

Urban Studies 360: Green Cities: Urban Agriculture, Sustainability, and Environmental Justice

Fall 2021 Syllabus: **Online course (synchronous and asynchronous)**, 3 Credits

Instructor: Xiaohan Gu

Asynchronous Hours: **Wednesday 9:30 am – 10:45 am**

Office Hours: **Wednesday 11:00 am – 12:00 pm (or appointments through Zoom)**

Email: gux@uwm.edu

Course Overview

Urbanization, with a pace that is growing ever faster, prompts both opportunities and challenges to satisfy the needs of the ballooning urban population. While this may boost technological innovations, economic growth, as well as more efficient and integrated lifestyles; the fast-paced urbanization leads to predicaments when our urban lifestyles counter resilient environmental stewardship and worsen social equity. Thus, sustainable development, by its very definition, brings hope to the establishment of a thriving and just urban environment, and a remedy to the dire ecological damages and deterioration caused by human beings.

Before desperately embracing sustainability as the panacea-like guidelines to treat the current conditions for humanity, we need to understand the complexity of sustainable development; the challenges and the dynamics at play to establish a sustainable city and transform it into a greener one, and to evaluate sustainable strategic urban plans. This course, therefore, offers the opportunity to review, discuss, and understand sustainable development through academic readings, book chapters, and case studies, with the integration of the ReFresh Milwaukee Plan (City of Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023).

Theories and practices are presented during the course to explain the complicated relationships between components of sustainable development and urban society through focuses on concepts, policy, justice, production, consumption, infrastructure, transportation, technology, and urban change. The purpose of the course is to support the establishment of critical and analytical thinking of urbanization and sustainability. Urban sustainability, through the observations and topics of the course, may reveal itself as problematic, contradictory, and sometimes seemingly unachievable, but it is nevertheless important for presenting our disagreement of existing urban development and our hopes for the creation of a more resilient and just city.

UW Shared Learning Credit and Social Science Credit

This is a Social Science course that fulfills part of the General Education Requirements (GER). The course will address the following GER Social Science learning objectives through a variety of assignments and assessments detailed below:

1. UW System Shared Learning (SL) Goals Assessed:

Individual, social, and environmental responsibility including civic knowledge and engagement (both local and global), ethical reasoning, and action.

2. GER Social Science (SS) Goals Assessed:

Students will be able to:

A) recognize and analyze intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development;

B) identify and critically evaluate the function, structure and development of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures and interrelationships.

UW System Shared Learning Goals	Social Science Learning Objectives
Students will identify how environmental, cultural, spatial, social, and economic components to urban sustainability efforts influence actors, institutions, and the production of space at both the global and local scale by analyzing different scholarly work, practical cases, and Milwaukee’s sustainability plan.	Students will be exposed to readings drawn from the social sciences, humanities, urban environmental history, and urban planning to better understand how urban sustainability efforts are contested.
	Students will identify connections between the governance of urban sustainability efforts and its effects on the urban landscape, and on populations of varying socioeconomic backgrounds.

Course Format

The current course will be taught online through the Canvas site with asynchronous and synchronous sessions; all students must attend both sessions to properly participate and succeed in this course. Details will be described in the Course Structure section below.

Students must have access to the Internet, inadequate Internet access will not be accepted as an excuse for a late assignment. Assigned readings, lecture materials, and videos will be posted on Canvas under the week in which they are assigned. If you have trouble with Canvas or you have not used it yet, please see the following information on accessing and navigating Canvas. Please contact the UWM Help Desk, as described below, if you have questions about these requirements.

To find and browse the Canvas web site:

1. Go to the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee website: <https://uwm.edu>.
2. Click on the top bar “Current Students”, and then, on the drop-down menu, click on “Canvas”.
3. Click on the button that says “Log Into Canvas” to access Canvas using your UWM ePanther account.

