

DRAFT COURSE OUTLINE

GEOG 1023: INTRODUCTION TO CITIES AND URBANIZATION (FALL 2026)

DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Instructor: Pablo Mendez **Office hours:** By appointment (pablo.mendez@carleton.ca)

Lectures: Mondays, 14:35 to 16:25, location TBA

Tutorials: One hour per week; see your registration for day, time and location

Teaching Assistant names and contact: To be posted on Brightspace

Course description

Cities are a form of human settlement that has existed since ancient times, and perhaps for this reason it can be easy to take their existence for granted. Yet we shouldn't forget that cities have long been, among other things, key drivers of economic development, dynamic incubators of social diversity, and vital sites of cultural, technological and political creativity, as well as a critical locus of over-consumption, environmental degradation, and all sorts of inequality. For better or for worse, there is nothing dull about cities and the processes that shape them. It's no wonder that many commentators have come to regard cities and urbanization as the most important of human inventions.

In this course, we will aim to make the familiar strange by learning about the ways cities are made and how we all participate in their making. Our task will be to examine how urban and suburban areas have historically been shaped by various kinds of linkages between natural, physical, and social processes involving experts and lay persons alike. My goal will be to stimulate your interest in [urban studies](#) and provide you with a solid foundation should you decide to expand your knowledge of this topic in the future.

Preclusion: Precludes credit for GEOG 2400 (no longer offered)

Learning Outcomes

Students will gain a geographic understanding of urbanization processes and their variegated outcomes in contemporary and historical global contexts. They will also develop the ability to recognize the actors involved in such processes and to discuss the uneven influence they have on city making dynamics.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. Assigned readings will be available online or through the Carleton library (note: you'll need to log in to your account on the library's website to be able to access some of the readings).

The syllabus and information about the course will be accessible through the Brightspace Course Management System. You must access your Brightspace account by going to:

<https://brightspace.carleton.ca/>

Course Evaluation

Your course performance will be evaluated as follows:

Tutorial	30%
Field exercises (5% and 10%)	15%
Online midterm exams (12.5% each)	25%
In-person final exam	30%

Tutorial: As defined by [Carleton's Registrar's Office](#), tutorials are “required components that are linked to a lecture. They break larger courses into smaller groups of students in order to review material from the lectures, complete practice problems, or discuss readings related to the course. They are generally led by Teaching Assistants, and you are expected to attend.” You must come to the tutorial session having done the reading assigned for that day. There are two components to your tutorial grade:

- a) *Attendance and engagement (15%):* This component of your grade will be based not only on attendance but also on the quality of your participation and engagement in tutorial discussion. Note that the first tutorial will take place on September 21, meaning there will be no tutorial after the first lecture on September 14.
- b) *Tutorial “show & tell” (5%) and essay (10%):* On a specific date that will be announced during the first tutorial session, you will be asked to share with your tutorial classmates either two quotes from the assigned readings, or two images, or an object. Your quotes, images or object should encapsulate a key point or central argument made by the authors of the assigned text. If you choose to show images or quotes, you will post them on Brightspace on the day before the date assigned to you (24 hours earlier). Then, during the tutorial session, you will be given four minutes to discuss the meaning and importance of your selection. In addition to this oral aspect of the activity, you will submit a 300- to 400-word written version of your “show & tell”. You must work alone and submit your own work. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. Please use APA citation style in this essay (see the Library's citation guides [here](#)). The short essay is also due 24 hours before you are scheduled to present. More details (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in lecture and posted on Brightspace.

Field exercises: Using a digital camera, you will “go out there” and document specific forms of urban infrastructure and urban everyday practices, then prepare a field exercise report with the photos you take. For the first of these exercises (5%), your site will be the Carleton University campus, which you will explore during class time the week of September 28; you will use your scheduled tutorial session that week to start working on your field report, which will be due on Friday, October 2 by 23:59. For the second of these exercises (10%), you will explore parts of the city of Ottawa beyond the Carleton University campus in your own time, after the November 23 lecture, and submit a field report by Friday, December 11 at 23:59. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. You may work on these exercises in groups of up to three students. More details about the field exercises (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in lecture and posted on Brightspace.

