

UP312 Communication for Planners

Class Meetings

(Zoom meeting links are available through the Illinois Compass course page)

Lecture: Tuesdays; 11:00 AM - 11:50 AM (ONLINE, Synchronous¹)

Lab: Thursdays; 11:00 AM – 12:20 PM (ONLINE, Synchronous)

Instructor: Professor Arnab Chakraborty, arnab@illinois.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM and by appointment (Zoom [link](#))

Teaching Assistant: Will Finkelstein, wdf4@illinois.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 12:30 PM – 1:30 PM and by appointment (Zoom [link](#))

Introduction:

Planners rely on their communication skills for a wide array of tasks. As a planner, you will interact with elected officials, developers, and community members. You will help your audience understand complex ideas and technical analyses that convey the direction in which your community is headed, or the challenges and opportunities it faces. Because a planner's authority is limited, you will also need strong communication skills to persuade your audience of the value of your recommendations.

A survey of planning and planning-related professionals² found that good communication is the most valued skill, even more than technical and quantitative skills. Memos, reports, and presentations are some of the most common ways planners communicate. Mastery in these comes from building strength in basic communication skills as well as from developing the knowledge of the field in which these skills are employed.

Towards that goal, in this course we will cover writing, verbal, and graphic techniques. You will consider incompletely defined and complex planning situations, identify key challenges, and present your analysis and recommendations. These lessons will build from one week to the next throughout the semester and will demand more and more integration of different techniques.

The emphasis in this course will be on learning by doing. Take-home assignments will complement readings, lectures, and lab, and will require significant amount of time every week. As an advanced composition general education course, this class will also involve significant research and writing. At the end of this course, you should expect to:

1. have enhanced your writing, verbal, and graphic communication skills.
2. have a sense of the relevance of these skills in practical planning situations.
3. be comfortable with using software applications taught in this course.

Prerequisites: You will be expected to understand basic planning vocabulary and have the ability of using Internet research tools and basic word processing software.

¹ Recommended format. Please see additional instructions for students who cannot attend synchronously in the Course Format section.

² Guzzetta, J. D., and S. Bollens. "Urban Planners" Skills and Competencies" Journal of Planning Education and Research 23, no.1 (2003) 96

Course Organization and Policies:

This course is built around regular cycles of learning and applying skills. Typically, on Tuesdays a lecture will cover a central idea; we will discuss some readings and review the prior week's work; and homework will be assigned. On Thursdays, a lab session will provide an opportunity to apply that idea through a designed group activity or training on a software program. Specific weekly activities will help you make progress toward reports and presentations for larger assignments.

Readings: Readings for this course are limited but important. Assigned readings will typically be for Tuesday's lecture sessions and digital copies of all required readings will be posted on Illinois Compass. You are expected to complete these readings prior to attending the respective class session.

Brief Memos: You will produce a number of brief memos in this course. Each will focus on development of a specific skillset. Lab sessions will provide training and review to complete the memos. Memos will be scored out of 10. Late submissions of memos will lose two points for the initial delay and two additional points for every additional 24 hours delay. [There will also be an extra credit opportunity].

Project Reports and Presentations: You will complete two set of project reports and presentations. These will ask you to tackle larger and more complex issues by synthesizing and compiling work done for brief memos, and create coherent and substantial outputs. A dedicated student with command of the materials will be able to draw significantly from brief memos to complete these assignments. Each set will be scored out of 50. Late submission will lose five points for the initial delay and five additional points for every additional 24 hours delay. There will be no make-up or extra credit exercises for these.

Participation and Attendance: Your active participation is important for the success of this course. Meaningful engagement in the class, on discussion boards, and during office hours will lead to high score on the participation component of the grade. You are encouraged to share your perspectives, experiences, and questions, and to respond to questions raised by the instructors and your classmates. Lecture and lab session will often employ Zoom breakout rooms to facilitate small group discussions and to offer opportunities to grow your skills and confidence. You are strongly encouraged to share questions about assignments during the class sessions so that your fellow students can participate and benefit from the discussions such questions generate. As stated in Section § 1-501 of the Student Code "*regular class attendance is expected of all students at the University.*" Poor attendance will not result in automatic failure, but will be reflected in the participation component of the course grade.

