Course overview

Transportation moves us. Jobs, school, health clinics, grocery stores, recreational facilities, and more would be impossible to get to without adequate service and infrastructure. But history shows that the benefits of transportation have not been distributed equitably, and historically marginalized communities have had to bear disproportionate costs from transportation as well. More recently, planners have taken up the challenge of creating a more equitable transportation system. Achieving this goal, however, can stand in opposition to other important goals like efficiency and effectiveness. It is not an easy task. The purpose of this class is to come away with an understanding of the multiple dimensions of equity so you can ask critical questions of plans and policies that address all modes of transportation. You will also learn critical skills, such as survey design, public outreach, and data analysis, that will prepare you for equity-oriented planning practice.

Learning objectives

The overall objective of the course is to foster discussion about what a just and equitable transportation system looks like. By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Define transportation equity from multiple perspectives
- Comprehend the legal basis for equity in transportation equity in the US
- Describe how accessibility metrics can be used as a basis for equity planning
- Apply multiple methods to assess the equity of a transportation plan or service
- Understand how historical and current practice exacerbates disparities in access, health, safety, and economic opportunity
- Understand what affects the travel behavior of diverse population groups
- Discuss and write about equity using the language of practitioners, advocates, and academics
## Course at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment due</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Defining transportation equity</td>
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<td>Setting the stage: demographics and travel behavior</td>
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<td><strong>Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday</strong></td>
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<td>Project introduction; Guest speaker</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Transportation justice in theory</td>
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<td>Mobility justice in theory</td>
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<td>Historical impacts of transportation planning</td>
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<td>Practicum: Transportation data</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Legal and policy frameworks: Title VI and Environmental Justice</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>Practicum: Survey design; GS: Ashlee McLaughlin, CUUATS</td>
<td>Final project proposal</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td><strong>Class work session: Survey design &amp; implementation plan</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Class work session: Survey design &amp; implementation plan</strong></td>
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<td>Assessing equity in regional plans and public transit</td>
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<td>Practicum: Defining equity metrics</td>
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<td>Accessibility and equity: Indicators and empirical research</td>
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<td>Practicum: Accessibility and equity (1)</td>
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<td>Finance, cost, and pricing</td>
<td>Assignment 1</td>
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<td>Practicum: Accessibility and equity (2)</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>Spring Break</td>
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<td>Walking and cycling</td>
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<td>Practicum: Accessibility and equity (3)</td>
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<td>ADA and planning for disability</td>
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<td>Women and transportation</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
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<td>Advocacy; GS: Adonia Lugo, People for Mobility Justice (et al.)</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td><strong>Class work session: Accessibility analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Poverty and employment access</td>
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<td>Immigrants and transportation</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>Transportation, housing, gentrification, and displacement</td>
<td>Assignment 2</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Course wrap-up</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<td>Lightning talks</td>
<td>Final project (May 8)</td>
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*Note: GS = Guest speaker*
Course requirements

Course structure and assignments

This course has two components: active participation and discussion led by students and practical applications. On most Mondays, students will facilitate discussion based on readings or topical events. Some lecture will be necessary when we cover concepts and material that form foundation for the day’s discussion. These topics are divided roughly into four parts: (1) Background, (2) History and theory, (3) Practice, and (4) Issues. Many Wednesdays will be dedicated to practicum and project activities. There is no computer lab section but some of these activities may require use of GIS or analysis software; we’ll work together to make the necessary arrangements to complete these activities. This general schedule is subject to revision based on real-world needs of this semester’s project.

Assessment will be based on the following:

1. Participation in weekly online discussions
2. Facilitation of in-class discussions
3. Two assignments involving practical applications including data collection and analysis
4. A final paper on a topic of your choice related to transportation equity
5. Attendance and class participation

Online discussions

Each student is required to participate in an online discussion related to the week’s readings, available on Compass. Sometimes I will post a focus question to organize discussion, but in general students will lead discussion. Post a minimum of two times per week: at least once prior to Monday’s class session and at least once prior to Wednesday’s class session. (Ideally, your first post will be well in advance of Monday’s class meeting so others have time to respond.) Posts can be top level or they can be replies to another student’s comment. They must analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the week’s readings in relation to the topic, to other planning topics, or to your experience. They should not be mere summaries of the readings but they may pose questions and offer critical commentary. We will often use these discussion threads as the basis for class discussion.

Class facilitation

In pairs, students will lead one class session each week. These facilitated sessions will generally occur on Mondays and should aim to take about half the class time. They may consist of discussion on specific themes related to the readings, current events or other in-class activities. Students must submit a draft facilitation plan and meet with the instructor the week prior to their assigned date. Graduate students will be expected to lead two class discussions; undergraduate students will lead one.
Assignments

There will be two class assignments related to a semester-long project. The first will focus on data preparation and collection. The second will require students to conduct an accessibility analysis. More details will be provided separately.

Final paper

A final paper or project related to transportation equity is required. I must approve a one-page proposal before you proceed with research. More details will be provided separately.

Requirements for undergraduates: Don’t feel restricted to writing a paper. If you choose to submit a multimedia project, we will mutually agree on the appropriate length, content, and format of the deliverables. If you write a paper, it should be close to 3,000 words, not including diagrams, charts, tables, or references. You will briefly present your findings in 5 minutes or less on the final day of class.

