



NYU

**ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

URPL-GP.4636.001

Housing Policy I

Spring 2024 (2/06/2024)

Instructor Information

- Kathy O'Regan
- Email: Katherine.OREgan@NYU.edu
- Office Hours: Thursdays 3:00-4:00 *via Zoom and in-person, sign up via [calendar](#)*
- Other times available via appointment.

Course Information

- Class Meeting Times: Tuesdays, 4:55-6:35pm, 1/23/24-3/05/24
- Class Location: 70 Washington Sq S (Bobst) Room LL141

Course Prerequisites

- CORE-GP.1011, CORE-GP.1018 and CORE-GP.1022 or URPL-GP.2660

Course Description and Learning Objectives

This course explores the historic, economic and social context of current housing policy in the U.S., including how housing and community conditions and policies are intertwined. It provides an overview of housing policy, with an emphasis on major federal policies and how they play out on the ground. A key goal of the course is for students to develop content knowledge of the field as well as insights for assessing the relative merits of various policies and interventions- what problem are we trying to solve? How might this approach address that problem, or not? What other related outcomes should we worry about? The role of race and space is considered throughout the course.

The course also has a set of analytical goals. The course should deepen students' ability to: read thoughtfully and assess the evidence and arguments provided by authors; think carefully about their own beliefs and what evidence supports those beliefs; and communicate well-articulated arguments. To accomplish these goals, the classroom needs to be interactive and run more as a seminar than lecture. Students are expected to have completed all required

readings prior to class, to have thought about them, and to come to class prepared for discussions on the theme(s) of the day and raise questions.

Course and learning objectives

By the completion of this course, students should:

1. Have knowledge of the major housing and community development policies and actors in the U.S., including how well the policies are perceived to be working.
2. Understand how those policies and the field developed over time, and the role of key actors in those changes.
3. Understand a set of current policy debates that are shaping policy discourse.
4. Have an in-deep understanding of a sub-set of policy areas.
5. Demonstrate critical reading of articles and literature.
6. Develop and communicate well-argued policy positions.

Learning Assessment Table

Graded Assignment	Course Objective Covered
Short Policy Memo #1	#1, #2, #3, #5
Short Policy Memo #2	#1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6
Final Paper	#1, #3, #4, #5, #6

Required Readings, Podcasts and Interactive Materials

- Background readings from Alex Schwartz's. [Housing Policy in the United States](#), New York: Routledge. Page references are for the 4th edition (2021). Bobst will have one physical copy of the new edition on reserve (though it may take several more weeks). The 2014 edition is available for free electronically through NYU's Library website for students not wishing to purchase the updated text,
- All additional readings, podcasts and interactive materials will available via the course site.

Course Website on NYU Brightspace

The site can be accessed from the Academics tab in NYU Home or directly here: [NYU Brightspace](https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home) (https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home). If you have not activated your account or have forgotten your password, go to [Start NYU](http://start.nyu.edu) (http://start.nyu.edu). All announcements and course related documents will be posted on the Brightspace course site or distributed via e-mail. Thus, it is important that you actively use your NYU e-mail account, or have appropriate forwarding set up. Materials on the course site can be accessed by selecting Content from the row of links at the top of the course homepage, and then using the tabs in the left-hand navigation bar. **Materials are organized by class session.**

Assessment Assignments and Evaluation

Grading is designed to ensure learning and assessment throughout the course. There are two short analytical memos and a final paper:

- The first written assignment (2-3 pages) is due by 11:59 p.m. Monday February 5 (prior to class 3).
- The second written assignment (2-3 pages) is due by 11:59 p.m. either Monday February 19 or Monday February 26 (depending on the topic).
- The final assignment (5-7 pages) is due no later than 11:59 p.m. Monday March 11, approximately a week after the course ends.
- Use of generative AI (e.g, ChatGPT) is **not allowed** for written assignments.

Details for assignments will be posted to the course site, including signing up for specific memo topics. Assignments should be uploaded to the course site by their due date. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior permission of the instructor.

