Course Outline

Course Code : RE3705
Course Title : Urban Planning
Semester : Semester 1, Academic Year 2026/2027
Faculty : NUS Business School
Department : Real Estate

Instructor(s)

Professor Lee Kwan Ok (kwan.lee@nus.edu.sg)

Overview

This course begins with an exploration of traditional and contemporary urban planning concepts that have shaped cities worldwide, including Singapore. It then delves into the strategic planning and regulatory mechanisms that guide urban development, emphasizing long-term planning, master plans, and development controls that are integral to real estate decision-making. The final section broadens the discussion by examining urban planning through multiple lenses, including land management, infrastructure, housing, and urban design.

Through case studies and comparative examples from both local and international contexts, this course highlights the complex interplay between urban planning and real estate development. By fostering an interdisciplinary perspective, it encourages students to think holistically and innovatively about urban development, beyond conventional financial metrics.

Learning Outcomes

Students who have successfully completed RE3705 will be able to:

1. Explain and evaluate traditional and contemporary urban planning principles and emerging trends relevant to real estate professionals.
2. Analyse the evolution of urban structures and critically evaluate how different planning approaches address contemporary urban challenges.
3. Evaluate how urban planning frameworks, regulations, and strategies influence real estate development and investment decisions.
4. Integrate key planning considerations—including land management, infrastructure, housing, and urban design—within long-term plans, master plans, and development-control processes.
5. Develop and justify a simplified master plan for Singapore's future urban development, demonstrating an applied understanding of planning processes and professional practice.
6. Assess and navigate the competing interests and trade-offs among planners, real estate professionals, government agencies, developers, and communities, drawing on local and international case studies.

Course Prerequisite(s)

RE1707* or RE1701

*: Suitable substitute courses may be considered on a case-by-case basis, subject to approval. Examples include CDE2501 *Liveable Cities*, GE2102 *Politics, Economies, and Space*, and GESS1901 *Urban Planning in Singapore*.

Course Preclusion(s)

RE2701 and RE3901

General Guide & Reading (e.g. Case preparation guide, project report guide, main textbook & supplementary materials, etc)

1. The City Reader. 6th edition. (2016). LeGates, Richard and Stout, Frederic (editors). Routledge Urban Reader Series. (E-book available via NUS library website)
2. Cities of Tomorrow. 4th edition. (2014). Peter Hall (editor). Wiley Blackwell. (Available at CL RBR: TH166 Hal 2014)
3. Introduction to Urban Planning. (1979). Anthony J Catanese and James Snyder. McGraw-Hill. (Available at CL RBR: HT166 Urb)

All other reading non-online materials will be posted on Canvas.

Tentative Schedule & Outline

Schedule

This is a one semester course, and the class will usually meet once per week with three hours per session.

Format

RE3705 follows a seminar format comprising a lecture of approximately 100–120 minutes, including a break, followed by in-class activities.

Lectures introduce the key themes and concepts from the assigned readings and provide opportunities for questions and discussion. Selected discussion questions will be posted on Canvas to extend class discussion and allow students to share questions and resources related to the group project. Canvas participation will be assessed based on the quality of contributions rather than the number or timing of posts.

In-class activities include:

1. structured discussions and case-based exercises related to the lectures and readings;
2. live role-play debates on selected urban-planning issues;
3. short group mini-presentations and reviews that allow students to report on the progress of their master-planning project, receive feedback, and refine their proposals progressively; and
4. two in-class online quizzes assessing students' understanding and application of the key concepts covered in the course.

Synopsis

This course is structured into three main parts, covering foundational concepts, regulatory frameworks, and interdisciplinary approaches to urban planning.

Part I: Traditional and Contemporary Concepts of Urban Planning

- From Garden Cities to New Town Planning
- Spatial Restructuring
- Urban Redevelopment
- Globalizing Cities

Part II: Planning and Regulating the Urban Environment

- The Singapore Approach: Long-term Plans, Master Plans, and Town Planning
- Overview of Plan-making Processes
- Regulating Real Estate Development
- Working with Markets and People

Part III: Multiple Perspectives in Urban Planning

- Infrastructure and Transportation Planning
- Urban Design, Conservation, and Place making
- Housing Affordability
- Land Management

Assessment

The assessment for this class is based on 100% CA.