Online midterm exams: These online exams will take place on November 2 and November 30 and will be written directly on Brightspace (campus presence not required). They will cover the lectures and assigned readings. The exams are open book, but you are required to write them alone and submit your own work. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT to produce assessed content is not permitted. Question types may include multiple choice, fill in the blanks, long answer, and/or essay questions. The second midterm is not cumulative. More details (including information about late submissions and extensions) will be provided in lecture and posted on Brightspace.

In-person final exam: The date, time and location of this cumulative exam will be announced by the University in October. Question types may include multiple choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and/or long answer. You will not be allowed to bring any notes or readings to the exam room. More details will be provided in lecture and posted on Brightspace.

Grades

Please note that email requests to “bump up” a grade will not receive a reply.

In accordance with the Carleton University Calendar, the letter grades assigned in this course will have the following percentage equivalents:

A+ = 90-100 B+ = 77-79 C+ = 67-69 D+ = 56-59 F = Below 50
A = 85-89 B = 73-76 C = 63-66 D = 53-56
A - = 80-84 B - = 70-72 C - = 60-62 D - = 50-52

WDN = Withdrawn from the course; ABS = Student absent from final exam; DEF = Deferred (See above); FND = (Failed, no Deferred) = Student could not pass the course even with 100% on final exam.

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean. You can access the grading system for this course at:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/grading/>

Retain copies of work submitted

Students are strongly advised to retain a hard copy (and electronic backup) of all work submitted and be prepared to provide it to the instructor in the event of loss for any reason.

Communication with the instructor

As you know, e-mail is excellent for conveying simple information but not a good medium for complex communication. Feel free to send messages to the instructor when you can realistically expect that your question can be answered in one or two sentences. Questions like "what are you looking for on the exam?" are inappropriate for an e-mail format. For this kind of complex information, please email the instructor to schedule an appointment and speak with him in person. It is important to include the course code in the subject line of all emails, to prevent messages from being automatically redirected to the instructor's spam email box. Messages that do not include this information in the subject line may not receive an answer from the instructor.

Artificial Intelligence:

For ethical, environmental, pedagogical, and mental health reasons, the use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT on any assessed content is not permitted.

Instructional & Conduct Offences:

Instructional offences include (among other activities): cheating, contravening examination regulations, plagiarism, and disrupting classes. Conduct offences apply in areas of discrimination and sexual harassment. Further information about University regulations which define and regulate these offences is presented in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/>

Note on Plagiarism:

The University Academic Integrity Policy defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, artworks, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, material on the internet and/or conversations.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings without appropriate acknowledgement;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own; and
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's work and/or failing to use quotations marks.

Plagiarism is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

Key to avoiding plagiarism is learning how to do research and cite sources properly. The following web site provides advice: <http://www.library.carleton.ca/help/avoid-plagiarism>

Writing Assistance

If you feel you need assistance in improving your writing skills, you are encouraged to get in touch with the Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS) at <https://carleton.ca/csas/>.

Academic standing and conduct

Students must familiarize themselves with the regulations concerning academic standing and conduct in the *Carleton University Undergraduate Calendar*. This document can be accessed online at: <http://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/>

Requests for Academic Accommodation

Carleton is committed to providing academic accessibility for all individuals. You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. The accommodation request processes, including information about the Academic Consideration Policy for Students in Medical and Other Extenuating Circumstances, are outlined on the Academic Accommodations website (students.carleton.ca/course-outline).

Student Life Services

Student Life Services, located in Room Nideyinàn 501, offers a range of programs and services to assist students in adjusting to academic life, in improving their learning skills, and in making academic and career decisions.

Student Mental Health

As a University student you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. See for example <https://carleton.ca/wellness/>