labor/socialist party. Finally, they will focus on the history of labor’s continuing alliance with the Democratic Party, starting with the New Deal and continuing to the present.

LPOL 602 Work, Culture and Politics in New York City 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course is designed to provide an interactive overview of the constantly changing worlds of work, culture and politics in New York City. We will learn about where New Yorkers live and work, how specific urban communities develop, and assess how the cultural and political institutions of New York serve the city’s diverse population. The class uses an historical frame to situate the contemporary city, spending equal time on past and present inquiries. Field trips to significant spaces, and visits to and from NYC organizers, policy makers, artists and scholars will take place on a near weekly basis. Throughout, we will learn about New York’s key industries, trends in immigration, economic development, public policy, public and private space, popular culture, urban social identity, community organizations, and labor’s contributions to building the city’s institutions.

PADM 601 Public Administration 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine critical issues confronting government and public administration. Readings and discussions will cover a broad range of topics and will include comparisons of public and private bureaucracies as well as proposals for “reinventing” government. Students will analyze theoretical questions of public administration and address the real-world experience of public sector employees, both managers and staff.

Students will evaluate academic literature on current and future trends in public-sector labor relations, including material on performance management and the Government Performance Results Act, as well as “post-bureaucratic” models of the public-sector workplace. In this process, students will examine such key managerial issues as evaluation of employee performance; motivation of employees; organizational justice; diversity management; training and staff-development; union-management relations; and collective bargaining. The course will conclude with a participatory workshop on managing in the public sector, in which students will draw on both their practical experience and the scholarly literature discussed in the course.

PADM 611 Social and Economic Policy in the United States 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will explore the economic and political aspects of critical social issues, discussing a range of policies and policy alternatives that address these issues at both the national and local levels. To provide a framework for these discussions, we

will examine the relationship between government, the economy, and the variety of policy approaches historically employed to address social issues. Students in the course will focus on specific urban issues such as poverty; welfare; housing; health-care; public education; and urban crime. The course will conclude with an analysis of the public-sector labor force and the future of municipal unions. While the main focus of this course is on municipal issues and policies, students will examine both federal and local policies for economic growth, seeking to understand the relationships between national and local economic policy.

PADM 621 Policy Analysis 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course will introduce students to theories and techniques of policy analysis and will help them acquire the basic skills necessary to do analytic work. The course will begin by defining policy analysis and the various social models that underlie differing analytic and evaluative frameworks. It will examine the institutions, interests, and forces that shape policy debate and affect “delivery” of policy initiatives. Students will explore several models of analysis and consider their limits as well as their strengths. They will explore the role of government in implementing public policy and allocating resources. In that process, students will address a key question: How do the interests of social groups combine with access to the political process to determine who gets what and when? Finally, students will examine case studies of public policy analysis in three selected areas of study.

PADM 701 Practices in Public Administration 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course begins with an overview of the social, political and economic conditions that determine the nature of public administration in American cities. Students discuss the varieties of public organizations; the roles and behaviors of managers in the public sector; and the bureaucratic constraints that affect management policies and implementation. The course examines these issues from the perspective of managers themselves, seeking to understand concretely the actual skills, capabilities and competencies managers must possess in order to be successful. These include a range of personal, interpersonal, and group skills, designed to communicate, motivate and empower employees in the public-sector workplace. Students will focus on problem-solving, leadership, and decision-making skills as well as team-building and delegating authority. In the second half of this course, students will analyze and practice models of conflict-resolution in the workplace. They will take a practical approach, analyzing and evaluating a number of case studies in conflict resolution.

URB 600 Classical Approaches to Urban Studies 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course is designed to familiarize students with central ideas and debates in the field of Urban Studies. Students will do close readings of classic critical texts and will write response papers of varying types and lengths. In this process of reading and responding, students will advance their understanding of the literature and will enhance their analytic skills. As they “write across texts”—analyzing differing concepts, theories, and arguments—they will identify and evaluate various research methods used by scholars in the field. In this writing-intensive course, students will also hone their ability to develop reasoned, defensible arguments about critical questions related to a range of urban topics, including the effects of globalization and immigration on the contemporary city and its workforce. Students will make class presentations and critique one-another’s work, including periodic drafts of a final research paper.