Assessment Components	Weightage
Group Project: Singapore's Next Generation of Urban Planning:	40% (Group)
Live Role-Play Debate	25% (Individual)
Two Online Quizzes	15% (Individual)
Class Engagement and Canvas Discussions	20% (Individual)

1. Group Project: Singapore's Next Generation of Urban Planning — 40%

Working in groups, students will develop a simplified master plan for the future development of a selected site or planning area in Singapore.

The project will require students to:

- analyse the physical site and its surrounding urban context;
- identify key planning constraints and opportunities;
- develop a planning vision and alternative development scenarios;
- integrate considerations relating to land use, transportation, housing, infrastructure, urban design, and implementation; and
- present and justify a coherent master-planning proposal.

Short in-class mini-presentations and reviews will serve as project progress checkpoints. These presentations are intended to help groups receive feedback and progressively refine their proposals; they are not separate assessment components.

2. Live Role-Play Debate — 25%

Each student will participate in one scheduled live role-play debate based on a contemporary urban-planning issue.

Students will be individually assessed on:

- the clarity and strength of their arguments;
- the appropriate use of evidence;
- the application of relevant planning concepts;
- their ability to respond to opposing arguments;
- the quality of rebuttals and responses to questions; and
- their understanding of the stakeholder position assigned to them.

The debate will be assessed primarily through the live performance. No written submission will be required.

3. Two Online Quizzes — 15%

Students will complete two in-class online quizzes, worth 7.5% each.

The quizzes will:

- consist of 15 multiple-choice questions each;
- be open book;
- assess students' understanding and application of the key concepts covered in the course; and
- be completed during scheduled class time.

4. Class Engagement and Canvas Discussions — 20%

This component recognizes students' sustained engagement with the course through class attendance, participation in learning activities, and selected Canvas discussions.

It comprises:

- Class attendance and engagement: 12%
- Canvas discussions: 8%

Class engagement includes constructive participation in discussions, case exercises, role-play activities, project mini-presentations, and peer feedback. Attendance alone will not receive full credit; students are expected to contribute meaningfully to the learning activities.

Canvas discussions will be limited to a small number of designated prompts. Students will be assessed on the quality, relevance, and thoughtfulness of their contributions, rather than the timing or quantity of posts. Students will not be penalized for developing a point that has also been raised by another student, provided that their contribution adds their own reasoning, evidence, or perspective.

Academic Honesty & Plagiarism

Academic integrity and honesty are essential for the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge. The University and School expect every student to uphold academic integrity & honesty at all times. Academic dishonesty is any misrepresentation with the intent to deceive, or failure to acknowledge the source, or falsification of information, or inaccuracy of statements, or cheating at examinations/tests, or inappropriate use of resources.

Plagiarism is "the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one' own" (The New Oxford Dictionary of English). The University and School will not condone plagiarism. Students should adopt this rule - You have the obligation to make clear to the assessor which is your own work, and which is the work of others. Otherwise, your assessor is entitled to assume that everything being presented for assessment is being presented as entirely your own work. This is a minimum standard. In case of any doubt, you should consult your instructor.

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

The use of generative AI tools is permitted but not required in RE3705, subject to the following conditions.

Students may use AI tools to support exploratory work, including:

- organizing information;
- brainstorming planning issues and stakeholder perspectives;
- identifying preliminary site constraints and opportunities;
- generating alternative planning scenarios;
- improving the structure and clarity of arguments; and
- preparing preliminary visual or written concepts.

AI-generated outputs must not be treated as authoritative planning evidence. Students remain responsible for:

- verifying all factual information, planning regulations, site conditions, and references against reliable sources;
- identifying errors, unsupported assumptions, and potential biases;
- exercising their own planning judgment;
- ensuring that submitted work reflects their own analysis and decisions; and
- complying with NUS academic-integrity requirements.

AI may be used in preparing for the group project and live debate, but students must demonstrate their own understanding during presentations, debates, and questioning. AI tools may not be used during the two in-class quizzes unless explicitly permitted by the instructor.

Where AI has been used substantively in a submitted assignment, students should briefly acknowledge the tool and the purpose for which it was used. Use of AI is not itself an assessment criterion, and students will not be disadvantaged if they choose not to use it.

