

Teaching urban history in Italian Universities

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This contribution displays the results of a **countrywide inquiry on Urban History courses** (in all its eventual specific denominations) activated in Italian Universities.

We circulated among the Italian Urban History Association (AISU) members and (with lesser results) among teachers in different disciplines the enclosed **form** containing questions on teachers' working and academic position, on the course level, number of students, duration and contents, with particular attention to the chronological scope and to textbooks in use. The principal aim of the inquiry was to draw a first map of Urban History teaching in Italy and to point out peculiarities or problems. We collected **22 relevant answers from a universe of about 70 activated courses**, as resulting from an exhaustive web search. Nevertheless, we can consider the sample of answers representative for some important variables, except the distribution of courses among different Universities and Faculties.

As far as this latter is concerned, the **internet overview** allows to appreciate the **leading role of some important research poles** (Rome and Turin with 8 courses, Naples and Venice with 6, Milan and Catania with 5, Bologna with 4), mostly seat of Polytechnics (Turin and Milan) or Faculties of Architecture and Schools of Archeology (Catania and Bologna), in fostering the activation of Urban History courses. Those are mainly given inside the **Faculties** of Architecture (58%); the remaining are mostly inside the Faculties of Letters or Humanities in general (37%), and only a few in the Faculties of Economics (3%), Law (1%) and Engineering (1%), as the **table** below shows. **Denominations** spread from *History of the City or Urban History* (prevailing with 54% of the courses, comprising different periods and often with explicit attention for the territory, or seldom for archeological, social, economic topics) to *History of Urban Studies* (35%, mainly in Faculties of Architecture, sometimes with theoretical or other special features), with less frequent geographic courses with reference to *landscape* and *settlement* in their denomination (11%, mainly in Faculties of Letters).

As we said, **the sample of collected answers** completely misses the geographical distribution of courses, overrepresenting some local realities. The bias is due to the features of the **AISU network**, mobilized for the distribution of the questionnaire: it involved only part of the teachers keeping Urban History courses, and among them teachers attaching more importance to this field were autoselected. Anyway, the sample reflects well the distribution of courses among Faculties, although it overrepresents some minor ones, such as Economics and Law. The opposite thing happens with denominations: History of the City and of Urban Studies are well represented, while Landscape Studies is underrepresented.

From the point of view of **teachers' academic position**, the collected answers show the prevailing presence of Full Professors and Assistant Professors in teaching Urban History (35% each), with fewer Associate Professors and temporary teachers (15% each). Courses have an **average duration** of 50 hours (10 credits), and are mainly activated at the first **level** degree (65%, mostly kept by Assistant Professors) and at the second level degree (25%, almost all kept by Full Professors), and only in few cases inside MA (Pisa) and PhD programs (Rome, Turin and Venice). The average number of **attending students** is 45. It is likely that the high number of students and high duration of courses is correlated with the autoselection of teachers attaching importance to Urban History courses.

The **chronological scope of contents** is widely differentiated: Modern and Early Modern periods are covered in more than half of the courses, but this percentage falls under 50% for Middle Ages and under 30% for Ancient Times. In the great variety of chosen **textbooks**, some titles are frequently met; this could be a sign of the publication of specific handbooks for Urban History.

We collected also further answers about **Urban History topics treated inside different teachings**; even if not representative, those answers show that History of Architecture for architects or engineers, and general History in other Faculties, such as Letters, Economics, Sociology, often cover Urban History subjects.

Web search results	Denomination			Total	%
Faculty	<i>History of the City / Urban History</i>	<i>Landscape / Settlements</i>	<i>History of Urban Studies</i>		
Architecture	22	1	18	41	57,7
Letters and Humanities	14	6	6	26	36,6
Economics	1	1		2	2,8
Law	1			1	1,4
Engineering			1	1	1,4
Total	38	8	25	71	
%	53,5	11,3	35,2		

Associazione Italiana di Storia Urbana

Questionario sulla didattica della Storia Urbana nelle Università italiane

Docente _____
Nome COGNOME Qualifica

Sede _____
Ateneo Dipartimento

Denominazione del corso _____

Eventuali corsi monografici di Storia della città all'interno di corsi generali con altra denominazione: _____

Livello _____
Laurea triennale / Laurea specialistica / Master / SSIS / Dottorato Anno di corso

Facoltà _____

Corso di laurea _____

Durata _____
Crediti Ore

Ambito cronologico: _____
Antichità / Medioevo / Età Moderna / Età Contemporanea / Tutto

Programma del corso:

Testi adottati:

Numero di studenti frequentanti _____

Titoli di eventuali tesi di laurea o di dottorato in Storia Urbana in corso o discusse:

Accordi di scambio di studenti e/o docenti attivati nell'ambito dei Programmi Erasmus/Socrates o altro che comprendono corsi di Storia urbana:

Eventuale interesse a partecipare a iniziative e convegni dell'AISU: _____
SÌ / NO

Italian Association of Urban History
Questionnaire on teaching Urban History in Italian Universities

Teacher _____
First name SURNAME Academic position

Seat _____
University Department

Course denomination _____

Eventual special Urban History topics inside general courses with different denomination: _____

Level _____
First level / Second level / Master degree / PhD

Faculty _____

Curriculum _____

Duration _____
Credits Hours

Chronological scope: _____
Ancient Times / Middle Ages / Early Modern / Modern / All

Course program:

Textbooks:

Number of attending students: _____

Titles of eventual BA or PhD dissertations in progress or discussed:

Student and/or teacher exchange programs activated inside Erasmus/Socrates or other including Urban History courses:

Interested in participating in the Association initiatives and conferences: _____
Yes / No