

Meeting time and duration: MW 10:00–11:50 am
Meeting location: 1038 Wickson Hall
CRN: 42849
Credit hours: 4

Instructor: Professor Jesus Barajas
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Office hours: Wednesdays 1:30–3:30 or by appointment (<https://calendly.com/jmbarajas/>)
Office hours location: 3011 Wickson Hall or Zoom (link provided in Canvas)

Course overview

Transportation moves us. Jobs, school, health clinics, grocery stores, recreational facilities, and more would be impossible to get to without adequate service and infrastructure. But history shows that the benefits of transportation have not been distributed equitably, and historically marginalized communities have had to bear disproportionate costs from transportation as well. More recently, planners and policymakers have taken up the challenge of creating a more equitable transportation system. Achieving this goal, however, can stand in opposition to other important goals like efficiency and effectiveness. It is not an easy task. The purpose of this class is to come away with an understanding of the multiple dimensions of equity and justice so you can ask critical questions of plans and policies that address all modes of transportation.

Learning objectives

The overall objective of the course is to foster discussion about what a just and equitable transportation system looks like. By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Define transportation equity from multiple perspectives
- Explain the legal and policy basis for equity in transportation equity in the US
- Evaluate equity in a transportation plan or service
- Describe how historical and current practice exacerbates disparities in access, health, safety, and economic opportunity
- Explain what affects the travel behavior of diverse population groups
- Generate a research project on transportation equity using the language of practitioners, advocates, and academics

Course at a glance

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment due
1	Jan 3	Course introduction; Defining transportation equity	
1	Jan 5	Setting the stage: demographics and travel behavior	
2	Jan 10	<i>TRB Annual Meeting: No Class</i>	
2	Jan 12	<i>TRB Annual Meeting: No Class</i>	A1: Reflection paper (1/16)
3	Jan 17	<i>Martin Luther King Jr. Day: No Class</i>	
3	Jan 19	Transportation and mobility justice in theory	
4	Jan 24	Historical impacts of transportation planning and policy	
4	Jan 26	Legal and policy frameworks	Final paper proposal (1/30)
5	Jan 31	Assessing equity	
5	Feb 2	Accessibility and equity: Indicators and empirical research	
6	Feb 7	Finance, cost, and pricing	
6	Feb 9	Walking and cycling	
7	Feb 14	ADA and planning for disability	
7	Feb 16	Gender and transportation	A2: Practice critique (2/20)
8	Feb 21	<i>Washington's Birthday: No Class</i>	
8	Feb 23	Race and identity	
9	Feb 28	Safety, security, and policing	
9	Mar 2	Advocacy	Opt.: Final paper draft (3/6)
10	Mar 7	Poverty and employment access	
10	Mar 9	Transportation, housing, gentrification, and displacement	
Week of Mar 14		Final presentations	Final paper/project (24 hrs. after presentation)

Course requirements

Course structure and assignments

The in-class portion of the course is a blend of lecture, in-class activities, and student-led discussion. On many class days, students will facilitate discussion based on readings or topical events. Some lecture will be necessary when we cover concepts and material that form foundation for the day's discussion. These topics are divided roughly into four parts: (1) Background, (2) History and theory, (3) Practice, and (4) Issues.

Assessment will be based on the following:

1. Participation in weekly online discussions
2. Facilitation of in-class discussions
3. Two assignments
4. A final paper on a topic of your choice related to transportation equity
5. Attendance and class participation

The general content for each assignment is listed below. More specific guidelines will be provided closer to the beginning of the quarter.

Online discussions

Each student is required to participate in an online discussion related to the week's readings, available on Canvas. We will use a reading annotation tool called Perusall, integrated with Canvas, that allows students to comment directly on each reading. Sometimes I will pose a focus question to organize discussion, but in general students will lead discussion. Exact guidelines for posting will be available before the first discussion is due, but in general, student comments should analyze, synthesize, or evaluate the readings in relation to the week's topic, to related topics, or to their experience. The comments may pose questions and offer critical commentary. We will often use these discussion threads as the basis for in-class discussion.

