

ECON3230 Urban Economics

Fall 2026

Course Information

Course Instructor: Professor Jinyue Li
E-mail: jinyueli@yorku.ca
Office Hours & Location: Wednesdays 5-6pm, online on Zoom. Or by appointment.
The Zoom link is posted in eClass.

Course Time & Days: Wednesdays
11:30am-2:20pm
Class Location: R S117B
Course eClass site:
<https://eclass.yorku.ca/course/view.php?id=159761>

Course Overview

Course Description

Examines the economic performance of urban areas and applies economic theory to study contemporary metropolitan problems such as poverty and welfare, housing and land, transportation and traffic, and pollution and the urban environment. Considers theories of location to understand the existence and location of cities and the spatial distribution of alternative activities within cities.

Pre-Requisites: AP/ECON 1000 3.00 or equivalent

Course Credit Exclusions (CCE): GL/ECON 3320 3.00.

Course Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to use economic theories to explain:

- what a city is, why cities exist, how and why cities grow, and why property values and rents vary within cities.
- how firms and workers choose their locations, and how the firm's choice is impacted by the location of customers, other firms, and raw material inputs.
- the forces that shape land-use patterns and segregation within cities.
- patterns of education, crime, and poverty within cities.
- how housing values are determined, how the characteristics of a dwelling and its surroundings impact its value, and how the determination of housing values differs from the price determination of other types of goods.
- how transportation and transportation costs impact households and firms' choices, and how public policies and public provision of transportation options might alleviate certain transportation externalities within cities.

Course Organization

The course is delivered in-person with many hands-on activities in class. The format will be lecture + active learning because active learning is the key for student success and growth. For this reason, we will hold our class in **CoLearn Active Learning Classroom**, designed to support collaborative learning. Only selected lecture materials are posted online. Students are responsible for taking notes during the class. **Therefore, class participation is essential for this course.**

Required Course Materials

Required Textbook: Urban Economics, by Arthur O'Sullivan, Ninth edition, McGraw Hill.

Purchase options and costs:

1. Hardcopy of the textbook is available at the University Bookstore for \$129.95 +HST.
2. D1D eText: \$78 for 180-day access

Second-hand copies or previous editions are good substitutes and are acceptable.

D1D eText

This course is participating in York University's Day1Digital Opt In program. Day1Digital (D1D) is the preferred method for York University students to receive their textbooks.

- You can access the eText on the first day of the semester through an easy link in eClass.
- You can opt yourself in or out for the first two weeks (until Sept 23, 2026) at the beginning of the semester to take advantage of lower prices.
- If you remain opted in after Sept 23, 2026, your student account will be billed the non-refundable digital material fee (\$78). If you find a cheaper alternative elsewhere, make sure that you opt out by Sept 23, 2026, so you won't be charged.
- If you withdraw from the course before Sept 23, 2026, you will not be billed, even if you were opted in to the material at the time of withdrawal.
- Day1Digital materials are HST-exempt.

More detailed information are available at the Day1Digital website:

<https://campus.bookstore.yorku.ca/day1digital>

Technical Requirements

Course materials will be posted on eClass and office hours will be conducted on Zoom.

Need technical help? Check out the following helpful links for information resources and support:

- [Student Guide to eClass](#)

- [Zoom@YorkU User Reference Guide](#)

If you need technical assistance, please consult the [University Information Technology \(UIT\) Student Services](#) webpage or write to askit@yorku.ca.

Course Evaluations

Course Evaluation Chart

Assessment	Date	Weight %	Notes
Class Participation	Throughout the course	30%	Drop the lowest 2
Midterm Exam	Oct 28, 2026	25%	In person exam during regular class time
Final Exam	Dec 10-23, 2026	45%	In person, scheduled by the Registrar's office
Total		100%	

Class Participation

Attendance in this course is mandatory. There are three forms of class participation:

1. In-class worksheet to be completed in pairs
2. “Explore Your City” Group Project
3. Small group discussions

When and how class participation takes place will not be announced in advance. Students are expected to attend class and actively participate on a regular basis.

“Explore Your City” Group Project and Integration of AI in Classroom Learning

The “Explore Your City” is a research project that consists of five assignments to be completed in class (with the exception of Assignment 1). You will complete a worksheet and interact with a custom designed Copilot page (Copilot Agent), which will guide you through one question at a time. The Agent reviews your responses, provides targeted feedback, and prompts you to identify evidence supporting your economic analysis. It also helps students organize their findings and create visualizations for a mini in-class presentation.

