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Instructional Team

Welcome to Neighborhood Analysis! We are excited to teach and learn with you this semester.

Professor Andrew J. Greene

Office Hours: varies. Book via Calendly

TA: Eli Dastreup

Office Hours: Wednesdays at 10 am via Zoom or by Appointment

Course Overview and Objectives

This course teaches techniques for analyzing the demographic, economic, physical, and social conditions that exist at the neighborhood and local government scale. While our focus will be on analyzing current conditions, we will also learn how to tell stories about neighborhood change, and will learn how to protect and forecast future trends. We will learn how to describe community characteristics with small area census data, work with local administrative data, and will think about how our analysis of quantitative data fit with other forms of data and engagement to fill in gaps in knowledge.

By the end of this course, we will:

1. Become familiar with common sources of information used to describe neighborhoods and neighborhood characteristics;
2. Learn how to use R, R Studio, and Github
to create reproducible analysis;
3. Learn how to work collaboratively to tell compelling stories for deliberation and decision-making.

Course Format and Expectations

We will learn together using a combination of direct instruction, lab sessions, and tutorials. We will use reading and reflection to help us contextualize our understanding of neighborhoods. However, our focus will be on learning by doing. Our class will meet in person twice per week. Tuesdays will typically be devoted to introducing and discussing new information, and Thursdays will typically be devoted to labs and independent work.

Unless otherwise noted, please plan on bringing to class a computer that run R and R Studio (available for PC/Mac/Linux) and for which you have administrative privileges.

What to Expect from Me

- Office Hours and Availability: Please make an appointment to speak one-on-one using my Calendly page.
- Communicating: The easiest way to communicate with me outside of class is via email. I try to respond to emails sent during the week within 24 hours. Emails sent over the weekend will receive
response within 24 hours, if you don’t hear from me after that amount of time, it’s okay to nudge me
to respond.

• **Troubleshooting:** Slack channel, Resources page provides thoughts and
  resources for troubleshooting, I also encourage you to work with others in the class to
troubleshoot problems. It is highly likely that others in the class have encountered similar problems, and this also
allows us to create a repository of our problems and responses.

**What I Expect from You**

• **Be Present:** I expect that you’ll engage fully in our course sessions and in our class community,
  actively supporting each other.
  participation within our class, that includes actively supporting our learning community over the course of the semester.
  This class assumes collaboration and sharing as part of our learning model.

• **Read with Care:** This course focuses on learning by doing. However, there are important details
  contained within the documentation on our course website and within reading selections. Details
  matter in this class. Be intentional about reading carefully and completely important course
  documents (including this syllabus).

• **Act with Integrity:** I expect that you will act with integrity in all that you do in this class. The class
  contract grading system places trust in you to not just meet the nominal standards contained within
  the contract, but to push yourself to produce your best work.

• **Seek Balance:** I expect that you’ll actively work to find balance between the many elements in your
  life. This means budgeting adequate time to engage fully in our course but also budgeting time for
  adequate rest and sleep, exercise, and other actions that support your mental and physical health.

**Prerequisites**

- No prerequisites.

**Assignments, Evaluation and Grading Contract**

Alongside the learning of techniques and perspectives on working with small area data, a primary goal of
this class is to learn to think critically about the ways in which those data and our analysis embody power
and exist within power relationships. One implicit goal of our learning this semester is to emotionally
and intellectually engage our students in this work in more ways than one. We will share power and authority for
the evaluation of learning by establishing individualized grading contracts which will allow you to set many of
the terms upon which your work is evaluated this semester. You will be held accountable to the standards
you propose and we agree upon.

We are using this approach for several reasons:

1. Implementing a contract-based assessment approach mirrors course goals regarding our
   understanding and practice around the power of data, particularly with regards to public
deliberation, decision-making, and governance. Considering the influence of power around evaluation
   in our classroom mirrors how we might deal with power and power relationships in professional
   practice.