4. On the “Dashboard” page, you will see your active courses. On Canvas, this course is titled “**Urban Studies 360: Green Cities, Urban Agriculture, Sustainability, and Environmental Justice**”.
5. Click on the course title to enter the course and start exploring the content.
6. If you have difficulty getting into the course web site, please close your web browser completely and open it up again. Then, try logging on again using the instructions above. If you do not know your ePanther username or password, please get help as indicated below.

What to do if you have problems with Canvas:

If you have any difficulties with Canvas, including problems with your login (e.g., you forgot your password, or if you just can’t get on), please contact the UWM Help Desk by doing one of the following:

- Call the UWM Help Desk at (414) 229-4040 or toll-free at 1-877-381-3459
- Call the CETL Learning Technology desk at (414) 229-4319

Course Materials

All related course materials are available online on Canvas.

Most of the current course materials are scholarly articles, book chapters, and chapters from the City of Milwaukee’s 2013-2023 Sustainability Plan: “ReFresh MKE” (in PDF). Others include online articles and videos from different urban studies platforms and news sources/media (with accessible links available on Canvas).

Course Structure

This course is separated into two sections: the asynchronous section and the synchronous section. The asynchronous section consists of course lectures that should be reviewed before our weekly discussion sessions; the synchronous section consists of debates and discussions that are related to our weekly topics and the ReFresh Milwaukee Plan.

1. Asynchronous Section

- All the course lectures are available online on Canvas. This is required content to complete each week before our synchronous discussion, but we are not required to be online at the same time for this session.
- New course content will open each week on Sunday at 12:00 AM. Due dates of reflections will be listed within the assignment. In general, **discussion reflections are due Fridays at 11:59 PM each week, all assignments should be submitted through Canvas.**
- The final reflection will be due on specific dates and times indicated in the syllabus and within the assignment page on Canvas.
- Future weeks’ assignments will not open until the previous week has ended (all the reading materials for this course will be available and accessible from the start of the semester on Canvas).

2. Synchronous Section

- All discussion sessions will be synchronous; attendance is required.

- A signup sheet of debate topics will be available on Canvas after our first meeting. The finalized discussion schedule will be posted on Canvas.
- Depending on the size of our class, each student is expected to participate in 2 rounds of debates during the semester.
- Detailed debate rules will be available on Canvas and illustrated during our first meeting.

The course schedule below represents a complete list of weekly debate topics, required and recommended weekly materials that students are expected to read, watch, and/or listen to before our meetings. The instructor does not accept late submissions. Make sure that you are submitting everything before the due date and hour.

COVID 19 accommodations: late submissions will be accepted with a deduction of 20% of the assignment's grade.

Reach out to me if illness will require late submission or other modifications to deadlines. If remaining in a class and fulfilling the necessary requirements becomes impossible due to illness, please feel free to contact me to discuss other options.

As your instructor, I will trust your word when you say you are ill, and in turn, I expect that you will report the reason for your absences truthfully.

Finally, the current schedule and content are subject to slight modifications, but the instructor will notify the class at least two weeks in advance of any major changes.

Course Schedule

1 INTRODUCTION & GREEN CITIES – WEEK 1 (NO MEETING)

Debate Topic

- No debate.

Read

- America's Most (and Least) Sustainable Cities, Ranked.
- Koh et al. (2010) "Eco-Cities" and "Sustainable Cities"—Whither?
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 87-103)

Watch

- Sustainability - Full Documentary (42:14):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjrPilem30g>
- The Sustainable City of the Future: Copenhagen, Denmark (5:48):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUbHGI-kHsU>

2 SUSTAINABILITY: CONCEPTS & INDICATORS – WEEK 2

Debate Topic (Open debate)

- What is your biggest takeaway from the plan made by the city of Milwaukee?
- Will humanity achieve sustainability?

Read

- Bell, S., & Morse, S. (2008). Sustainability indicators: Measuring the immeasurable? (pp. 41-44)
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 7-11)

Recommended

Wheeler, S. (2005). Planning for Sustainability: Creating Livable, Equitable, and Ecological Communities. (Chapter 2)

Debate signup & Debate schedule available on Canvas by Friday

3 GOVERNANCE & POLICY – WEEK 3

Debate Topic

- If current development strategies are detrimental to achieving the goals of sustainability, the leaders at different levels should prioritize environmental protection goals even if some of them would hinder economic growth.