URB 601 Urban Public Management 3 Credits

Prerequisite: None

This course examines the scope and range of urban public management, with the aim of defining and evaluating how services are delivered through local government and nonprofit agencies. The focus will be on government managers, public-sector employees, and public-sector unions. Topics will include the difficulties of providing human services through street level bureaucracies, theories and styles of leadership, strategies for making organizational change, and how to achieve innovation in government and the nonprofit sector. These subjects will be considered in both an historical and contemporary context, with special emphasis on the effect of the political climate on the management of public organizations. Using a case-study approach, students will learn what public managers actually do and will analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of differing practices in leadership and decision-making. Through case simulations, they will develop decision-making skills necessary for working effectively in public agencies, government departments, and nonprofit organizations.

URB 610 Research Methods in Urban Studies 3 Credits

Prerequisite: URB 600. The Prerequisite may be waived by permission of the Academic Director.

This course examines research methods used to produce and analyze accurate data on a range of urban issues. Students will learn how to frame research questions; which methodologies can be employed to answer them and why and when to use them;

and what tools of research are available and how to use them. They will learn how to analyze data to produce research reports with conclusions supported by reliable data. Students will discuss the theoretical and operational issues critical to doing urban research and will develop tools and techniques for conducting both quantitative and qualitative research. Students will critique and evaluate specific urban research studies and will make presentations, posing questions for group discussion. Finally, students will become familiar with statistical programs for data analysis. One week of class sessions will be scheduled in a Computer Lab for basic SPSS training. For their final project, students will work in groups to prepare a proposal for an urban research project. The topic must be approved in advance by the instructor. Drawing upon material from the course, groups will outline the research question (or questions); develop hypotheses; explain the methods used to investigate the question and test hypotheses; and justify the use of particular methodologies. In addition to submitting the proposal, each group will make a brief class presentation.

URB 620 **Urban Public Finance** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

This course explores theories, principles, practices, and problems of public financing in the context of urban economics. Focusing on the City of New York and its budget process, students identify and analyze sources of public revenue, including taxation, as well as types of public expenditures and how they are administered. In studying the budget process, students examine the factors that determine how public funds are allocated, including the impact of national socio-economic policy, problems of social and economic inequality, the role of state and local governments, the political actors and the influence of various constituencies and interest groups. During the term, each student will make a class presentation, utilizing a case study from recent New York City history that illustrates a controversial or problematical issue in public financing or public budgeting. The student's case study will be the basis for a final paper, analyzing the issues in debate and arguing for a resolution based on sound principles of public financing.

URB 621 **Delivery of Urban Public Services** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: URB 600

This course examines concepts and theories of social welfare and the development of social welfare policy, focusing on the scope and variety of contemporary human services and the urban institutions that deliver those services. The course combines both theoretical and practical learning, allowing students to draw on their own experiences as service providers in New York City or as recipients of public services. Students analyze the nature and function of public-service bureaucracies and evaluate how they meet the needs of a diverse and multi-faceted client population. In addressing this question, students consider the broad political and socio-economic context and the impact of social inequality, the role of government and regulatory bodies, and the movement toward privatization of public services. A central topic of this course is the role of social-service professionals, the range of legal and ethical questions they confront, and the array of technical and professional skills required to function effectively as a service provider in a complex urban environment. Students will complete final group projects that examine a selected urban public service provision sector and site. They will outline the service's function regarding social welfare, historical development as a public service, and its place within larger bureaucratic structures. They may conduct interviews with practitioners; engage in observation of the service delivery site; and apply their own experiences as practitioners. Based on this research and course readings, students will produce an analytic paper, and make a presentation, summarizing their conclusions, including an assessment of management practices and ethical dilemmas for practitioners.