Grading: Your grade for this course will be based on the following breakdown:

- Brief memos: 30%
- Class Participation: 20%
- Project 1: 25%
- Project 2: 25%

Final course grade will be based on the following distribution: 100-97 points = A+, 96.9-94 = A, 93.9-90 = A-, 89.9-87 = B+, 86.9-84 = B, 83.9-80 = B-, 79.9-77 = C+, 76.9-74 = C, 73.9-70 = C, 69.9-67 = D+, 66.9-64 = D, 63.9-60 = D-, and 59.9-0 points = F

Please note: You will submit all deliverables through the Illinois Compass course site unless otherwise noted. Please ensure that written submissions are in PDF format, have recognizable file names (for

example, assignment number and your last name) and that file sizes are appropriate. There will be no final examination in this course.

Format: Instructions for this course will be in synchronous, online-only format. This quality of this course will depend on enthusiastic student interactions and, as a result, students are expected to be present online during the synchronous lecture and lab hours. I encourage students to keep their videos ON during the class session. If you cannot be present for the synchronous session or if your availability changes during the semester for any reason, please get in touch with the instructor as soon as possible. Students who are unable to take the course in the synchronous format or when they miss individual synchronous sessions will be expected to review all posted materials for that session within 24 hours of the class meeting and post an additional 250-word reaction to the class session on a designated Illinois Compass discussion board page.

Software: Software used in this course are accessible to students through DURP Remote server: <https://static.ics.illinois.edu/remote-list/>. Details will be discussed prior to use in the course. Software are also available for free download for students ([Adobe Cloud](#), [Office 365](#)). Finally, UIUC is offering [AnyWare](#), a virtual desktop environment allowing student to access software whether remote, on campus, or in class.

Academic Integrity: Please be aware of the university guidelines regarding academic integrity, which can be found under Article 1, Part 4 of the student code (<http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/>). Academic dishonesty includes such things as cheating, inappropriate use of university equipment/material, fabrication of information, plagiarism (presenting someone else's work from any source as your own such as copying someone else's post), and so on. All forms of academic dishonesty will be reported to the student's home department, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, and to the Senate Committee on Student Discipline.

Diversity: The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) is committed to creating an environment of inclusion and opportunity that is rooted in the very goals and responsibilities of practicing planners. Conduct that interferes with the rights of another or creates an atmosphere of intimidation or disrespect is inconsistent with the environment of learning and cooperation that the program requires. By enrolling a course in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, students agree to be responsible for maintaining a respectful environment in all DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. We will be governed by the University Student Code. Please see the *Student Code Article 1—Student Rights and Responsibilities* for further details (<http://www.admin.illinois.edu/policy/code/>).

Disability Services: This course will accommodate students with documented disabilities. Please refer to the Disability Resource Guide (<http://disability.illinois.edu/disability-resource-guide>) for more information and inform the instructor of any requests at the beginning of the semester.

Counseling Center: The Counseling Center is committed to providing a range of services intended to help students develop improved coping skills in order to address emotional, interpersonal, and academic concerns. The Counseling Center provides individual, couples, and group counseling. All of these services are paid for through the health services fee. The Counseling Center offers primarily short-term counseling, but they do also provide referrals to the community when students could benefit from longer term services. (<https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>)

COURSE OUTLINE

FUNDAMENTALS OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Week 1: 8/25, 8/27 – Communication for Planners – An Introduction

Tuesday: Course overview

CareerOneStop. (n.d.). Retrieved August 24, 2020, from //www.careeronestop.org. [Urban Planning](#)

Thursday: Lab activity: Review commentaries

Reading: Bronin, S. C. (n.d.). *Opinion: In fight for justice, zoning laws that exclude low-income people must be changed*. The Courier-Journal. Retrieved August 24, 2020, from <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2020/06/09/zoning-laws-exclude-poor-people-neighborhoods-must-change/3138316001/>

Reading: Trump, D. J., & Carson, B. (2020, Aug 17). *We'll protect America's suburbs. Wall Street Journal* Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2434325301?accountid=14553>

Introduce Memo 1

Week 2: 9/1, 9/3 – Principles of Profession Communication

Tuesday: Principles of profession communication

Reading: Doumont, J. L. (2002). The three laws of professional communication. *IEEE Transactions on professional communication*, 45(4), 291-296.