Additional guidance is available at:

- http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/administrative-policies-procedures/acceptance-record#NUSCodeofStudentConduct
- http://nus.edu.sg/osa/resources/code-of-student-conduct
- https://libguides.nus.edu.sg/new2nus/acadintegrity

About me

I am Professor of Real Estate at the Business School at the National University of Singapore (NUS). I am also the Deputy Head in the NUS Department of Real Estate. I received numerous awards, including the Annual Teaching Excellence Award for 2016/2017, the Business School Teaching Excellence Awards for 2020/2021 and 2022/2023, and the School Teaching Excellence Awards for 2015/2016, 2016/2017, and 2018/2019.

I truly enjoy teaching real estate and urban planning that have practical and interdisciplinary natures between economic, socio-political and physical components. I am proud that my education exposing students to international cases and application to local contexts has inspired some students to shatter stereotypes to become critical thinkers and aspire changes in the built environment. Teaching these subjects also means that I and students could achieve mutual growth because there is no single answer for any question raised. As we learn from each other and collaborate for research, I am strongly motivated for my education as both a teacher and a learner. By teaching this course and interacting with students, I hope to produce more real estate professionals and urban planners who will significantly contribute to the built environment in Singapore and beyond.

Schedule and Outline

Lesson/ Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Main In-Class Activities
1	Aug 10	*No Class due to National Day*	
2	Aug 17	Course objectives; Topics to be covered; Tasks and responsibilities *Part 1* **Traditional and Contemporary Concepts of Urban Planning I (From Garden Cities to New Town Planning):** Garden city and city beautiful movement; Contemporary/radiant city ideas; New town planning *Part 1* **Traditional and Contemporary Concepts of Urban Planning II (Spatial Restructuring):** Suburbanization and urban sprawl; Spatial inequality and spatial mismatch; Smart growth and new urbanism; Polycentric model	
3	Aug 24	*Part 1* **Traditional and Contemporary Concepts of Urban Planning III (Urban Redevelopment):** Failures of urban renewal; Issues surrounding gentrification; Loss of sense of community and social capital	Group Project Kick-off I – practical workshop (introduction of tools for master planning)
4	Aug 31	*Part 1* **Traditional and Contemporary Concepts of Urban Planning IV (Globalizing Cities):** Globalization and world city hypothesis; Issues arising in global cities; Importance of creative class; Search for sustainability	Group Project Kick-off II – site choice and initial brainstorming
5	Sep 7	Part 2 **Planning and Regulating the Urban Environment I (The Singapore Approach: Long-term Plans, Master Plans, and Town Planning)**: Introduction of Singapore's planning history, Planning institutions in Singapore, and Transitions of actual plans	Guest Speaker: Tan See Nin (URA)
6	Sep 14	*Part 2* **Planning and Regulating the Urban Environment II (Overview of Plan-making Processes):** Population and economic projections, SWOT, Visioning and programming, Development guide plans	Mini-presentation on Population and Economic Projection
Mid-semester break			
7	Sep 28	*Part 2* **Planning and Regulating the Urban Environment III (Regulating Real Estate Development)**: Development control, GLS, Development charge	Role Play Planning Debate I: Master Planning, Regulation, and Policies
8	Oct 5	*Part 2* **Planning and Regulating Land Use V (Working with Markets and People):** Top down vs. bottom up; Governance; Incentives given to real estate; Public benefits provided by developers; Public Private Partnership; Participatory planning	Mid-review of Group Project / Quiz I
9	Oct 12	*Part 3* **Multiple Perspectives in Urban Planning I (Transportation Planning)**: Public transportation; Smart mobility Guest Speaker: Prof. Raymond Ong (NUS CDE)	Role Play Planning Debate II: Public Private Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement
10	Oct 19	*Part 3* **Multiple Perspectives in Urban Planning II (Urban Design, Conservation, and Place making):** Public space needs; Interactions between urban planning and design; Heritage conservation Guest Speaker: Kelvin Ang (URA Conservation Group)	Role Play Planning Debate III: Dilemma between Conservation and Development
11	Oct 26	*Part 3* **Multiple Perspectives in Urban Planning III (Housing Affordability):** Global housing crisis, Affordable housing policies	Role Play Planning Debate IV: Efficiency and Effectiveness of Different Affordable Housing Policies
12	Nov 2	*Part 3* **Multiple Perspectives in Urban Planning IV (Land Management):** Land acquisition vs. land readjustment; White site; Mixed use; 15 minute city	Group project consultation / Quiz II

13	Nov 9	Class Wrap-up and Review	Final Presentation with Jury Members