# **Syllabus**

# **BI/EE/EH 795: Urban Biogeoscience and Environmental Health: From Research to Policy**

# **Fall 2024/Spring 2025**

Credits: 1, 2, or 4

## Meetings: TBD

## **Course instructor**

Emily Walton

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5 Cummington Mall 417​

Office Hours: By appointment (<https://calendly.com/ewalton-urban/>)

## **Course description**

This course prepares graduate students to address urban environmental challenges through hands-on training in a semester-long internship with the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and/or the private sector to learn how cities are tackling environmental challenges, including but not limited to mitigation and adaptation to climate change, protecting vulnerable populations from air pollution, and issues related to water quality and quantity.

## **Course learning objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Communicate and transfer scientific knowledge to the needs of governments, NGOs, or the private sector to advance the organization’s efforts tackling urban environmental challenges.
2. Navigate professional settings more effectively through discussions with peers and instructor that pertain to topics such as conflict management and resolution, proactive communication, and managing up
3. Give effective elevator pitches and use other communication strategies that provide insight into personal career and research interests.

**Online Resources**

### The class uses the BU URBAN website (<https://sites.bu.edu/urban/current-students/internship-course/>) to share handouts, reading material, and other files throughout the semester.

# **Teaching methodology/Course format**

Students are expected to have selected the internship organization prior to the first course session. The internship matching process is facilitated by BU URBAN faculty and staff who help identify an internship organization and project appropriate for the student. This process begins 2-4 months in advance of the semester start, around the same time students sign up for this course (June for Fall, October for Spring, January for Summer).

This course is designed to enable students to report on their internship progress and receive feedback on their work. In addition, students participate in exercises and discussions that cover communication and professional development skills. Students also present findings from their internship at either the BU URBAN Introductory Workshop or the BU URBAN Annual Symposium. The final presentation will be evaluated based on presentation format and aesthetics and how well the student presents their work verbally. To communicate these findings and experiences, students may also elect to create a policy brief, stakeholder presentation, white paper, or other product that enables practice of research translation skills and/or summarizes their experiences during the internship. Information gathered from the pre- and post-internship assessments enable improvements of the learning outcomes of the course and the overall internship experience.

Students also complete BU course evaluations at the end of the semester.

If students complete their internship after the course is over, students should complete the post-internship assessment within a week of completing their internship. Within a month of completing their internship, students should complete the internship write-up which will be shared on the URBAN Internship Impacts webpage.

GRS students are expected to spend a minimum of 6 hours/week in their internships to earn 2 course credits, or at least 12 hours/week to earn 4 course credits. If the internship is shorter in duration than the full semester, consult with the instructor to determine how many credits to sign up for. If students would like to sign up for fewer credits, please consult with the instructor. SPH Students may also take the course for 1 credit.

# **Assessments**

The course consists of pre- and post-internship assessments (10% total), participation in course meetings (20%), participation in the internship (50%), elevator pitch (5%), and a final presentation (15%). Assessment guidelines are listed below.

**1.**    **Pre- and post-internship assessment, 10% total**

Students are required to complete the pre- and post-internship assessments for program evaluation and understanding student learning gains.

**2.**    **Participation in the course meetings 20%**

Students are required to attend course meetings and actively participate in discussions in order to acquire full credit for the course.

**3.**    **Participation in the internship 50%**

Students are required to spend a minimum of 80 hours participating in the internship. Depending on the agreement between the student and the organization the internship can be completed by participating 6 hours per week throughout the semester or through more concentrated experiences for shorter periods of time.

**4.**    **Science Communication Product 5%**

Effective science communication includes concise, well-packaged statements about the who, what, why, and how of a project that can be conveyed to various audiences. Students should create an elevator pitch, policy brief, white paper, or something similar to meet this requirement.

**5.**    **Final Presentation 15%**

This assignment gives each student an opportunity to share their internship experience and findings with their peers and other partners.

