

Urban Education (URBE)

Course information contained within the Bulletin is accurate at the time of publication in June 2025 but is subject to change. For the most up-to-date course information, please refer to the Course Catalog.

URBE 0855. Education for Liberation Here and Abroad. 3 Credit Hours.

This course explores educational issues in urban America and indigenous educational traditions in the "Third World." The course focuses on the connections between education and politics, cultural diversity and economics, and the existence and persistence of poverty in developing nations. Students will critically analyze international films, course readings, and presentations from guest speakers. Culturally responsive, post-modern, and comparative approaches are used to investigate the impact of culture, poverty and development, and the goals of education in each societal context. NOTE: This course fulfills the World Society (GG) requirement for students under GenEd and International Studies (IS) for students under Core.

Course Attributes: GG

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 1006. Schooling and Development in Third World Societies. 3 Credit Hours.

Development in Third World Societies has been defined primarily in terms of economic growth. Schools have been designed largely to support this process and serve the primary function of developing human capital. Similar patterns can also be seen in the United States. The course presents these and alternative definitions of development and the functions of schooling, and compares the experience of third world societies to that of poor people in the cities in the United States. While journeying through different countries, school systems, and cultures, the course also focuses on the "Third World" inside the United States. Here we explore how knowledge of Third World economic and cultural issues can help us understand the life and challenges of urban students from minority, working class, and immigrant backgrounds. Students also learn from experiences with urban and Third World groups with whom they are involved in service learning activities. NOTE: (1) Must complete 20 hours of community-based service learning activities. (2) This course can be used to satisfy the university Core International Studies (IS) requirement. Although it may be usable towards graduation as a major requirement or university elective, it cannot be used to satisfy any of the university GenEd requirements. See your advisor for further information. In addition to meeting the university Core International Studies requirement, this course meets the Non-Western/Third World IS requirement for Communication Sciences majors.

Course Attributes: IS

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 1909. Honors Schooling and Development in Third World Societies. 3 Credit Hours.

The Honors version of Urban Education 1006 (C060). NOTE: (1) Course requirements include the completion of 20 hours of community-based service learning activities. (2) This course can be used to satisfy the university Core International Studies (IS) requirement. Although it may be usable towards graduation as a major requirement or university elective, it cannot be used to satisfy any of the university GenEd requirements. See your advisor for further information.

Course Attributes: HO, IS

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 2320. Special Seminar in Urban Education. 3 Credit Hours.

A special topics course. Topic varies each semester.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 3990. Honors Special Seminar in Urban Education. 3 Credit Hours.

An honors special topics course. Topic varies each semester.

Course Attributes: HO

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 4301. Partnerships between Schools and Communities. 3 Credit Hours.

This course focuses on the theory and practice of education-related collaborations and partnerships that cross social and professional divides. Partnerships and collaborations in pursuit of social (rather than economic) goals have become increasingly prominent since the 1980s. This is true internationally as well as in the United States, and in many fields besides education. While we explore what these collaborations entail and why they represent an important trend, a major emphasis will be on learning how to become a partner and how to support and facilitate collaborations in settings that bring together participants from different organizations, professional orientations, and social backgrounds. In other words, part of the work of this class is for you to focus on yourself as a partnership practitioner, learning from your practice and experiences. In this class you will learn in multiple ways, but especially by moving between practice and theory, and experiential and academic learning. You will analyze written cases as well as develop your own by being involved in a collaboration/partnership. Do expect to do a fair bit of critical reflection on your own positionality, assumptions and experiences as they relate to the course. The class will be conducted as a collaborative seminar and you are expected to bring your individual and collective interests to the table. The urban educational landscape has also experienced a growth in community organizing around such educational issues as funding, governance, etc. The final part of the course will look at these types of partnerships. This course requires fieldwork. In order to register for this course, students must submit full clearances to the Office of Field Placement.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 4496. Understanding Urban Communities. 3 Credit Hours.