Because writing and synthesizing evidence is a form of thinking, you should not use ChatGPT or other AI tools as a shortcut or substitute for drafting and editing written work in this class. All graded assignments should be solely based on individual work; any collaboration or taking credit for writing you did not create is a violation of [Wagner's Academic code](#).

Class participation (and preparation)

To assist students in preparing for and engaging in class, I have provided some direction on questions or themes to consider when doing the reading for the day on the course site. Class will be taught with the expectation that students have done – *and thought about* – the reading. Pay particular attention to any guiding questions included in the course site as well as posted discussion questions, they will frame our discussion.

Structured Participation in Brightspace Discussions

Beyond class discussion, an additional *required* form of participation is by responding to weekly reading discussion questions on the class discussion board. Discussion responses should be posted to the discussion board no later than the night before class, so all can read (Monday 11:59p.m). Responses can connect beyond the reading for the day, particularly as the course progresses. To facilitate building on other students' postings, occasionally one discussion will be designated: "Class Thread". Meaning students should post on the same, singular thread, building from what has already posted, to constructively move the discussion forward. *If that format doesn't work for your thoughts that week, respond to one of the other discussion questions.

*Discussion responses are OPTIONAL for weeks when you are submitting policy memo's, all students can miss one week at their discretion.

Note: All graded assignments and discussion questions have a two-hour grace period (e.g. until 2:00 am).

Assessment

- Class participation = 20% (including via discussion board)
- Two Policy Memos = 35%
- Final Paper = 45%

Course Overview

See the course website for details of:

- The topical focus of the day,
- Including the list of required and optional readings
- With specific framing questions for the class or particular readings
- Discussion topics
- And any specific pre-class work (e.g, investigating housing costs or redlining for a specific city).

CLASS ONE: January 23

Introduction to Housing Policy and Challenges: What Are We Trying to Solve, and Why Do We Care?

Various rationales and objectives have been stated as housing policy has evolved. These are critical starting points as one develops housing and community policy in the present. This class is intended to clarify objectives and drawbacks of existing housing policy, and place current housing and community development policy in a larger political and historical framework.

INTRODUCE ASSIGNMENT #1 (due Monday February 5th, in advance of Class 3)

CLASS TWO: January 30

Economics of Housing Markets and the Role of Capital and Finance in Housing and Community Development

In the U.S. housing is primarily provided through private markets. Understanding how those markets function, and whether there are market failures is key to considering why we intervene in housing markets and how specific interventions are likely to play out. We begin by reviewing

housing through an economics lens. What are some of the unique features of housing that affect market operations? How does the context affect the nature of housing 'problem'? We then focus on the role of capital and finance in housing as well as in community development. Who are the key actors and how did they and the policy-systems they are in, evolve over time? We first consider the evolution of the modern housing finance system, including features that were the seeds of the recent subprime housing crisis. We then discuss the evolution of community development organizations and particularly those on the community development finance side and related current federal policies, such as the Community Reinvestment Act.

CLASS THREE: February 6

Thinking About Who, What and Why: The Structures, Actors, and Major Interventions in Housing/Community Development Policy and Practice

This class is aimed at going deeper into a set of major housing and community development policies and approaches. What are the major forms of interventions and how well are they working? Who are the key actors in both shaping and implementing the policy? In particular, how should we think about the role of government at both the federal and non-federal level and the role of other actors in the private and non-profit sectors, including how these actors influence the creation, operation, and modifications of these programs?

CLASS FOUR: FEBRUARY 13

Race and Place: The Significance of History and Race in Housing Markets and Policy

How has housing policy interplayed with race, and what role does race continue to play in housing outcomes? We focus specifically on racial segregation, and consider the role of federal housing policy in fostering segregation and whether the housing policy effects continue today. We then consider one key federal tool for addressing segregation, the Affirmatively Furthering obligation of The Fair Housing Act. This potentially powerful tool was mainly dormant until HUD's 2015 Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing rule. Though revoked under the Trump Administration, the Biden Administration released its proposed rule in 2023. Our guest speaker (Ken Zimmerman) was an architect of the original 2015 rule, and is a fair housing expert.

