



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO



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Urban Studies
Innis College, University of Toronto

**URB 421: Urban Justice in the Global South
(Syllabus in Progress – DRAFT)**

*Summer 2025
May 12 – June 8, 2025*

Professor Aditi Mehta – aditi.mehta@utoronto.ca
Office Hours – Wednesdays 1:30-3:30 PM or by appointment

Sign Up Here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/17SAmE69bIEUOlrzOpbli82k8XvNyHj4JohSgZ9L4tLI/edit?usp=sharing>

Cities all over the world, and particularly in India, are engines of the global economy, but also sites of deep inequality and poverty. The global south metropolis is highly dependent on the informal economy to function, fueled by the most vulnerable urban populations who are excluded from the wealth accumulation. How do we make sense of this paradox? This course investigates the notion of urban justice in the context of Indian Cities. How do local governments, private actors, non-profit organizations, and various community stakeholders in Indian cities each conceive of urban justice and collaborate or clash to achieve their visions? We will explore knowledge production and power in the city, as well as competing theories of justice to interrogate whose voice matters in urban development and policymaking. We will apply these theories to real world case-studies exploring the spatial politics of housing and transit policy; climate change; as well as gender, caste, and religious discrimination. Ultimately, students will develop their own vision of urban justice.

Mumbai a prime urban center to understand inequality and justice in the global south. It is a rapidly expanding city of acute contradictions: home to both Bollywood and billionaires as well as Dharavi, South Asia's largest slum. In fact, sixty percent of the city's

population lives in slums. Mumbai is also a site of powerful community organizing and self-determination among marginalized groups. Community organizations such as the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC) and PUKAR have paved the way and provided models of resistance and self-determination for other vulnerable communities in cities across the Global South.

Assignments & Evaluation

Assignment	Percentage of Grade
Weekly Blog + Reading Response	30%
Urban Justice Research Media Project (In Groups)	30%
Final Course Reflection Essay	20%
Participation & Attendance	20%

Seminar Schedule

Readings will change based on confirmed field trips. I may also add more media, fiction, and film to the syllabus.

Summer 2025	Seminar Session
Week 1 (Zoom)	<p>Kickoff Meeting on Zoom What to Expect and How to Prepare</p> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do we define urban justice? - Understanding caste and post-colonialism in the Global South <p>Readings Appadurai, A. (2006). <i>The right to research. Globalisation, societies and education</i>, 4(2), 167-177.</p> <p>Prakash, G. (2010). <i>Mumbai fables</i>. Princeton University Press. (Excerpts)</p> <p>McFarlane, C. (2008). Governing the contaminated city: Infrastructure and sanitation in colonial and post-colonial Bombay. <i>International journal of urban and regional research</i>, 32(2), 415-435.</p>

	<p>Mosse, D. (2018). Caste and development: Contemporary perspectives on a structure of discrimination and advantage. <i>World development</i>, 110, 422-436.</p> <p>Yengde, S. (2022). Global castes. In <i>Rethinking Difference in India Through Racialization</i> (pp. 170-190). Routledge.</p> <p>Film Watch the Film: Bombay Velvet (based on Gyan Prakash’s book)</p>
<p>Week 2</p>	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the relationship between the informal and formal economy in Mumbai? <p>Field Trips:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Dharavi walking tour, South Asia’s largest slum Site visit to PUKAR, SPARC, Mahila Milan Walking Tour with PUKAR – PUKAR is a youth participatory action research non-profit that provides walking tours of South Asia’s largest slum, highlighting the informal economies that flourish there and the lived experiences of youth. Site visits with SPARC and Mahila Milan – These two non-profits are famous for their organizing work with slum-dwellers regarding property rights (SPARC) and women’s economic independence and access to healthcare (Mahila Milan). 2) Dhobi Ghat – an open air laundry facility founded in 1890, where workers clean linens from hospitals and hotels 3) Bollywood studios + Andheri where the studio are located <p>Readings</p> <p>Roy, A. (2009). Why India cannot plan its cities: Informality, insurgence and the idiom of urbanization. <i>Planning theory</i>, 8(1), 76-87.</p> <p>Kudva, N. (2009). The everyday and the episodic: the spatial and political impacts of urban informality. <i>Environment and planning A</i>, 41(7), 1614-1628.</p> <p>Film Watch the Film: Dhobi Ghat</p> <p>Ponnachan, M. K. S. (2023). One City, Many Lives: Exploring the Quintessence of Mumbai City in the Movie Dhobi Ghat. <i>International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences (IJELS)</i>, 50.</p>

<p>Week 3</p>	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are housing, climate, and transit justice interrelated in Mumbai? - How have residents claimed their right to the city? <p>Field Trips:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Mumbai during the plague heritage walk 2) Understanding Mumbai’s waterways walk 3) Site Visit to Swaach Coop in Pune and waste trail walk – India’s first waste-picker cooperative 4) Site Visit to Suvidha Center - This is an example of effective public private partnership between the company Unilever and the Mumbai Municipal Corporation to provide low-income communities with access to clean toilets, showers, and laundry facilities. <p>Readings</p> <p>Boo, K. (2014). <i>Behind the beautiful forevers: Life, death, and hope in a Mumbai undercity</i>. Random House Trade Paperbacks. (Excerpts)</p> <p>Sharma, K. (2000). <i>Rediscovering Dharavi: stories from Asia's largest slum</i>. Penguin Books India. (Excerpts)</p> <p>Wagle, P., & Philip, K. (2022). Climate justice is social justice: articulating people’s rights to the city in Mumbai. <i>Environment and Urbanization</i>, 34(2), 331-348.</p> <p>Kaushal, J., & Mahajan, P. (2021). Asia's largest urban slum-Dharavi: A global model for management of COVID-19. <i>Cities</i>, 111.</p> <p>Kudva, N. (2005). Strong states, strong NGOs. <i>Social movements in India: Poverty, power, and politics</i>, 233-266.</p> <p>Film</p> <p>Watch the Film: Slumdog Millionair</p>
<p>Week 4</p>	<p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does gender affect the way one navigates Mumbai? Why is it important to view urban justice from an intersectional lens? <p>Field Trips:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LGBTQ Underground Tour

- **Garima Greh Mumbai** – This is a first of its kind shelter and safe-haven community centre for transgender individuals, who are often ostracized in India.

Readings

Estrada, M., Galvin, M., Maassen, A., & Hörschelmann, K. (2023). Catalysing urban transformation through women’s empowerment in cooperative waste management: the SWaCH initiative in Pune, India. *Local Environment*, 28(7), 852-866.

Dutta, A., & Roy, R. (2014). Decolonizing transgender in India: Some reflections. *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1(3), 320-337.

Final Exhibition of Media Projects

- Photo essay, video essay, maps, zine, journalism exploring an urban justice issue of your choice