Reference only³: Guzzetta, J. D., and S. A. Bollens. "Urban Planners" Skills and Competencies: Are We Different from Other Professions? Does Context Matter? Do We Evolve?" *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 23, no.1 (2003) 96.

Reference only: Strunk Jr, W., & White, E. B. (2006). *The Elements of Style*. 1918. Bartleby.com, 24.

Thursday: Lab activity: Synthesize information [Work on Memo 1]

[Memo 1 Due 5 PM Monday 9/7]

COMMUNICATING URBAN AND REGIONAL ISSUES

Week 3: 9/8, 9/10 – Exploring Planning Issues

Tuesday: Local regulations and the real estate market

Reading: Schuetz, J. (2019, October 31). Is zoning a useful tool or a regulatory barrier? Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/is-zoning-a-useful-tool-or-a-regulatory-barrier/>

³ Entries marked "Reference only" are highly recommended but not required. If you don't read the entire document, I recommend scanning the abstract.

Reference only: Reading: Yen, M. and York, G., Chapter 3: Information from secondary sources. Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) *The planner's use of information*. Planners Press, 2003

Reference only: State of Florida, Department of Transportation, Community Impact Assessment Handbook, Chapter 4: Developing a Community Profile
https://www.cutr.usf.edu/oldpubs/CIA/Chapter_4.pdf

Introduce Project 1 and Memo 2

Thursday: Developing your community profile with Data and Maps (Work on Memo 1)

Week 4: 9/15, 9/17 – Developing Knowledge from Information

Tuesday: Developing Knowledge from Information

Reading: *Portland changes zoning rules to allow duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes in areas previously reserved for single-family homes—Oregonlive.com*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2020/08/portland-changes-zoning-code-to-allow-duplexes-triplexes-fourplexes-in-areas-previously-reserved-for-single-family-homes.html>

Reading: *Missing Middle Housing: Thinking Big and Building Small to Respond to Today's Housing Crisis*. (n.d.). Planetizen - Urban Planning News, Jobs, and Education. Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <https://www.planetizen.com/features/110259-missing-middle-housing-thinking-big-and-building-small-respond-today-s-housing>

Reading: Kim, N.Y. (2020, Aug 21). *Housing will test White support for Black lives—The Boston Globe*. Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/08/21/opinion/test-white-support-black-lives/>

Thursday: Memo Writing Workshop (Continue working on Memo 2)

[Memo 2 Due 5 PM Monday 9/21]

Week 5: 9/22, 9/24 – Seeking Evidence, Crafting Arguments

Tuesday: Basic components of arguments

Reading: Kneupper, C. (1978). Teaching Argument: An Introduction to the Toulmin Model. *College Composition and Communication*, 29(3), 237-241. doi:10.2307/356935

Reading: Wegmann, J. (2020). Death to Single-Family Zoning... and New Life to the Missing Middle. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86(1), 113-119.

Reading: Chakraborty, A. (2020). Calls to End All Single-Family Zoning Need More Scrutiny. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 86(1), 123-124.

Introduce Memo 3

Thursday: Argumentation Activity (Work on Memo 3)

Week 6: 9/29, 10/1 – Developing Findings

Tuesday: Connecting the dots

Reading: Armentrout, V. N., Chapter 9: Written Communication. In Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) *The planner's use of information*. Planners Press, 2003

Thursday: Bring a basic outline of your upcoming report to include in Memo 3 The lab activity will provide opportunity to receive feedback and further develop the draft report. (Continue working on Memo 3)

[Memo 3 Due 5 PM Monday 10/5]

Week 7: 10/6, 10/8 – Formatting Reports

Tuesday: Reading: *Cherry Picked—Five ways to improve planning reports*. (2017, August 7). Urban Planning Program. <https://urbanplanning.ku.edu/cherry-picked-five-ways-improve-planning-reports>