This course will introduce students to key issues in urban education, focusing on both formal schooling and informal educational settings. It will use readings from history, sociology, and political science - as well as the popular media - to provide students with a deeper understanding of the larger social and political processes that shape cities and their schools. The course will also cover such key issues as the achievement gap, funding inequalities, high school dropout, school violence, and various approaches to school reform. A key focus of the course will be identifying strengths and assets within urban communities and countering the "deficit" narrative that dominates popular perceptions of urban education. Another key focus will be on identifying promising practices within schools and other organizations that serve urban youth. For this reason, students will conduct research on possible policy interventions, study a particular intervention in depth, and write about that intervention. As a Writing Intensive course, this class will provide students with significant instruction and support in the following areas: conducting research on social policy interventions, evaluating sources, using research to craft an argument, and writing one argument-focused social science research paper and one policy brief. Students will be encouraged to make connections between theory and research on urban education and the challenges and opportunities they may face as practitioners.

Course Attributes: SI, WI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5401. Policy and Practice in Urban Education. 3 Credit Hours.

This course introduces students to key issues in urban education. It helps students situate urban schools in their broader social, political, and economic contexts, providing a deeper understanding of the ways larger social processes shape cities and their schools. In addition, it provides students with multiple lenses to understand dynamics within urban schools and classrooms.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5417. The Urban Environment. 3 Credit Hours.

"The Urban Environment" will provide students with an introduction to the historical, social, and political factors shaping cities. The course is primarily, but not exclusively, intended for education students and is designed to help students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the contexts in which urban education occurs. More specifically, the course will focus on the history of cities, including 20th and 21st century urban transformation, the development and persistence of residential segregation, urban politics and poverty, and trends in theory and practice around urban redevelopment. Students will, of course, be encouraged to make connections between course material and other issues in urban education or their own areas of specialization.

Course Attributes: SI

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5501. Urban Schools. 3 Credit Hours.

This course is designed to help students understand the social, political, and economic factors that shape urban schools. The focus is on both perennial and emerging issues affecting the urban environment and schools and on major policies relating to those issues (e.g., equity, accountability, and school finance). The class requires several critiques of educational literature, as well as an extensive review of the literature on a substantive topic related to urban education. Offered every Fall term.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5515. Service Learning and Community Development. 3 Credit Hours.

This course presents models for service learning with particular emphasis on those that contribute to urban community development and community building. Students conduct a participatory community study and design a service learning project that meets authentic community needs. Offered every Fall term.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5516. School-Community Partnerships in Urban Settings. 3 Credit Hours.

This course introduces models, practices, and theories for developing partnerships between schools, universities, community-based groups/agencies, and neighborhoods. Among the models studied are various types of partnerships, community organizations, family centers, and community schools.

The course emphasizes the manifold issues that emerge when partnerships involve participants who cross the boundaries of class, race, gender, professions, culture, and language. Field visits and fieldwork are included. Offered Spring term.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5565. The Origins of Urban Education. 3 Credit Hours.

This reading and discussion class is based on the most important secondary literature in urban history and the history of urban education. Philadelphia is used as a case study. Topics in urban history include the geography and functional differentiation of urban space; the political economy of cities; urban demographics with a special emphasis on racial and ethnic minorities; urban political and social institutions; and the site as educator, including regional and site planning and urban material culture. Topics in urban educational history include race and ethnicity in the history of urban education; the politics of urban education; the history of social class; and the opportunity structure in urban education.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5611. Reforming City Schools. 3 Credit Hours.

This course will examine educational policy reform ideas and strategies. The course content will focus on understanding the impact of educational policymaking on big city school districts and their local school contexts. Special attention will be paid to the urban social and political environments in which policies are made and applied, along with the challenges of racial and social class inequalities. Students will consider different types of current and past reforms, utilizing published research literature, popular media, and Internet-based resources to increase the likelihood that current debates in the field are covered. The intended and unintended consequences of educational and social policy will be examined as well.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 5620. Special Topics in Urban Education. 2 to 6 Credit Hours.

Topics vary.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 5630. Special Seminar in Urban Education. 3 Credit Hours.

Topics vary.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 8401. Urban Education and Policy Doctoral Proseminar. 3 Credit Hours.