- Choose the city you would like to explore within the first two weeks of the course.
- Students who choose the same city will form a group and sit together on the days when the project is completed in class.

- For Assignment 1, each student will complete the worksheet independently at home and come to class for a brief, one-step interaction with AI to generate the presentation.
- For subsequent assignments, each group will complete the worksheet in class and interact with AI step by step before the AI generates the presentation.

Assignments must be submitted through eClass by Turnitin. **Submissions through emails are not accepted.** Please see the section of Turnitin below.

Late policy: If you are late to class but class participation (1, 2, or 3 above) is already done, you will not be given the chance to do it. You missed the credit for this class. Please see the accommodations for missed participation below. If you are late but class participation is still going on, you can participate but you won't be given extra time to complete it, and you will be evaluated based on how you perform in the reduced time.

Missed Class Participation and Accommodations:

I understand that life happens. Circumstances such as illness or injury, bereavement, work or family responsibilities, technical issues or unforeseen/unavoidable incidents beyond a student's control, may prevent students from completing class participation. To support students fairly, **the lowest 2 class participations will be dropped and the grade will be .** **This means that you can miss two weeks of the classes without the need to notify me and will not impact your grades.**

Effective September 2025, the new **Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Missed Course Work** (see the section below) is in place. The flexibility in our grading scheme provides built-in accommodations that are designed to align with this policy. **The built-in accommodations are automatically granted for students, thus no further accommodations will be made for class participation, whether or not you self report an absence.**

Except the “Explore Your City” project, you are not required to stick to the same pair or same group for your class participation. In fact, you are encouraged to form a new pair or a new group every time, so you can interact with different classmates and learn from each other.

Midterm Exam

The in-person midterm exam is scheduled on Wednesday, Oct 28, 2026, during our regular class time at 11:30am-2:20pm in our regular classroom R S117B. The coverage, format, and duration of the midterm exam will be announced later.

Missed Midterm Exam

There is no makeup exam. If you miss the midterm exam for any reason, whether you self declare absence or not, your midterm weight will be shift to the final exam. In this case, your final exam will be worth 70% of your total grade. In the past, students usually do better in their midterm because midterm exam covers less and potentially easier materials for the first half of

the course. Therefore, this option of not writing the midterm exam should only be exercised when you have real emergencies.

Final Exam

The in-person final exam is scheduled by the Registrar's office. Final exam is comprehensive and covers all materials in this course. More details on the final exam will be announced later.

Missed Final Exam

We are now enforcing supporting documentation when students submit deferred standing requests. It means that student request deferred standing with health issues will require an Attending Physician's Statement. For all other reasons – travel, family emergency, death – students will need to submit documentation (in English) to support their request for a deferred final exam. Having to work at the time of the exam or non-emergency travel are not valid reasons for missing an exam.

Students must fill out the Deferred Standing Mach form

<https://www.yorku.ca/laps/econ/undergraduate-programs/academic-resources/departments/policies/deferred-standing/>

within 7 days of the original exam date. Students who do not submit the Deferred Standing Mach form within 7 days of the missed exam, will receive a zero for their final exam score.

Bonus Mark Activity: GNL Collaboration with Adamas University

The Globally Networked Learning (GNL) project promotes cross-institutional collaboration through joint research and policy design on urban transportation challenges. Students in this course will work with peers from Adamas University, a leading private university in India, to examine and compare urban transportation issues and policy responses across two cities. Activities will include policy research, policy brief writing, and peer review.

The three-week collaboration will begin after the midterm. Students who successfully complete the GNL project may earn up to 5% bonus mark toward their final course grade, and a GNL certificate issued by York International (<https://www.yorku.ca/international/globally-networked-learning-gnl/>).

Course Schedule

Important Dates

Explore York University's [Registrar's Office](#) to find a list of important dates, such as class start/end dates, drop deadlines, holidays and more.

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. We will try to cover as much of the material as time allows. I may change the topic in each week depending on how the discussion goes.