# **Course Schedule**

# Each class starts with a brief check in to see how students are progressing in their internships. Schedules and topics are subject to change.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Session** | **Date** | **Topic** | **Assignments for next class session** |
| 1 | December 6 | Orientation | Pre-internship assessment ([Link](https://sites.bu.edu/urban/pre-internship-assessment/))  Readings on developing sustainable cities (on URBAN website)  Brainstorm 3 contacts/audiences who may be interested in your work and email to urban@bu.edu |
| 2 | December 20 | The Big Picture: How do public-private partnerships contribute to ecologically sustainable and healthy cities? | Review [resource](https://mitcommlab.mit.edu/be/commkit/policy-elevator-pitch/) on the elevator pitch and complete all six steps  Email a written version to urban@bu.edu |
| 3 | January 24 | Elevator Pitches | Read sample policy briefs (on URBAN website) |
| 4 | Feb 7 | Policy briefs | Either:   * Write a draft policy brief on an issue you are working on (additional resources on URBAN website)   Or   * Find an example of a policy brief that is relevant to your field, and send to [urban@bu.edu](mailto:urban@bu.edu) with a brief written reflection:   + What makes this policy brief effective?   + What could you achieve with a policy brief that resulted from your internship? Who would you share it with? |
| 5 | February 28 | Introduction to Stakeholder Presentations | Develop Lightning Talk (for April 4)  Read overview of white papers and samples (on URBAN website)  Reach out to one of your brainstormed contacts for an informational interview |
| 6 | March 21 | White Papers | Read the communication and data visualization resources on the URBAN website  Finish your Lightning Talk slides and send to [urban@bu.edu](mailto:urban@bu.edu) |
| 7 | April 4 | Practice Talks | Please send modified/finalized presentation and recording to [urban@bu.edu](mailto:urban@bu.edu) by April 18.  [Post-internship assessment (click to access survey)](http://sites.bu.edu/urban/post-internship-assessment/) |
| 8 | April 18 | Internship Impacts | [Internship Course Write-up Assignment](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1yLCOI50hYx4Le3ws212ZEQiW6jN4EZcr/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=106093533358648006640&rtpof=true&sd=true)  Please complete within 30 days after completing your internship and/or the internship course |
|  | TBD | URBAN Symposium / Intro Workshop | Present at URBAN Annual Symposium (date TBD) or URBAN Introductory Workshop for incoming trainees in September 2025 |

## **Grading policy**

Students will be assigned the following final letter grades, based on course assessments.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course Average | Final Grade |
| 94‐100 | A |
| 90‐93 | A‐ |
| 87‐89 | B+ |
| 83‐86 | B |
| 80‐82 | B‐ |
| 77-79 | C+ |
| 73‐76 | C |
| 70-72 | C- |
| 60‐69 | D |
| <60 | F |

## **Course policies and student expectations**

## Late-work policy: Late work is not accepted, except in extenuating circumstances in which case proactive and clear communication is required.

## Attendance and/or participation policy: Attendance at all meetings is required.

## Course preparation: Required readings are available on the website.

# **Boston University: Standards of Academic Honesty**

Below is a reprint of the Boston University Academic Conduct Code as it appears on the following web-site: <https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

Departures from this code can have serious repercussions.

“All students entering Boston University are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. It is the responsibility of every student to be aware of the Academic Conduct Code’s contents and to abide by its provisions. The Academic Conduct Committee of the individual school or college, which is composed of students, faculty and staff, has jurisdiction over all charges of academic misconduct brought against students.

In all charges of academic misconduct against a student, the student is entitled to full procedural fairness in any disciplinary proceedings. The Academic Conduct Code details the guidelines governing disciplinary proceedings. It also articulates the University’s philosophy of discipline, defines violations of the code, and enumerates penalties applicable under the code.”

Academic misconduct is any intentional act or omission by a student which misrepresents his or her academic achievements, or any attempt to misrepresent his or her academic achievements. The following acts constitute academic misconduct. This is not an exhaustive list.

* *Cheating on examinations:* The use or attempted use of any unauthorized books, notes or other materials in order to enhance the student’s performance in the examination, copying or attempting to copy from another student’s examination, permitting another student to copy from an examination or otherwise assisting another student during an examination, or any other violation of the examination’s stated or commonly understood ground rules.
* *Plagiarism:* Any representation of the work of another as one’s own constitutes plagiarism. This includes copying or substantially restating the work of another person without the use of quotation marks or other indication that the words of another have been copied, the use of any written or oral work from which the student has obtained ideas or data without citing the source or collaborating with another person in an academic endeavor without acknowledging that person’s contribution.
* *Submitting the same work in more than one course without the consent of all the instructors*
* *Misrepresentation or falsification of data*
* *Allowing another student to represent your work as his or her own*
* *Violating the rules of an examination or assignment*

**All work that you submit must be written in your own words and have the appropriate citations.**

Be sure to complete the [plagiarism tutorial](http://medlib.bu.edu/tutorials-secure/SPHPlagiarism/) and review [tips for avoiding academic dishonesty](https://ori.hhs.gov/avoiding-plagiarism-self-plagiarism-and-other-questionable-writing-practices-guide-ethical-writing).