ENVR370 URBS370 **Urban Sustainability: Theory and Case Studies in Greece**

**Course Instructor:** Evangelia Chatzikonstantinou

No prerequisites required. Fieldtrips and educational visits are important part of the course.

### Course Description

Ten years since the beginning of the great recession of 2008 and as the discourse of sustainability is entering its fourth decade there is a need to rethink urban sustainability critically and in context. Drawing on interdisciplinary work in urban studies, this course examines the sustainability debate from a variety of perspectives and analyzes the, often conflicting, social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable urban development. In order to problematize the relevant discussion and connect it with the production of urban space we will focus on specific case studies in Athens and attempt to unpack the contradictions that are connected with urban development and the use of natural resources. The course is organized into three parts.

During Part I (Intro) we will trace the roots of urban sustainability as a concept and policy agenda, the evolution of the term over time, and the methods that have been used to define it. We will discuss the transfer of the relevant discourse in different contexts in the global North and South and its appropriation in Greece, taking into account the history and the particularities of the European and Greek city, the environmental and planning policies and practices, and the local administrative structures.

During Part II (Socio-natural entanglements) we will discuss about urban environment, smart cities, sustainable mobility and landscape design and we will study the complex city-nature nexus in Athens, focusing on the relationship between the city and the sea. In order to gain a better understanding of the notion of 'urban metabolism' we will visit Athens waste water treatment plant on Psyttalia island and organize the main field trip and semester project of the course at the coastal zone of Attica.

Finally, during Part III (Politics of space) we will focus on the 'urban', a crucial but often missing part for understanding social transformations, analyze urban regeneration, green and tourist-led gentrification, short-term rentals and other processes that are particularly intense in Athens in the post-crisis period of austerity, and evaluate environmental and urban policies and projects using the perspectives covered in the course.

The aim of the course is to provide a framework for understanding current environmental and planning debates, while engaging in a critical discussion of the idea and practices of sustainable development. Through studying Athens, we investigate sustainability issues and challenges that apply to other cities and through a continuous comparison method we learn that sustainability is experienced and practiced in a variety of ways. In this context, most of the questions we will discuss force us to think comparatively, study social and ecological relations across spatial scales, and from the point of view of different social actors and stakeholders.
Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify the key concepts of sustainability and connect them with the current urban debates
- Reflect on the contradictions inherent in urban sustainability theory and ‘best practices’
- Discuss and interpret urban plans and policies using the theoretical framework of sustainability
- Analyze the characteristics and the particularities of the European and Greek cities
- Compare environmental practices in different contexts. Identify commonalities and differences
- Examine the urban and environmental challenges in Athens in the post crisis period of austerity
- Evaluate the access to environmental ‘goods’ and exposure to environmental ‘bads’ in Athens

Course Requirements

1. **Class Participation**

   **Attendance** is mandatory and an important aspect of the class. Students are expected to attend each class and arrive on time. Unexcused absences will be reflected in the final grades. In case of illness please inform the instructor and the Student Affairs Office. If you miss a class or arrive late, you are responsible for getting lecture notes from your classmates.

   **Participation** in class and teamwork is crucial. Students are required to engage with the course materials in creative and critical ways. This is a discussion driven course. All questions, thoughts, arguments are welcome as long as they are thoughtful and mindful. Please turn-off cell-phones.

   **Laptops** are allowed for note-taking and referencing materials.

   **In-class activities:** In addition to lectures, classes may include activities that supplement the course objectives, such as quick writes, group discussions, and role playing exercises.

   **Discussion Questions & Facilitation:** Before the class, everyone is responsible for crafting one or more comments, questions or other brief responses related to each one of the assigned readings. You will need to post them to Moodle by 06:00pm the day before the class, so others have the chance to read over them before class. These comments will be also used by the discussion leaders to keep the discussion active. Everyone will be required to lead the course discussion at least once.

   All the readings, assignments, and handouts will be uploaded on the course’s Moodle page.

2. **Semester project:** The semester project will be introduced at the second part of the course. Its subject will be the study of the coastal zone of Attica. It will be organized in three parts:

   - **Main Fieldtrip:** We will visit coastal areas with different characteristics. Students will be encouraged to understand the social and spatial characteristics of Attica coastal zone through direct observation or with the help of the secondary sources. The information collected will be used to assemble the Field Lab Project, the Poster and the short Essay.

   - **Field Lab Project:** The class will break into groups to analyze and present what was found on the ground and propose ideas for the management / planning of the coastal zone of Attica based on experiences and practices implemented in coastal cities you have lived in and travelled to in the US or in cities you have visited in Europe and Greece (Nafplio, Kalamata, Thessaloniki).

   - **Poster & short Essay:** In the short Essay (1000 words) you will describe the public space and the local particularities of the coastal zone of Attica and highlight the challenges and conflicts that should be considered in order to implement urban sustainability practices. The poster will include the main points of the short Essay as well as sketches, photos, maps and other visual material from the Attica coastal zone and from other coastal cities.

3. **Essay Paper** on a topic of interest related to urban sustainability (2500 words). Note: All ideas and quotes that are not your own need to be property cited. We will use the Chicago Manual of Style notes and bibliography documentation system.