Tentative Weekly Course Schedule

Week 1:

Introduction and Key Concepts of Urban Economics (Ch 1 and 2)

Worksheet on Ch 1

Week 2:

Why cities exist? (Ch 3)

Worksheet on Ch 3

Last day to choose your city for the “Explore Your City” project

Week 3:

Agglomeration (Ch 4)

“Explore Your City” Assignment 1

Week 4:

Where do cities develop? (Ch 5)

“Explore Your City” Assignment 2

Week 5:

Consumer cities (Ch 6)

“Explore Your City” Assignment 3

Week 6:

Urban Land use: Land rent and manufacturing land (Ch 10)

Week 7: Midterm

Week 8:

Urban Land use: Office space (Ch 11)

“Explore Your City” Assignment 4

Week 9:

Housing Policies Small Group Discussions

Week 10:

Land-Use Policy (Ch 16)

Worksheet

Week 11:

Urban Transportation: Cars and Roads (Ch 18)
“Explore Your City” Assignment 5

Week 12:
Urban Transportation: Public Transit (Ch 19)

Course Policies

Please review the course policies in this section. All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information:

- [Student Rights & Responsibilities](#)
- [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#)

Academic Integrity and Conduct

Academic integrity is a fundamental and important value of York University. To maintain a fair and honest learning environment, you are responsible for understanding and upholding academic integrity in all courses and academic activities. You are encouraged to connect with reliable [on-campus resources](#) that support your coursework and academic honesty. To better understand the serious consequences of breaching academic honesty policies, familiarize yourself with the [Senate Policy on Academic Conduct](#). You can learn more about upholding academic integrity in your courses by exploring [SPARK: Academic Integrity Module](#), [LA&PS Academic Honesty](#) and [Academic Integrity for Students](#).

Turnitin

To promote academic integrity in this course, you will normally be required to submit your written assignments to Turnitin (on the course’s eClass site) for a review of textual similarities and the detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, you are allowing your material to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used only for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin service are described on the [Turnitin.com website](#). York students may opt out of using Turnitin. If you wish to opt out, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible.

Accessibility

York University is committed to creating a learning environment which provides equal opportunity to all members of its community. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this course, please discuss your concerns with your instructor as early as possible. For students with disabilities, contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) to coordinate academic accommodations and services. Accommodations will be communicated to Course Directors through a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). Accommodations for tests/exams normally require three (3) weeks (or 21 days) before the scheduled test/exam to arrange. To learn more, please visit [Accommodated Exam/Test Scheduling](#).

Religious Observance Accommodation

York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community and making reasonable and appropriate [accommodations to adherents for observances of days of religious significance](#). Should any of the dates specified in this syllabus for course assignments, tests, or deadlines conflict with a date of religious significance, please contact the instructor not less than two (2) weeks (or 14 days) prior to the date for which accommodation is sought. If the requested accommodation is for an exam or falls within the formal examination periods, you must complete and submit a [Religious Accommodation Agreement \(PDF\)](#) at least three (3) weeks (or 21 days) before the start of the exam period.

Academic Consideration for Missed Course Work

This policy applies to course assessments worth 20% or less of your overall course grade and does not apply to exams held during the final examination period. Students may self-declare two (2) 7-day consideration periods each 12-week term and one (1) 7-day consideration period per six-week term. An Attending Physician's Statement (APS) is not required for these self-declared absences. However, an instructor may request a signed APS for the final examination period, coursework worth more than 20% of the course grade and missed work outside of the self-declared academic consideration period(s).

Students can submit their self-declaration(s) for academic consideration [using eClass](#). Students are then responsible for contacting the instructor no later than two (2) business days after the end of the consideration period(s) to arrange details of any accommodation for missed coursework. If you do not do this, you may get a zero (0) on the missed work. Where courses have built-in accommodations already established, the instructor may decline providing additional accommodations under this policy. For further details, please review the [Policy on Academic Consideration for Missed Course Work](#).

Final Examination Identification Policy

For final exams in this course, you must present a valid York University official photo identification card ([YU-card](#)) to verify your identity. Also, you will need to sign the exam's attendance roster. Learn more about preparing for your exams by reviewing York's Policies on [Conduct of Examinations](#) as well as the Registrar's Office [Examination Tip Sheet](#).

Intellectual Property

Course materials are designed for use as part of this particular course at York University and are the intellectual property of the instructor unless otherwise stated. Third-party copyrighted materials (such as book chapters, journal articles, music, videos, etc.) have either been licensed for use in this course or fall under an exception or limitation in Canadian copyright law. **Students may not publish, post on an Internet site, sell, or otherwise distribute any course materials or work without the instructor's express permission.** Course materials should only be used by students enrolled in this course.

Copying this material for distribution (e.g., uploading material to a commercial third-party website) may lead to a charge of misconduct according to York's [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), the [Senate Policy on Academic Conduct](#), and/or legal consequences for copyright violations.