URB 630 **Urban Social Identity** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

This course will identify and examine multiple and often overlapping forms of social identity, including race, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. Through readings, films, and other forms of cultural expression, students will explore the ways in which social identities are shaped and informed by the urban environment and – conversely – how the design and function of cities have been influenced by factors of social identity. In considering both cultural and economic aspects of urban social identity, students will address a number of key questions: How do the various factors of social identity intersect and how do they relate to class and class relations in the urban environment? How is social identity reflected in the nature, function and design of cities? How are public and private space defined and organized by factors of race, gender, sexual identity and class? How is social identity expressed or encountered in the workplace? How do social and government services address the needs of differing social groups and constituencies? In answering these questions, students will consider the relationship of urban social identity to issues of equality and discrimination, poverty and affluence, and power relations in the political, social, and work lives of urban inhabitants.

URB 635 **Community Organization** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: None

This course will examine the historical development and contemporary practice of community organizing. Students will examine why and how people in urban communities and neighborhoods have organized to protect their rights and their entitlements to public services, to acquire resources for development, and to improve their quality of life. Students will develop a historical and theoretical perspective on community organizing and will explore the range of issues around which communities organize. They will acquire practical knowledge and skills for effective grassroots organizing, including coalition-building and alliances between community organizations and labor. Through readings and presentations by guest speakers, they will gain familiarity with various models and strategies of community organizations in New York City. Following each presentation by a guest speaker, students will submit a 1-2 page paper, reflecting on a key theoretical or practical concept in the presentation.

The course is divided into three parts: I. History and Theory of Organizing, II. Organizing Tools and Techniques, and III. Issues and Case Studies. As a final project, students will work in groups to design a grass-roots campaign to address a particular issue or problem. Each group will make a presentation and submit a written report, summarizing the project and its desired outcomes. In doing so, students should utilize class readings and discussions and refer to historical, theoretical, and political models and examples.

URB 639 **Fieldwork** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: Permission of the Academic Director

- Class meets for a total of 16 instructional hours.
- A minimum of 6 hours per week of faculty approved internship is required.

Students in this course will combine a 15-week internship with readings and analysis appropriate to the mission and practices of the host organization. Host organizations could include municipal administrative agencies, government offices, unions, community organizations, and other urban-based institutions. In eight two-hour class meetings, students will reflect on their internships, comparing their experiences with those of other students and discussing them in relation to course readings on selected urban issues. Through a combination of field work and scholarly analysis, students will explore the relationship between urban theory and practice, and will acquire multiple perspectives on administrative structures and urban policy, including the policy-making process and the role of interest groups and various urban constituencies and communities.

URB 649 **Independent Study** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: Permission of the Academic Director

The Independent Study will be taken under the supervision of an instructor. The student will develop a proposal and rationale for the Independent Study, which must be approved in advance by the instructor. The instructor and the student will develop a set of guidelines for the course, including the scope of reading and writing assignments. These guidelines will be submitted to the Academic Director in the form of a course proposal and plan. Students will be limited to one independent study in fulfillment of the elective requirement.

URB 651 **Special Topics** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: Permission of the Academic Director

This course will offer qualified students the opportunity to study special topics within the scope of Urban Studies that are not covered, or are only partially covered, in courses offered. Topics may vary from semester to semester and could include in-depth study of particular urban issues or problems; comparative studies of urban regions; examinations of urban working-class experience; demographic research; neighborhood environmental problems; urban coalitions with labor and other advocacy groups; case studies of particular community or political mobilizations for urban justice.

URB 699 **Capstone Course** **3 Credits**

Prerequisite: To be completed in the student's last semester

This course is an opportunity for students to integrate and synthesize the body of knowledge acquired in courses leading to completion of the M.A. in Urban Studies. Students will work with the instructor to develop an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary capstone project that demonstrates the student's command of subject matter and literature covered in the courses. The project may take various forms, including independent or group research; an annotated literature review; or a media presentation. All projects must include an extensive bibliography and an analytic essay. Classroom sessions will alternate with independent supervised research and project development, including periodic submission of drafts.