2. A unitary assessment of performance in a 400-level class is not likely to serve students well. This
   class is open to advanced undergraduate students, masters students, and doctoral students - some
   who are pursuing degrees in planning and others who are not. Contracts allow us to assess your
   work against your own goals and expectations.

3. There is increasing evidence in higher education settings that unitary grading measures tend to
   homogenize individual learning and have the potential to be biased towards certain types of students.
   Put simply, obsessing about grades in advanced coursework is counter-productive to deep learning.
   This course adheres to the pedagogy that when given more control and ownership over the terms of
   evaluation, a student is more likely to embrace the challenges presented to them within the
   classroom, are more likely to take ownership of their work and, for instance.

4. We are attempting to learn together through a set of extremely challenging times. The impact of
   COVID-19 on your lives and your learning should not be discounted. The impact is very
   individualized to each of your situations. A unitary grading standard would typically be strained to
   account for your circumstances.

**Baseline Standards**
Each of you is expected to meet the following baseline standards. By doing so, you will earn a grade of “B”.

- **Attend class regularly:** Show up for course sessions before or on time, be absent from no more than three course sessions over the course of the semester. If you are unable to be present due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, please let me know before the course session in which you are absent, and I will consider excusing the absent.

- **Participate actively:** In addition to showing up to class sessions on time, you are expected to make thoughtful and informative contributions to our class community. This includes coming to class prepared and having completed readings, reflections, and assignments. This also includes thoughtful engagement with course material, asking and responding to questions, and helping other students learn course concepts.

- **Submit work on time:** Your assignments have due dates. You are responsible for submitting your work by this date. Work submitted within 48 hours of the due date will be counted as late. Work submitted more than 48 hours after the due date will be considered ignored.

### Expectation Summary

The baseline contract standard in the class is a “B”. You may customize your grading contract to contract for a grade between A and C (C-, D-, D, B, A-). The below table will help you to propose accountability expectations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Late</th>
<th>Missed</th>
<th>Ignored</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Absences:** Indicate the number of times you are absent from class. Additional excused absences may be allowed due to documented extenuating circumstances.

- **Late Assignments:** Assignments submitted after a due date but within 48 hours of the due date.

- **Missed Assignments:** Assignments submitted more than 48 hours after the due date.

- **Ignored Assignments:** Assignments that are not submitted by the last day of class (excluding your final assignment). Ignored assignments are a more serious breach of contract than missed assignments as they reflect contract work which you have not completed.

Please note that assessment of these contracted standards is based upon what you do. The default contract graded “B” does not include any direct assessment of the quality of your work. As you design your personalized learning contract, you can use the above table to help you propose expectations in line with the final grade you wish to contract to receive.

### Assignments

You will find detailed information on assignments in the Assignments section.

Our contract-based approach to the class means that all of you will complete several common assignments in order to earn a minimum grade of “B”. Some of you may add additional assignments to your contract in order to work towards a higher grade in class.

Here are the baseline items which all Neighborhood Analysis students will work towards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grading Contract</td>
<td>September 9, 2023</td>
<td>You will propose an individual grading contract by which you will be assessed this semester.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Selection Memorandum</td>
<td>September 19, 2023</td>
<td>You will select a place which your analysis will focus on across the course of the semester. In this memo, you will describe the basic characteristics of your place, and propose some initial thoughts on avenues for further analysis and exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place Background Memorandum</td>
<td>October 1, 2023</td>
<td>You will develop a deeper background study on your place by looking at existing analyses and policy questions. In your place, you will develop a preliminary storyboard that will guide your subsequent analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Memorandum</td>
<td>October 22, 2023</td>
<td>You will analyze population characteristics and distribution and prepare a memorandum that summarizes your analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis Memorandum</td>
<td>November 12, 2023</td>
<td>You will analyze the impact of an existing or proposed policy on the neighborhoods present in your place, and will prepare a memo from that summarizes your analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Analysis</td>
<td>December 10, 2023</td>
<td>You will combine elements of your population memorandum and policy memorandum to produce a final place analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please refer to the Assignments area for more information on extensions or other suggested items you may wish to contract for.