4. **Mid-term & Final Quiz** with short questions deriving from readings that we have discussed in class. At the end of the semester the lowest Quiz grade will be dropped and only the other one will be counted.
Grading

Grading will be used as recognition of work, engagement, capacity to communicate thoughts and work collectively. Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

1. Attendance & Participation  10%
   Discussion Questions & Facilitation  15%
2. Semester Project  30%
3. Essay Paper  30%
4. Mid-term & Final Quiz  15%

General Grading Rubrics *

1. Attendance & Participation
   - A range participation requires the student to attend class and always contribute to the discussion with questions and comments that synthesize across readings and discussions.
   - B range participation requires the student to attend class, prepare the readings in advance and sometimes contributes to the discussion with the aforementioned ways.
   - C range indicates that the student attends class but fails to complete readings before class and participate in collective thinking.
   - D range happens when the student has excessive absences, is frequently late, and cannot participate in thoughtful discussions.

Discussion Questions & Facilitation
You will only be graded for writing your questions and comments on time. You will get an A if you post them all on time and you are well prepared to lead the discussion the assigned days and a D if there are more than two questions and responses missing and you lead the course discussion in such a manner as to convey that the reading was not actually done.

2. Semester Project
The Field Lab Project will be graded according to the ability to collect information, combine it with your experiences and work together in a way that enhances creativity and critical thinking.
The short Essay will be graded on clear expression of ideas and use of correct bibliographic form.
I will take into consideration in the Poster grade the different data collected and the way they are organized and displayed together in order to communicate your ideas.

3. Essay Paper
   - A range papers are very well organized, with a strong, clearly expressed point of view written and presented in a way that exceeds the parameters of the assignment.
   - B range papers will have a good argument, are clearly written and organized, and meet the parameters of the assignment.
   - C range papers show effort to complete the assignment, however, present organizational and argumentation problems and do not address some aspects of the assignment.
   - D range papers demonstrate very little effort, are shorter or extremely longer than anticipated, with serious organizational and argumentation problems.

All assignments submitted during the semester should be the original work of the student. Any excerpts from the work of others must be identified as a quotation, and a proper citation should be provided.

* Separate and detailed rubrics will be given in class
Class Schedule

* Note: Schedule will likely change to adapt to class needs. Time and location of the fieldtrips and the days that the guest speakers will visit us may need to change. Also, the reading list will be subject to change to benefit student learning. The latest version of the reading list will be uploaded on the course's Moodle page.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Daily schedule/ Readings / Assignments</th>
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| **1** **Tue Jan 29** *(Week I)* | **What is urban sustainability?** *(INTRODUCTORY DISCUSSION)*  
**In-class Assignment** |
| **2** **Thu Jan 31** *(Week I)* | **Urban Sustainability** *(DOCUMENTARY & DISCUSSION)*  
**In-class Assignment** |
| **3** **Tue Feb 5** *(Week II)* | **The European city in history & the origins of sustainable planning** *(LECTURE)*  
| **4** **Thu Feb 7** *(Week II)* | **The Greek city in history: Athens as a case study** *(LECTURE)*  
**Essay topics** |
| **5** **Tue Feb 12** | **Dimensions of Urban Sustainability** *(LECTURE)*  
Lyle, John Tillman. "Waste as a recourse." In Wheeler, M. Stephen and Timothy Beatley,
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<td>Tue Mar 12</td>
<td>Peloponnese fieldtrip</td>
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<td>Tue Mar 14</td>
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<td>Tue Mar 19</td>
<td>Environmental politics and the Greek cities (INVITED SPEAKER: NIKOS CHRYSOGELOS, POLITICIAN - GREENS: SOLIDARITY, DEVELOPMENT, ECOLOGY. We will meet at the WELCOMMON HOSTEL, a hostel run by the social cooperative Wind of Renewal: Social Cooperative Enterprise for Social and Green Economy, Innovation and Culture)</td>
<td>Lekakis, N. Joseph and Kousis Maria. &quot;Economic Crisis, Troika and the Environment in Greece.&quot; South European Society and Politics 18, no. 3 (2013): 305-33</td>
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<td>* Essay progress</td>
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<td>Thu Apr 4</td>
<td>Spaces of crisis in Athens. An everyday life perspective (INVITED SPEAKER: NTINA VAIOU, PROFESSOR OF URBAN ANALYSIS &amp; GENDER STUDIES, DEPARTMENT OF URBAN &amp; REGIONAL PLANNING, NATIONAL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS)</td>
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<td>Tue Apr 9</td>
<td>Northern Greece I Thessaloniki</td>
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**19**

**Tue Apr 16**

(Week X) Current urban transformations, gentrification and displacement (LECTURE)


* Essay and Poster progress

**20**

**Thu Apr 18**

(Week XI) Gentrification research, methods and case studies (INVITED SPEAKER: AREAS KALANTIDES, PROFESSOR OF PLACE MANAGEMENT, MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY)

**Tue Apr 23**

Spring Recess

**Tue Apr 25**

Spring Recess

**21**

**Tue Apr 30**

(Week X) Gentrification processes in Athens: The area of Metaxourgeio (VISIT)


**Thu May 2**

Student Conference

**22**

**Tue May 7**

(Week XII) Poster Presentation and discussion

* Essay and poster submission

**23**

**Thu May 9**

(Week XII) Touristification in Athens: everyday life and housing markets (VISIT)

**24**

**Tue May 14**

Final Quiz