Requirements for graduate students: If you choose to submit a multimedia project, we will mutually agree on the appropriate length, content, and format of the deliverables. If you write a paper, it should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words, not including diagrams, charts, tables, or references. Empirical papers or case studies are preferred. PhD students should submit a first draft of a paper suitable for submission to an academic outlet, such as the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting or a peer-reviewed journal. You will briefly present your findings in 5 minutes or less on the final day of class.

Grades

Grade percentages will be distributed as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduate students</th>
<th>Undergraduate students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online discussion</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class facilitation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation and attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</table>

Note that assignments are weighted higher for undergraduates, while the final paper is weighted higher for graduate students. Unexcused late assignments will lose one letter grade per day they are late. Discussion posts submitted late will not count toward your grade and cannot be made up. Notify me in advance if you have a valid reason to submit something late.

Readings

No textbook is required for this course. Readings and links to readings will be available on Compass. The list of readings is subject to revision throughout the semester.
Participation and attendance

Class participation, and therefore attendance, is mandatory at all sessions. However, I understand that life happens and you'll occasionally need to miss a class because of emergency, illness, religious observances, or other needs. There is no need to notify me in advance, but more than three absences will result in a lower participation grade. But do notify me in advance if you will have a prolonged absence for a legitimate reason. Whatever the reason for your absence, you are responsible for acquiring class materials when you do not attend, and assignments are still due as posted.

Course policies

Respect, civility, and inclusivity

We bring our own life experiences with us to the university, which means that we may have quite different perspectives about the issues we will discuss in this class. Any thoughtful viewpoints as they relate to the course material are welcome. I ask that you be mindful of our differences as you engage with your fellow classmates in a respectful manner. Skills in empathetic dialogue will serve you well as a professional planner.

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is rooted in the goals and responsibilities of professional planners. By enrolling in a class offered by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, students agree to be responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect in all DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. See Student Code, Article 1-Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part 1. Student Rights, §1-102.

Academic accommodations

If you need academic accommodations due to a documented disability, please inform me as soon as possible. You should also contact the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) as soon as possible. To contact DRES, you may visit 1207 S. Oak St., Champaign, call 217-333-4603, email disability@illinois.edu, or go to the DRES website.

Counseling

Academic settings can be stressful and it’s easy to get overwhelmed. If you feel that you need help, consider making an appointment at the Counseling Center (https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/). The Counseling Center provides a range of services intended to help students develop improved coping skills to address emotional, interpersonal, and academic concerns. Services are paid for through the health services fee.

Academic integrity

Don’t cheat and don’t plagiarize. Any work you turn in with your name on it is presumed to be your own. If it is not, and you do not attribute the work to its source, it is grounds for sanctions that range from a written warning to course failure to dismissal or suspension. Refer to the University of Illinois Student Code for more details.
**FAA writing services**

The FAA Writing Advisor offers one-on-one writing assistance to undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty. She is available to assist FAA students (and students in FAA unit classes) with classroom assignments; theses and dissertations; artist statements, short bios and program notes; grant applications; scholarly publications; résumés, portfolios, and cover letters; and many other kinds of documents. Weekly drop-in hours and more details are posted here: [https://faa.illinois.edu/current-students/writing-services](https://faa.illinois.edu/current-students/writing-services).

**Digital distractions**

The scientific evidence indicates, all else being equal, you are likely to perform better in this class if you stow away your laptop and pull out your paper notebook and pen to take notes. But I recognize that some people have organized their lives entirely digitally and prefer to use a laptop, while others may require one because of a disability. So, feel free to use your laptop or tablet for notetaking purposes or when otherwise instructed. However, I will ask you to put away your digital devices if we find your technology use to be distracting. Also—please turn off your phone ringers and keep your phones put away.
Course reading list and schedule

**Week 1: Defining and setting the stage for equity**


**Week 2: Demographics and travel behavior**


**Guest speaker**

**Week 3: Transportation and mobility justice in theory**


Week 4: Historical impacts of transportation planning


Week 5: Legal and policy frameworks: Title VI and Environmental Justice


Skim: FTA Circular 4702.1B, “Title VI Requirements and Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients,” but read the following pages: I-6 to I-10 (sec 6), II-1 (sec 1-2), Chapter III. https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/FTA_Title_VI_FINAL.pdf


Guest speaker

Final paper proposal due
Week 6: Class work sessions, no readings

Week 7: Assessing equity in regional plans and public transit


Week 8: Operationalizing transportation equity: Accessibility


**Week 9: Finance, cost, and pricing**


**Week 10: Active transportation**


Week 11: Americans with Disabilities Act and Accessibility; Women and Transportation

**Skim** through 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, but especially: Sections 208 and 209 (65-68), Chapter 4 (117-148), and Section 810 (214-218).


https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.03.025.


Week 12: Safety; Advocacy


**Skim**: Smart Growth America. 2017. Dangerous by Design.
https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/

The Untokening. 2017. Untokening 1.0: Principles of Mobility Justice.

Week 13: Poverty and employment access


Week 14: Immigrants; Transportation, housing, gentrification, and displacement


Review the “Housing and Transportation Affordability Index” website: [https://htaindex.cnt.org/](https://htaindex.cnt.org/).


**Week 15: Course wrap-up; Lightning talks**