Reading: Writing Tips for Planners By Clement Lau, UrbDeZine Los Angeles (2015)

Thursday: Bring a substantial draft of Project Report to Lab.
Adobe InDesign Workshop (Work on Project 1)

Week 8: 10/13, 10/15 – Preparing Persuasive Presentations

Tuesday: Presenting to the public

Reading: *5 Ways to Get Over Your Fear of Public Speaking*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <https://hbr.org/2018/02/5-ways-to-get-over-your-fear-of-public-speaking>

Reading: *8 Ways to Deliver a Great Presentation (Even if You're Super Anxious About It)*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2020, from <https://hbr.org/2020/07/8-ways-to-deliver-a-great-presentation-even-if-youre-super-anxious-about-it>

Reading: Storey, A. W. Chapter 8. Speaking Skills for Presentations. Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) *The planner's use of information*. Planners Press, 2003

Thursday: Come prepared with your draft presentation. The class will involve a facilitated activity to refine your pitch (Continue working on Project 1)

[Project 1 Report and Presentations Due 5 PM Monday 10/19]

COMMUNICATION IN PLANNING PRACTICE

Week 9: 10/20, 10/22 – Local Planning and the Development Process

Tuesday: Local Planning and the Development Process

Reading: Berke, P., D. R. Godschalk, E. J. Kaiser, and D. Rodriguez. *Urban land use planning*. Chapter 10: The Plan-Making Process. University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Introduce Project 2 and Memo 4

Thursday: Review planning documents and municipal codes; Context Mapping (Work on Memo 4)

Week 10: 10/27, 10/29 – Small-Area and Site Planning

Tuesday: Considerations in Small Area Planning
Reading: Berke, P., D. R. Godschalk, E. J. Kaiser, and D. Rodriguez. Urban land use planning. Chapter 14: Small area plans. University of Illinois Press, 2006.

Thursday: Adobe Illustrator Training (Continue Working on Memo 4)
[Memo 3 Due 5 PM Monday 10/2]

Week 11: 11/3, 11/5 – Imagining Community Futures

Tuesday: No Class (Election Day | State Holiday)

Thursday: Visualizing a plan's impact on urban form; Adobe Photoshop Training
Reading: Frank, A., Chapter 10: Graphic Communication. In Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) The planner's use of information. Planners Press, 2003
[Introduce Memo 5; Work on Memo 5]

Week 12: 11/10, 11/12 – Planning with Multiple Interests

Tuesday: Stakeholders in the planning process
Reading: Fisher, R., and W. Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*. Chapters. 1-3, Edited by B. Patton. Second Edition. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1983
Reading: Lyles, W., & Swearingen White, S. (2019). Who cares? Arnstein's ladder, the emotional paradox of public engagement, and (re) imagining planning as caring. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 85(3), 287-300.

Thursday: Bring a basic outline of your upcoming report to include in Memo 5. The lab activity will provide opportunity to receive feedback and further develop the draft report. (Continue working on Memo 5)

[Memo 5 Due 5 PM Monday 11/16]

Week 13: 11/17, 11/19 – Project Management

Tuesday: Discussion on Planning Process and Project Management
Reading: Moore, T. (1991). A practical guide for managing planning projects. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 57(2), 212-222.
Reading: John Houseal, AICP, and Devin Lavigne, AICP, Delivering Better Plans, American Planning Association, PAS Memo — January/February 2012

Thursday: Work Session – Bring an early draft of Project#2 deliverables.
[Extra Credit Exercise: Update your E-Portfolio: Prepare a cover letter and resume for an internship position
Reading: Jones, W. W., and N. Macris. A career worth planning: starting out and moving ahead in the planning profession. Planners Press, American Planning Association, 2000.]

Week 14: 11/24, 11/26 – – NO CLASSES: Fall Break

Week 15: 12/1, 12/3 – Project Activities

Tuesday: Final Project Updates; Feedback on draft presentation outlines.

Thursday: Final Presentations.

Week 16: 12/8 – Conclusion and Course summary

Tuesday: Overflow Presentation Slot; Course summary.

[Final Reports and Copies of Presentation are due by 5 PM Monday 12/16]