Class facilitation

In pairs, students will each lead one class session. These facilitated sessions should aim to take about half the class time (roughly 45 minutes). They may consist of discussion on specific themes related to the readings, a presentation and discussion of current events, or other in-class activities. **Students must submit a draft facilitation plan and meet with the instructor the week prior to their assigned date.**

Assignment 1: TRB or webinar reflection paper; due January 16

Option A: Going to TRB? Great! Attend a lectern session (*preferred*) or poster session (*less preferred*) that focuses on transportation equity; I suggest a session sponsored by the Standing Committee on Equity in Transportation (AME80), or any of the other committees that start with the code AME (see [here](#)). Write a reflection paper on the session. Your paper should briefly summarize the research presented and then focus on what you took away from the session. Some guiding questions to consider: What did you learn? What was

surprising or most interesting? What did you think was left unaddressed? What was the audience interaction like? What did you leave wanting to know more about? Aim for about 500 words; longer is OK but shorter is not. Don't forget to identify the title and the date of the session you attended.

Option B: Not going to TRB? That's OK too! Identify and watch a recent webinar that focuses on transportation equity. The webinar should have been presented within the last year at a university or hosted by a well-known transportation or urban planning organization, including public agencies or advocacy coalitions (Vision Zero Action Network, Transportation for America, America Walks, etc.). If you have questions about whether the webinar qualifies, check with me first. Follow the guidelines under Option A for what the paper should contain. Don't forget to identify the webinar title, URL, and date first delivered.

Assignment 2: Practice critique; due February 20

The purpose of this assignment is to learn how transportation agencies are implementing equity in practice and to use your understanding of transportation equity to critically review that practice. You will work in pairs or groups of three to review transportation plans or policies issued in the recent past. (Good candidates for review include the main document of an MPO long-range transportation plan [LRTP], the environmental justice analysis of a California LRTP, the circulation element of a general plan, and others.) Each group member will review and assess their own plan, examining factors including the demographic context of the plan area, the equity-related goals and objectives, the indicators used to evaluate equity, the degree to which equity is embedded in community engagement about the plan, and what theories of justice implicitly guided the development of the plan. Group members will then share their findings with each other, report on similarities and differences between the two, and develop a collective critique on how well the plans would be expected to advance equity and offer recommendations for improvement. The recommendations for improvement should include the development of an alternative indicator or set of indicators for evaluating equity and, where possible, using the indicator to show differences in projected outcomes.

Final paper or project; proposal due January 30, paper/project due finals week

A final paper or project related to transportation equity is required. The paper or project can be anything at all plausibly related to the course material; however, I must approve a one-page proposal before you proceed with research. Don't feel restricted to writing a paper. If you choose to submit a multimedia project (like a video or podcast), we will mutually agree on the appropriate length, content, and format of the deliverables. If you write a paper, it should be between 4,000 and 5,000 words, not including diagrams, charts, tables, or references. Empirical papers or case studies are preferred. PhD students should submit a first draft of a paper suitable for submission to an academic outlet, such as the Transportation Research Board Annual Meeting or a peer-reviewed journal. You will briefly present your findings on the final day of class or during finals week. More details will be provided separately.

Grades

Grade percentages will be distributed as follows:

Category	Weight
Online discussion	15%
Class facilitation	10%
Assignment 1	15%
Assignment 2	20%
Final paper/project	40%

Each category will be graded using a letter grade (no pluses or minuses). Exact specifications for how to earn a grade will be provided for each assignment. In general, class facilitation, the two assignments, and the final paper/project will be graded on the quality of response to the prompt. The online discussion will be graded on both the quantity and quality of responses.

Unexcused late assignments will lose one letter grade per day they are late. Discussion posts submitted late will not count toward your grade and cannot be made up. Notify me in advance if you have a valid reason to submit something late.

Readings

No textbook is required for this course. Readings and links to readings will be available on Canvas, and a complete reading list will be available at the beginning of the course. The list of readings is subject to revision throughout the quarter.

Participation and attendance

Class participation, and therefore attendance, is mandatory at all sessions. However, I understand that life happens (particularly in the Covid era) and you'll occasionally need to miss a class because of emergency, illness, religious observances, or other needs. There is no need to notify me in advance, but **more than three absences will result in a reduction of your final grade by a fraction (i.e., an A will become an A-)**. But do notify me in advance if you will have a prolonged absence for a legitimate reason. Whatever the reason for your absence, you are responsible for acquiring class materials when you do not attend, and assignments are still due as posted.