Preparing your Contract

Our grading system this semester focuses on capturing the consistent application of your labor towards our course goals. If you consistently submit your work as contracted, you will receive a "C" at the end of the semester. Consequently, to contract for a higher (or lower) grade, you may commit yourself to applying more (or less) labor in support of course goals when you design your contract.

Please use the following contract template to construct your proposed learning contract for the semester.

Honor Code

The Illinois Student Code states: "It is the responsibility of the student to refrain from infractions of academic integrity, from conduct that may lead to suspicion of such infractions, and from conduct that aids others in such infractions." Note that you are subject to the Honor Code, as well as procedures for addressing violations to the Code, regardless of whether you have read it and understand it. According to the Code, "Ignorance is no excuse."

To meet this standard in this course, note the following: In written work, all ideas (as well as data or other information) that are not your own must be cited. Note that ideas that require citation may not have been published or written down anywhere. While you are free—and indeed encouraged—to discuss assignments with your peers, all of your analysis, and writing should be your own. The consequence for violating these expectations may include receiving no credit for the assignment in question, and may include automatic failure of the course.

Put simply, don’t cheat and give credit where credit is due.

Learning Environment and Support

Our Learning Environment

The Department of Urban and Regional Planning is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is rooted in the goals and responsibilities of professional planners. By enrolling in a class offered by the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, students agree to be responsible for maintaining an atmosphere of mutual respect in all activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular opportunities. See Student Code Article 1: Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part 1, Student Rights and Regulations.

Our Class Environment

As part of our classroom and university community, you are an obligation to do the following:

- If you feel ill, do not come to class. If you test positive or have an exposure that requires testing or quarantine, do not come to class.
- Wear face coverings in classrooms and indoor university spaces, per CDC guidance.
- Be willing and prepared to show your Safer Illinois building access status when requested.

Your Wellness

Wellness at Illinois: Throughout the semester, you may need assistance coping with emotional, interpersonal, or academic concerns. wellness.illinois.edu is a good resource to identify help for yourself or others who may need assistance. Please do not hesitate to reach out or request assistance.

Learning R and your Wellness

Whether you have prior experience working in R or not, you will face challenges related to working with the software this semester. That’s a given, and it is an expected part of learning in this class. Part of the goal is to teach you how to understand the functionality behind the software so that you can anticipate where
errors are likely to occur.

> **The only way to do this, is to encounter errors - and there will be many!**

You are learning a new language, it's grammar, and its application. While this will be frustrating at times, there is a major payoff in the capacity you will gain in analytic skills and problem-solving. This payoff will come slowly over time - do not expect it to come easily.

You are not alone in this struggle. In addition to your classmates and others who are going through the same thing, there is a large user community, and lots of existing documentation and troubleshooting on sites like Stack Overflow and RStudio Community. Any problem you will encounter has likely been encountered and addressed before.

> **When I run into an error, after an initial check for simple issues like closing parentheses and spelling errors, I copy and paste error codes directly into a web search to see how others have dealt with similar problems. I encourage you to do the same.**

You got this, and there will be a payoff, so long as you use the tools consistently - I promise.

**Covid and your Wellness**

We've been living in particularly abnormal times for the last year and a half - while for many things are improving, it would be irresponsible to expect that teaching and learning would occur "normally" right now. We continue to teach and learn under emergency circumstances amidst an evolving global pandemic.

As you face challenges this semester (and beyond) I need you to communicate with me, either during our course sessions or individually. You can schedule an appointment with me at your convenience via my [Calendly page](#). I promise to listen, to be a resource, and to help in any way that I can. If I can't help you, I will find someone who can.

Made with the [blogdown package](https://r-bayesiantesting.github.io/blogdown) and the [Academic Theme](https://themes.g证书producer.org) for Hugo.