



University
of Basel

Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences



Critical Urbanisms

Master of Arts



criticalurbanisms.philhist.unibas.ch

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire (Photo: L. Baati)

In our rapidly changing and contested global environment, cities are becoming increasingly important: they house a majority of the world's inhabitants and act as catalysts of social, economic, cultural, and ecological change.

The University of Basel's Master in Critical Urbanisms offers a new opportunity to understand these planetary transformations in the structure, form, and use of cities and territories.



Cape Town, South Africa (Photo: S. Bushra)

Interdisciplinary and International Study

The University of Basel's Master in Critical Urbanisms draws on a diverse faculty from across the humanities, social sciences, and design disciplines to develop ways of interdisciplinary learning. At its core stands a pedagogical model, a jointly taught research studio that immerses students in collaborative research. A second unique quality of the program is its international learning experience, with a semester of study and research in Cape Town, anchored in the African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town. Through fieldwork, archival work, and mapping, students gain fluency in spatial, social, and visual research methods. As such, they acquire relevant practical and theoretical knowledge of the social, economic, cultural, and political processes that make up cities and territories. Interdisciplinary proficiency and international experience will enable graduates of the program to interact effectively with the broad range of constituents and institutions that play a vital role in shaping the future of cities.

The University of Basel's Master in Critical Urbanisms is an English-taught four-semester program that will train a new generation of inquisitive and creative graduates to think beyond divisions of urban versus rural and North versus South in order to address some of the most pressing issues of our times.

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STUDY PROGRAM

Research Studio

Taken in the first and third semesters, the research studio immerses students in collaborative, interdisciplinary research practice that combines humanities and social-scientific methods with visual and spatial analysis and representation. Jointly taught by core and affiliated faculty, with regular visits by external experts, the studio takes place in a dedicated studio space that acts as a laboratory in which small teams of students hailing from different disciplinary backgrounds can work closely together. Students work on a range of outputs, from essays to illustrated booklets, maps and diagrams, photographic projects, videos, and installations. This work will be assembled and edited for public presentation as the collective outcome of the research studio.



Pyongyang, North Korea (Photo: G. Scotto)

STUDY PROGRAM

Cape Town Semester

The second semester of the master's program takes place at the University of Cape Town. The semester focuses on African Urbanisms, exploring cities in the African and broader global southern context as crucial sites for the analysis of everyday forms of agency central to contemporary urbanism. The semester provides students with exciting opportunities to engage with varied aspects of city life and debate. Students whose circumstances prevent them from participating in the Cape Town semester can take a year-long course at the University of Basel in anthropological fieldwork methods that will include a research trip during the winter holidays.



FOR WHOM?



Breidjing refugee camp, Chad (Photo: M. Herz)

For Whom?

The program targets international and Swiss students in the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. It is likely also to be of interest to academically qualified professionals from the fields of architecture, urban planning, and environmental management. English proficiency is required.

Career Perspectives

The program prepares students for careers in a variety of national and international contexts, from research institutions to local, regional, and national government planning offices to development aid organizations, NGOs, architecture and design firms, museums, urban planning and policy offices, international organizations, universities, and consultancy firms. Students will be equipped and are also encouraged to continue their studies at the PhD level.



Istanbul, Turkey (Photo: G. Scotto)

Why study Critical Urbanisms?

The Master in Critical Urbanisms starts from the premise that the world's most pressing urban challenges call not only for new ways of doing but for new ways of thinking. Imagining alternative futures means rethinking the present and the past. Instead of seeking to solve problems as they appear, we interrogate their historical making, their political unfolding, and the ways in which they are represented. We do so by approaching scientific expertise, intellectual constructs, and professional practices through the study of lived experience, in all its complexity and contradiction.

The transformation of cities and territories has long escaped treatment as a topic exclusive to any one discipline or profession. To tackle this century's urban and ecological crises, we need more than the practical application of specialized knowledge. Against the abstraction of the bird's-eye view and the limits of problem-solving expertise, we are committed to critical, interdisciplinary interrogation as the foundation for imagining alternative futures. Drawing from the fields of urbanism, geography, architecture, anthropology, and history, the program foregrounds both the heterogeneity of urban life and the multiplicity of ways in which people seek to make sense of it. The curriculum trains students in theoretical and practical competencies and is oriented toward both scholarly engagement and public debate, a combination essential to addressing the extraordinarily complex imperatives of urban lifeworlds in the twenty-first century.

FACTS & FIGURES

1460

Founded in 1460, the University of Basel is the oldest university in Switzerland. It has an international reputation of outstanding achievements in research and teaching. Today, the University of Basel offers its unique studying conditions to around 13,000 students from over a hundred nations as they work towards their bachelor's, master's or PhD degrees.

Minimum study achievements: 120 ECTS credits

Minimum duration: 4 semesters

Start: Fall semester

Language: English

Application fee: CHF 100 (one-off)

Tuition fees: CHF 850 per semester

Financial Aid

Partial fellowships are available to contribute towards the costs of travel to and from Cape Town.

Application

The deadline for applications is 30 April. Please contact Michelle Killenberger for more information (michelle.killenberger@unibas.ch).

International Students

Since the visa application process can take several months, we recommend that international students submit their application early. Please contact us for assistance. The estimated monthly expenses for living and studying at the University of Basel are between CHF 1500 and CHF 2000.

Contact

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**Educating
Talents**
since 1460.

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