



# Urban & Regional Studies | 2014-2015 Assessment Report

## City and Its Regional Context 341 / Spring Semester 2015

**Overview.** Thirteen Students were enrolled in the URS core course for the major: City and Its Regional Context 341. The relative low enrollment (in the past, this course enrolled 25 to 30 students), reflects the decline in majors in Urban and Regional Studies. As a group, the students demonstrated different levels in reaching the course' objectives and learning outcomes. The course is one of three core course requirements for graduating with a degree in Urban and Regional Studies. Excluding three students who major in Social Work, the ten URS majors demonstrated different levels of competence due to, as in the past, to the disparate manner by which they joined the program. The majority were transfer students and/or switched majors late in their academic careers at UWGB. Only one student began the major as a first year student (freshmen).

**Mechanics and Objectives of Course.** The students are evaluated by completing four written ten page discussion papers written as a team of three or four, discussion on field trip to Milwaukee, and a final consisting of visual interpretation and analysis of landscapes via slides and video content. The course objectives expects the student to learn to appreciate the urban landscape by acquiring skills that will make the student be able to read and critically assess urban landscapes. Furthermore, students are expected to integrate social processes with spatial processes and to critically think about the relationship between the two.

**Overview of Assessment.** The 10 URS students were assessed against the rubrics outlined in the Programmatic Assessment for Urban and Regional Studies that was developed last year. Each student received a score between ranges of 1 to 3. One being Not Satisfactory, two Somewhat Satisfactory, and three Satisfactory. The scores were tabulated to arrive at a mean shown next to each Learning Outcome:

**Programmatic Assessment: Urban and Regional Studies.** URS students enrolled in URS 341 City and its Regional Context will be assessed in their progress towards a degree in Urban and Regional Studies by using the assessment plan outlined in the programmatic assessment document 2013/2014.

1. Students who have completed the major in Urban and Regional Studies will have the ability to conceptualize, analytically define, and treat urban and regional places as meaningful entities, and will have developed and understanding of the interaction and relationship between population groups, economic activities, and the natural and built environments from an interdisciplinary perspective.

### Learning Outcomes Measured

1. Conceptualize urban and regional places **2.3**
2. Interdisciplinary perspective **3.0**

2. Students who have completed the major in Urban and Regional Studies will have developed an understanding of social science methodology, including the analysis and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data appropriate to the study of urban areas and regional places, and will have an understanding of and commitment to ethical standards for conducting research, for reporting findings, and implementing results of those findings, including ethics in decision making for urban and regional planning and public action.

Learning Outcomes Measured

1. Social Science Methodology **1.2**
  2. Ethical standards **3.0**
3. Students will have gained technical knowledge, analytical tools, critical thinking and teamwork skills necessary to (a) qualify for entry level employment in positions in urban planning, economic development, and comparable areas in the private or public sector at local, regional, state, and national levels; (b) qualify for admission into graduate programs in Urban and Regional Planning, Environmental and Behavior, Architecture, and related professional fields.

Learning Outcomes Measured

1. Critical thinking and teamwork skills **2.7**
2. Admission to graduate programs **Not Measured**

**How will this information be used:** Students are coming to this upper level class with various deficiencies and at different levels of understanding spatial concepts expected of students majoring in Urban and Regional Studies. Students should arrive at this course already with at least the introductory course in field of urban studies. This leads to questioning the current curriculum and making improvements to the curriculum that would strengthen the conceptual foundation of our students. The curriculum needs more structure in guiding students, there are too many electives in the structuring of the major. This is perhaps due to having too many Course offerings should be sequential and in that way would help students have a foundation of spatial concepts that is demanded by this course.

The lowest score was on mastering social science methodologies, in particular, spatial analysis was very weak among the students. The curriculum offers few skills and tools courses and depends on such courses offered by other departments that do not have a spatial analysis focus. An example COMSCI 301 Foundations of Social Research does not train our students well who will go into the spatial professions of urban design, architecture, urban planning and civil engineering. Perhaps creating a new course on spatial analysis is needed. Further curriculum improvement is necessary. I believe that curriculum review and improvements should be the focus of our faculty meetings.