Read

- While et al. (2010). From sustainable development to carbon control: Eco-state restructuring and the politics of urban and regional development.

Recommended

- Lorek, S., & Fuchs, D. (2013). Strong sustainable consumption governance – precondition for a degrowth path?

4 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE – WEEK 4

Debate Topic

- Is gentrification intrinsically bad?

Read

- Wolch, J. R., Byrne, J., & Newell, J. P. (2014). Urban green space, public health, and environmental justice: The challenge of making cities 'just green enough.'
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 41-47)

Recommended

- Maantay, J., & Maroko, A. (2018). Brownfields to Greenfields: Environmental Justice Versus Environmental Gentrification.
- Walker, G. (2009). Beyond Distribution and Proximity: Exploring the Multiple Spatialities of Environmental Justice.

5 WATER & INFRASTRUCTURE – WEEK 5

Debate Topic

- Should water systems be privately or publicly managed?

Read

- Chini et al. (2017). The Green Experiment: Cities, Green Stormwater Infrastructure, and Sustainability.
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 61-67)

Watch

- Green Infrastructure for Runoff | Elizabeth Fassman-Beck, Ph.D. | TEDxStevensInstituteofTechnology (14:44): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAenu6Vshs8>

Recommended

- Van Oijstaeijen et al. (2020). Urban green infrastructure: A review on valuation toolkits from an urban planning perspective.

6 SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRIAL REDEVELOPMENT – WEEK 6

Debate Topic

- Should preserving and maintaining biodiversity be the only objectives when it comes to reclaiming previous industrial sites?

Read

- Loures & Panagopoulos. (2007) Sustainable reclamation of industrial areas in urban landscapes.
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 61-67)

Watch

- Redevelopment for Resiliency-Transforming Brownfield Sites | Colette Santasieri | TEDxNJIT (12:51): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8OetOf-B50>

Recommended

- Chen et al. (2016). Toward Sustainable Brownfield Redevelopment Using Life-Cycle Thinking.

7 FOOD SYSTEM & URBAN AGRICULTURE – WEEK 7

Debate Topic

- Urban agriculture would eliminate food deserts in cities.

Read

- Nogueira-McRae et al. (2018). The Role of Urban Agriculture in a Secure, Healthy, and Sustainable Food System.
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 29-34)

Watch

- Earthrise - Detroit's Urban Farming Revolution (24:23): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFJsXev3eU0>

Recommended

- Corburn, J. (2009). Toward the healthy city: People, places, and the politics of urban planning. (Chapter 5)
- Carolyn Steel: How food shapes our cities (15:37): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CLWRclarri0>

8 MIDTERM WEEK – WEEK 8

No class

- No required readings and posts.

9 JUST PLANNING – WEEK 9

Debate Topic

- Bottom-up planning promotes equity; while top-down planning only promotes economic development.

Read

- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 35-40)

Watch

- Susan Feinstein: Alexander von Humboldt Lecture: "Justice in the Neo-liberal City" (1:03:29): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HM5n4gQ_pGk

10 BUILDING & TECHNOLOGY – WEEK 10

Debate Topic

- Since it is everyone's responsibility to protect the environment, individual homeowners should voluntarily pay for sustainable upgrades on homes.

Read

- Jerry Yudelson. (2016). Reinventing green building: Why certification systems aren't working and what we can do about it. (Chapter 2 & 4)
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 13-20)

Watch

- Buildings of the Future: Net Zero Energy | David Shad | TEDxCSUSM (15:55):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bi-Zu09vX3o>

11 CONSUMPTION & WASTE – WEEK 11

Debate Topic

- Is our current lifestyle ethical?