INTRODUCE ASSIGNMENT #2 (due Monday February 19 or Monday February 26)

CLASS FIVE: February 20

Policy Evolution and Innovation in Rental Assistance: Voucher, Mobility and Emergency Rental Assistance

This is the first of two classes in which we look at the evolution of a key federal housing or community development policy and significant innovation marking large change. The goal is to gain insight on the nature of change in the field and a better understanding of the political, policy, and programmatic challenges involved. Each class begins with a specific policy area(s), a historically important moment in its development, and the policy lessons from that time. We then link to current issues, with readings highlighting an active policy debate. What are the key policy issues and policy features under debate? What are the best arguments on each side, and pieces of evidence? How do developments and lessons from earlier changes affect the debate and what are the likely effects of policy options being debated? **Assignment #2 focuses on one of three topics, one of which is covered in week 5.**

The movement from unit-based to tenant-based assistance is one of the largest shifts in rental assistance policy; debates about the relative merits of tenant versus unit-based assistance continue, and in particular, which goals should be prioritized in policy design? We examine that evolution and assessments of how the current voucher program is or isn't working. We then dive into current debates on vouchers. Should the goal be mobility or is increased housing stability/lowering housing cost burdens the goal? If mobility, how do we achieve that and at what cost? Could we help more people with shallower subsidies? ***Topic #1 for Assignment 2.**

INTRODUCE FINAL ASSIGNMENT (due Monday March 14th, after last class)

CLASS SIX: February 27

Policy Evolution and Innovation in Public Housing and Place Making

This second class on policy evolution covers the evolution of public housing policy from a 'pure' housing program to one that some see as 'place-making', using some lessons from comprehensive community development efforts. The change-moment or policy intervention is HOPE VI, views on which are still mixed, through to Choice neighborhoods (**Topic #2 for Assignment 2**). We then talk about the current policy tension of whether new affordable housing should be sited where 'opportunity' already exists or as part of an effort to revitalize a place, in the context of LIHTC (**Topic #3 for Assignment 2**).

CLASS SEVEN: March 5

State and Local: Actors, Policies, and Debates

Our final class focuses on states and localities, the importance of local context and players, and a set of specific local policies and debates. Many believe that local regulatory policies are a key driver of increased housing costs, bringing us back to affordability issues, now considered through the role of local policies. Are local barriers to housing production a key factor driving affordability issues and what might this mean for overall inequality? Who should control the decision over whether new housing can or should be built, and where—including whether there should be a federal role? We will consider the tensions between incumbent resident's desire to avoid change and the need for additional housing, and what this may mean for who opposes what type of housing. We then consider one tool for addressing local opposition and local housing pressures, community preferences for tenants of affordable housing. We end the class with 'mini-briefings' for a fictional HUD secretary on what HUD should have decided in the San Francisco community preference case.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a vital component of Wagner and NYU. All students enrolled in this class are required to read and abide by [Wagner's Academic Code](#). All Wagner students have already read and signed the [Wagner Academic Oath](#). Plagiarism of any form will not be tolerated and students in this class are expected to report violations to me. If any student in this class is unsure about what is expected of you and how to abide by the academic code, you should consult with me.

Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at NYU

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities. Please visit the [Moses Center for Students with Disabilities \(CSD\) website](#) and click on the Reasonable Accommodations and How to Register tab or call or email CSD at (212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu) for information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are strongly advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance.

NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays

[NYU's Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Please notify me in advance of religious holidays that might coincide with exams to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives.

Class Policies:

To support a learning environment conducive to co-learning and mutual respect, it is useful to lay out that aspiration at the start. It is particularly important that we be respectful of different points of view, and enter discourse with curiosity. There are also some specific policies I adopt for this course, including the following:

1. Attendance: Especially since there are only seven classes, the expectation is that each student attends each class, both for covering material and discussion of written assignments. If you cannot attend a class, please let me know ahead of time. Unexcused absences are likely to affect the class participation portion of the grade. If you are absent, you should also talk to another member of the class promptly to ensure you have updated information.
2. Timeliness of Assignments: Without prior approval, papers turned in late will not be accepted.
3. In addition to office hours or scheduled appointments, I am available by email. I will make every effort to respond within 24 hours of emails I receive.