This proseminar is intended to prepare students for doctoral study in urban education and beyond through readings, discussions, guest speakers, and workshops related to the "hidden curriculum" of academia and teaching and pedagogy in higher education. The seminar is also intended to support first-year doctoral students in the development of their research focus and individual goals for their academic program. Doctoral students will also develop their mentoring network and connections to faculty and their peers in the program, as each member of the Urban Education faculty will introduce students to their areas of scholarship and practice in the proseminar. The proseminar will also include multiple opportunities for cohort-building through collaborative activities and peer review. While only students in the program will take the proseminar course for course credit, the graduate student professional development workshops and guest speakers will be open to graduate students in the broader CEHD and will connect to the college's focus on student success.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 8403. Urban School Reform: Policies, Politics and Practices. 3 Credit Hours.

This course will examine educational policy reform ideas and strategies. The course content will focus on understanding the impact of educational policy making on big city school districts and their local school contexts. Special attention will be paid to the urban social and political environments in which policies are made and applied, along with the challenges of racial and social class inequalities. Students will consider different types of current and past reforms, utilizing published research literature, popular media, and internet-based resources to increase the likelihood that current debates in the field are covered. The intended and unintended consequences of educational and social policy will be examined as well.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 8404. Race, Class and Space in Urban Contexts. 3 Credit Hours.

The course is designed to help doctoral students develop a more sophisticated conception of the contexts in which urban education occurs, the promise of urban life, and the potential for creating healthier, more vibrant urban schools and communities. We will engage with current theory and research situating urban schools in broader urban processes and will focus on key issues shaping urban communities, including housing, social policy, and criminal justice. For each, we will examine the structural factors underlying them, how they impact the lives and experiences of community members, and how they intersect with individual and community-level resources. In addition to studying the challenges inherent to each domain, we will also use Philadelphia as a laboratory to introduce activism, policy, or practice focused on increasing individual and collective well-being. Students will write a proposal for an original research project on an issue related to their own scholarly interests but connected to course topics and drawing on course insights (as well as additional resources). The proposal will include a rationale for the study, a literature review drawing on insights from course material and additional relevant sources, research questions, and a plan for data collection and analysis. Students will also write a review of a recent book focusing on urban issues that could be submitted for publication.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 8602. Theory Seminar in Urban Schools. 3 Credit Hours.

This course introduces some important theoretical frameworks and theorists that inform research in urban education. Emphasis is on the contributions of the social sciences. Theories are discussed in the context of urban education and are applied to major issues of interest to the class. Each student selects an issue, which s/he may have begun to explore in URBAN ED 5501, around which written and oral presentations are based. Teams of students also lead class discussions on the work of selected theorists.

Repeatability: This course may not be repeated for additional credits.

URBE 8603. Urban Education Doctoral Capstone. 3 Credit Hours.

This is the first semester of a two semester (Fall/Spring) course that is required for all urban Education doctoral students. It is designed to support students as they carry out their own independent research projects and to serve as a capstone to their doctoral education. Ideally, all students will work on developing projects related to their future dissertation research.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 9982. Independent Research in Urban Education. 3 Credit Hours.

Because the Urban Education Program is interdisciplinary and draws on faculty from across the University, it is critical that students become acquainted with faculty whose research styles and interests will contribute to their course of study by, for example, serving on their dissertation committees. This course requires students to design and complete a project with a faculty member outside the program. In consultation with their advisors, students identify an affiliated member with whom to work and then create and complete an independent study. This research can take several forms, e.g., collecting and analyzing data, conducting an extensive literature review, or utilizing secondary data.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 9991. Research Practicum. 3 Credit Hours.

This doctoral-level course provides each student with the experience of completing an independent study research project. Students are required to formulate a research question; conduct a thorough review of the relevant literature on the topic; design a small study to be carried out throughout the year; and write up the results. While this project may be directly related to the student's dissertation research, it does not serve as a replacement of that research endeavor. Each student is expected to present her/his work in a public setting.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 9996. Masters Thesis. 3 Credit Hours.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.

URBE 9999. Doctoral Dissertation. 1 to 6 Credit Hour.

Open only to doctoral candidates who have successfully completed the minimum hours of coursework required for the degree, passed the preliminary examination, and have an approved proposal on file with the Graduate School. Continuous registration during the Fall and Spring semesters is required until the dissertation is completed and accepted by the Graduate School.

Repeatability: This course may be repeated for additional credit.