

Master of Arts in Urban Sustainability (USMA)

AULA has a long standing, deeply-rooted commitment to educating students by building their capacity to create a more just world. Consistent with this tradition and in response to the challenges of global, environmental change, as well as social and economic inequality, Antioch's program trains the next generation of urban problem-solvers. The Urban Sustainability program prepares students for leadership positions in multiple sectors, including public policy, corporate accountability, social justice organizing, and environmental programming. *(Note: Effective Fall/Winter 2016 semester, USMA implemented its revised curriculum with reduced total program units from thirty six (36) semester units to thirty two (32) semester units and shortened its program length from four (4) semesters to three (3) semesters. Refer to previous catalogs for information about the old curriculum.)*

Program Overview

The USMA program integrates theoretical learning with field-based practice in an 18-month/ three-semester, full-time, graduate-level curriculum. This 32- semester-credit degree program uses a low-residency format with on-campus residencies, off-site residencies, and structured periods between those residencies. During their first year, students engage in one six-credit interdisciplinary seminar course as well as four three-credit content courses. They also attend four residencies and begin their field work during this first year. In their third semester of the program, students continue their fieldwork and launch a capstone project while taking practice-based elective courses. Students attend one residency at the beginning of their third semester and a final one at the end of their program.

In order to meet the program learning outcomes described above, students studying Urban Sustainability at AULA will acquire the following competencies:

Systems Thinking

Because today's cities exist in a world that is more crowded, complex, interconnected, interdependent and rapidly changing than ever before, we need to develop holistic ways of seeing and mapping key relationships and processes. Our students are taught to become adept systems thinkers who can:

- address a problem at multiple scales
- analyze social, scientific, and economic implications
- transfer knowledge across disciplines
- engage in creative problem-solving

Environmental Literacy

Building from a foundation of environmental science, students gain a strong understanding of cities as ecosystems. From this perspective, students explore diverse urban sectors such as food, land, transportation, energy, waste, and water within their cultural, political, and economic contexts, and configure ways and means for human settlements to become more compatible with nature.

Practitioner Skills

Through workshops, courses, and fieldwork our students learn and practice technical skills including facilitation, policy analysis, mapping, research, graphic presentation, and evaluation as well as the habits of a reflective practitioner.

Social Justice Perspective

Reducing inequality at the local, regional, and global level is a prerequisite of urban sustainability. Students learn to apply a human rights lens to their ecosystems analysis and practice in order to become global citizens who can help shape a more equitable world.

Degree Requirements

Students in the USMA program must earn a total of 32 semester credits to complete the degree. Degree requirements include the following:

- 18 credits required core curriculum coursework
- 2 credits elective coursework
- 3 credits first-year fieldwork
- 3 credits third semester fieldwork
- 6 credits capstone project
- 3 semesters of full-time enrollment (or the equivalent)
- Attendance at 6 residencies
- 4 residencies in first year
- 2 residencies in second year

For every three credits of coursework, students are expected to spend 10 hours of face-to-face instruction during the residencies and 75-100 hours online (over the 20-week semester). Students are also required to attend 15-30 hours of additional lectures, special events, and site visits during the residencies.

Students may withdraw or take a Leave of Absence but are required to complete the degree within five calendar years of initially entering the Masters degree program.

Core Coursework

Each USMA student takes the following five courses as part of their required core curriculum:

- Urban Sustainability (6 units)
- Eco Systems Thinking (3 units)
- Urban Infrastructure (3 units)
- Research and Writing for Practitioners (3 units)
- Sustainable Urban Economies (3 units)

Full-time students enroll in 9 units of core coursework each semester, completing these required 18 units within the first year of the program. Note that students also enroll in fieldwork courses while completing their core curriculum.

Elective Coursework & Independent Learning Activities

Students take two one-unit elective courses that enable them to develop their practitioner skills. A minimum of two electives are offered during each semester of the program. Students take their elective courses in the third semester of the program.

Students can potentially enroll for elective units as independent learning activities, working under the mentorship of a faculty expert. These independent studies are learning activities conceived and crafted by students in collaboration with their evaluators (faculty at AULA or other accredited graduate programs) and approved by their USMA faculty mentors. Independent studies may be focused on content related aspects of a student's field work, specific areas of interest arising from one or more of the required core courses, or an emerging topic of urban sustainability not covered in any of the required courses or electives.