Read

- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 55-60)

Watch

- Conscious Consumerism: Does it make a difference: (26:12):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6lx0i26ptuM>

Recommended

- Why renewables can't save the planet | Michael Shellenberger | TEDxDanubia (17:32):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-yALPEpV4w>
- García-de-Frutos et al. (2018). Anti-consumption for Environmental Sustainability: Conceptualization, Review, and Multilevel Research Directions.

12 ENERGY & POLLUTION – WEEK 12

Debate Topic

- Sustainable development and the protection of the environment require more global responsibility than equity.

Read

- Waldrop, M. M. (2019). News Feature: The quest for the sustainable city.
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 21-28)

Recommended

- Mazzucato, M., & Semieniuk, G. (2018). Financing renewable energy: Who is financing what and why it matters.
- Ray, P. (2019). Renewable energy and sustainability.

13 THANKSGIVING – WEEK 13

No class

- Happy Holidays!

14 MOBILITY & TRANSPORTATION – WEEK 14

Debate Topic

- Is public transportation more sustainable?

Read

- Hinkeldein et al. (2015). Who Would Use Integrated Sustainable Mobility Services – And Why?
- ReFresh Milwaukee Sustainability Plan 2013-2023 (pp. 49-54)

Watch

- The Future of Urban Mobility | Oren Shoval | TEDxJaffa (8:54):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TcBrchkBSBE>

Recommended

- Golub, A. (2016). Mobility and Sustainability.

15 SMART CITIES & THE SHARING ECONOMY – WEEK 15

Debate Topic

- Can technological innovations solve our environmental crises?

Read

- Reimagining cities from the internet up.
- Why we're no longer pursuing the Quayside project – and what's next for Sidewalk Labs.

Watch

- Where Are All the Smart Cities? | Phil James | TEDxNewcastle (14:27):
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7fNjH9_5fc

Recommended

- Martin, C. J. (2016). The sharing economy: A pathway to sustainability or a nightmarish form of neoliberal capitalism?

16 WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY – WEEK 16

Debate (Open debate)

- What is sustainability?

Final Reflection Due

- Submit final reflection on Canvas before **12/19/2021**

Course Assessment

Here is a brief overview of all assessments. See individual assignment guidelines on Canvas for details.

Debates (40% of total grade – 20% each)

There are 11 debate topics throughout the course (as listed above in the schedule), depending on the size of cohorts, **each student is expected to participate in 2 rounds of debates**. The signup sheet for the debate topics will be available after our first meeting, the instructor will organize and post the debate schedule on Canvas.

The instructor will provide specific rubrics for the grading criteria of the debates on Canvas. The schedule is subject to change due to the size of the class and unexpected scenarios.

Weekly Reflections (30% of total grade)

The weekly reflections consist of 10 required discussion posts regarding weekly debates and your thoughts. There are 11 topics throughout the semester, and you can pass 1 reflection post without penalty. Students are asked to briefly recap and reflect on the debates with knowledge acquired through the process of this course. **Weekly reflections are due on Sundays at 11:59 PM.**

The submission should be discussion posts on Canvas with:

- Debate recap (100 words, maximum)
- Comment (200 words)

Final Reflections (20% of total grade)

The final reflection is a well-drafted paper of 1,500 words of your critical and rigorous views of one of the debate topics we have had during the semester. Students are expected to provide coherent materials and examples to support their arguments.

Specific instructions and rubrics will be provided on Canvas.

Attendance (10% of total grade)

Attendance is required for all the synchronous sessions throughout the semester. If possible, please let me know in advance of the absence or inability to participate.

Extra credit (10 points)

There is a survey developed and assigned after the midterm to collect student’s feedback on the course for 10 points as extra credit when students complete and submit them before the due date.

Credit Hours & Course Workload

Urban Studies 360 is a 3-credit course. Based on federal and university expectations, students should prepare to spend a minimum of 144 hours of class time on preparation and work related to the course. Taking into consideration that the number of hours demanded of students outside of class will fluctuate based on the scheduling of key assessments, students should anticipate investing approximately 10 hours per week on the course.

