This course examines the tools, tactics, and theories associated with the economic revitalization of cities. Explicit theories and implicit assumptions about the economic life of cities will be illuminated through numerous real-world case studies, some of which will involve the instructor’s hands-on experience with urban park revitalization and the transformation of Times Square. Through specific examples we will examine how ideas about urban economic development shift across time and place, to better identify deeper truths. While reviewing the standard tools in the economic development toolbox, we will also look at relevant ideas and practices in corporate branding and competitive strategy, managing public space, nurturing creative industries, and changing regulations. Across all categories and case studies, we will repeatedly ask: What are the things that make cities thrive and grow, and how does one nurture those things?

Course Requirements & Grading

All students should be prepared to discuss and answer questions about the week’s readings in class. Oral participation in class throughout the term will be 20% of the grade.

There will be three short (1-2 page) writing assignments (10% of grade each) relating to the readings or case studies, and one longer (9-10 page) assignment due at the end of the term where students will present their economic development recommendations for New York City and their rationales for those recommendations (50% of grade). Students will also form teams to discuss, form and present collective recommendations (which will in turn be questioned by fellow students) near the end of the term.

The readings are front-loaded to the first half of the term to familiarize students with a number of core concepts and ideas, which will then be explored through case studies, conversations with guest speakers, and the process of making policy recommendations for the final paper.

The order of classes may shift slightly during the term depending on the availability of guest speakers either for case studies or for Q & A sessions.

I will on occasion send students current articles from publications or websites so that we may discuss them in class with course concepts and readings in mind.

Office Hours

I will be available from 6:00 pm – 8 pm by appointment on Tuesdays either at the Puck building or at a location in or near the classroom at 25 West 4th Street.
Main Texts


Class 1 - September 4 - Introduction

Glaeser, Introduction & Chapter 1

Jacobs, Chapter 1

Sagalyn, Preface and Chapter 1


Class 2 – September 11 - Basic Tools & Tactics


Glaeser, Chapters 2 & 3.

Jacobs, pp. 29-73

Sagalyn, Chapters 2 & 3.

Class 3 – September 18 – The Safety Threshold


“Toward a Psychology of Being,” Maslow. Also, http://www.edpsychinteractive.org/topics/conation/maslow.html

Glaeser, Chapters 4 & 5.
Class 4 – September 25 – Assets & Liabilities


Glaeser, Chapter 6 & 7.

Jacobs, pp. 152-199.

Sagalyn, Chapters 6 & 7


Class 5 – October 2 – Brands, Perceptions and the Press


Glaeser, Chapters 8 & 9.

Jacobs, pp. 200-269

Sagalyn, Chapters 8 & 9

Selected Readings

SHORT (1-2 PAGE) ASSIGNMENT DUE

Class 6 – October 9 – Through a Competitive Lens


Glaeser, Conclusion.

Jacobs, pp. 270-337.
Sagalyn, Chapters 10 & 11

NO CLASS – October 16

Class 7 – October 23 – Arts & the Creative Economy
Jacobs, pp. 338-448.
Sagalyn, Chapter 12 – 14 and Epilogue

Class 8 – October 30 – Case Study: NYC Parks, the Bronx River & Social Capital
NYTimes articles in Course Folder
Partnerships for Parks Catalyst Materials
Kennedy School of Government Case Program: The Bronx River Alliance

Class 9 – November 6 – Case Study: Atlantic City, NJ
Guest Speaker: Curtis Bashaw, Cape Advisors, former Executive Director of the Casino Investment Redevelopment Authority
Selected Readings
SHORT (1-2 PAGE) ASSIGNMENT DUE

Class 10 – November 13 – Case Study: Singapore
Selected Readings

Class 11 – November 20 – Case Study: Times Square (At Times Square Alliance office)
DRAFT OUTLINE OF FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE – Not graded

Selected Readings

Class 12 – November 27 – Team Presentations & Cross Questioning: Part 1

Class 13 – December 4 – Team Presentations & Cross Questioning: Part 2

Class 14 – December 11 – Panel Discussion: Times Square, NYC & Economic Development

FINAL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT DUE