Degree Program Schedule

The USMA program follows an 18-month cohort-model for students enrolled full time. Students who do not enroll in all of the required graduate courses their first year will take at least two years to complete their degree. Instruction follows a hybrid approach, meeting in on-site classrooms or in the field during the residencies and maintaining an online connection throughout the intervening weeks between residencies

First Year Curriculum

During the first semester of the first year, students enroll in one six-unit interdisciplinary seminar class as well as one three-credit course. During the second semester, students enroll in three three-unit courses. Both semesters require students to participate in two residencies. In addition, three credits of field work are also required as part of the first-year curriculum. Students begin their field work in the second semester. This first year curriculum totals 21 semester credits.

Semester 1

URS 5010	Urban Sustainability	6
URS 5100	Fieldwork Planning	1
URS 5230	Eco Systems Thinking	3

Semester 2

URS 5040	Sustainable Urban Economies	3
URS 5110	Fieldwork	2
URS 5220	Research and Writing for Practitioners	3
URS 5240	Urban Infrastructure	3

Third Semester Curriculum

The third semester curriculum includes a combination of fieldwork and the capstone project as well as two units of elective coursework. Students in their third semester attend the residency at the beginning of the semester as well as a sixth and final residency at the end of their program (at the beginning of the following semester), during which they make a public presentation of their capstone project. This third semester curriculum totals 11 semester credits.

URS 6120	Fieldwork	3
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Electives

URS 6200	Adaptive Leadership for Sustainable Change	1
URS 6210	Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories	1
URS 6230	Funding Your Mission: Grant Writing	1
URS 6250	Group Facilitation	1
URS 6260	Practical Map Making	1
URS 6280	The Power of Story: Creating Strategy, Meme and Messages for Social Change	1
URS 6290	Introduction to Environmental Journalism	1

Residencies

The residencies constitute a key component of the USMA Program. Students are required to attend six residencies over the course of their studies in the program. On-campus residencies that occur at the beginning of each semester span six days, commencing on Tuesday and finishing on Sunday. New students are required to attend a one-day orientation, which takes place on the Monday prior to the first day of their initial residency. All students attend two six-day residencies during their first year in the program and two six-day residencies in their second year. Two additional on-campus residencies for first year students, occurring mid-semester, span four days beginning on Thursday and ending on Sunday.

Residencies include a combination of classroom learning, mentorship, site visits, guest lectures, panels, collaborative problem-solving sessions, workshops, cultural and social activities, and elective seminars. Students who have completed three semesters and have met all of the program requirements give public presentations of their capstone projects during their final residency.

During campus residencies, students are responsible for their own room and board expenses and arrangements.

Cohorts Starting in October:

Semesters 1 & 2

October (6 day)

January (4 day)

April (6 day)

July (4 day)

Semester 3

October (6 day)

Final Residency: April (6 day)

Cohorts Starting in April:

Semesters 1 & 2

April (6 day)

July (4 day)

October (6 day)

January (4 day)

Semester 3

April (6 day)

Final Residency: October (6 day)

Between Residencies

During the periods between residencies, students participate as active members of a virtual learning community. Through the use of the Sakai learning management system, students post and discuss reactions to their assigned readings; receive new course-related content including websites, online video presentations, blogs, and images; submit drafts and completed assignments for peer and faculty review; and engage in ongoing discussions related to all of the above. Classes also have some synchronous meetings during these periods using the Adobe Connect Pro Classroom Platform.

Students are expected to correspond with their mentors on a regular basis, further developing their fieldwork, elective, independent study, and capstone plans discussed and agreed upon during residencies and following through on them during the semester.

Fieldwork

The USMA program requires students to engage in fieldwork in their second and third semesters in the program. Fieldwork planning is a part of the first semester curriculum and involves articulating students' areas of focus and identifying appropriate placements that match their interests. These placements can take place in community settings of all types (including colleges and universities, not-for-profits, for-profit businesses, and governmental agencies). The program's strong emphasis on fieldwork ensures that students have the opportunity to develop practical professional skills that they can integrate with theoretical learning while serving community needs related to issues of urban sustainability.

Capstone

The Capstone is a semester-long comprehensive project in which students apply their integrated learning of social, economic and scientific perspectives through the overarching lens of natural systems thinking. Through their capstone project, students demonstrate the habits of mind, breadth of knowledge, practitioner skills and social justice perspective that comprise the mission of the Urban Sustainability program.

The capstone seminar ensures that students remain connected, receive feedback from their mentors and peers, and benefit from the wisdom of a larger community.

Through the capstone process, students:

- identify and address an urban place-based question, problem or initiative
- work under the mentorship of a faculty member and content expert
- design, create, record and report on the processes of a significant project or research effort