Course Workload	Hours
Time reading, listening, watching, and absorbing required content (includes course overview content, and instructor’s content – text and/or audiovisual)	60 hrs
Time spent preparing and writing the weekly reflections (10 reflections are required)	18 hrs
Time spent preparing the two debates	48 hrs
Time spent preparing, composing & writing the final reflection	18 hrs
Total	144 hrs

Course Grading & Percentage Distribution

Assessment	Total Points	Percentage
Debates	400	40%
Weekly Reflections	300	30%
Final Reflection	200	20%
Attendance	100	10%
Total	1,000	100%

Grading Scale	
A 93-100%	C 73-75%
A- 90-92%	C- 70-72%
B+ 86-89%	D+ 66-69%
B 83-85%	D 63-65%
B- 80-82%	D- 60-62%
C+ 76-79%	F 59% or below

Academic Conduct

You are expected to do your own work in this class and properly cite any ideas or quotes from other sources. Citations should follow a generally accepted format (APA, MLA, Chicago). Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct will be dealt with in accordance to the guidelines of the university. Academic dishonesty includes failing to cite published work or someone else’s ideas, purchasing a paper from another student or online, using another student’s work as your own, directly copying from a source without quoting the author, submitting your own work from another class, etc. Submitted material may be randomly run through plagiarism detection software. Any student caught engaging in plagiarism will receive a failing grade for this course and will automatically initiate the university’s procedure and policy on plagiarism and academic integrity. This can be viewed at: https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/wpcontent/uploads/sites/263/2019/07/misconduct_flowchart.pdf

University Policies

The Secretary of the University maintains a web page that contains university policies that affect the instructor and the students in this course, as well as essential information specific to conduct of the course. The link to that web page is: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/SyllabusLinks.pdf>

1. **Students with disabilities.** Verification of disability, class standards, the policy on the use of alternate material and test accommodations can be found at the following: <http://uwm.edu/arc/>
2. **Religious observances.** Policies regarding accommodations for absences due to religious observance are found here: <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S1.5.htm>
3. **Students called to active military duty.** Accommodations for absences due to callup of reserves to active military duty are found here:

Students: <http://uwm.edu/active-duty-military/>

Employees: <https://www.wisconsin.edu/ohrwd/download/policies/ops/bn9.pdf>

4. **Incompletes.** A notation of "incomplete" may be given in lieu of a final grade to a student who has carried a subject successfully until the end of a semester but who, because of illness or other unusual and substantiated cause beyond the student's control, has been unable to take or complete the final examination or to complete some limited amount of term work. https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_31_INCOMPLETE_GRADES.pdf
5. **Discriminatory conduct** (such as sexual harassment). Discriminatory conduct will not be tolerated by the University. It poisons the work and learning environment of the University and threatens the careers, educational experience, and well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Policies regarding discriminatory conduct may be found here: https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf
6. **Academic misconduct.** Cheating on exams or plagiarism are violations of the academic honor code and carry severe sanctions, including failing a course or even suspension or dismissal from the University. Policies for cheating/plagiarism may be found here: <http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>
7. **Complaint procedures.** Students may direct complaints to the head of the academic unit or department in which the complaint occurs. If the complaint allegedly violates a specific university policy, it may be directed to the head of the department or academic unit in which the complaint occurred or to the appropriate university office responsible for enforcing the policy. https://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S_47_Discrimina_duct_Policy.pdf
8. **Grade appeal procedures.** A student may appeal a grade on the grounds that it is based on a capricious or arbitrary decision of the course instructor. Such an appeal shall follow the established procedures adopted by the department, college, or school in which the course resides or in the case of graduate students, the Graduate School. These procedures are available in writing from the respective department chairperson or the Academic Dean of the College/School. <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S28.htm>
9. **LGBT+ resources.** Resources that support inclusivity of students who identify as LGBT+ in the learning environment may be found here: <http://uwm.edu/lgbtrc/>
10. **Final examination policy.** The final exam requirement, the final exam date requirement, etc. <http://www4.uwm.edu/secu/docs/other/S22.htm>