

Tuesdays and Thursdays
9:30-10:50
TBH 225 (Fingers Crossed)

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Office Hours:

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Marc: TBD

Cong: TBD

Both of us: By appointment! Make an appointment!

Course Overview

This course grounds students in common methods of urban planning analysis, using both primary and secondary data. The course gives you the knowledge and skills to define a region, and to describe and analyze a region's demographic, social, and economic conditions. In the first half of the course, we will focus on the Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other common sources of "secondary," quantitative data. After Spring Break, the course switches focus to primary data collection: to the surveys, interviews and searches any good planner needs to do in order to create data for issues on which good data do not come pre-packaged.

The Part about Covid-19

I wish it weren't so, but we've changed the course, significantly, due to Covid-19. As you have probably heard, this course contains..... a lot of work. I throw you in the deep end and you learn to swim, basically. In-person meetings and labs are essential to the course. We'll do our best to make things as normal as possible, but everything has moved a little more slowly and a little less enthusiastically since last March. So the course you're taking is a bit lighter than the one past cohorts had. We cut two assignments, and turned a third from a statistical assignment into a writing assignment. To bring you up to speed with the times, we're also going to ask you to say something about what the big-picture statistics about your place can tell us about the crises (plural – I mean, take your pick!) of today.

To get the best out of the course under these conditions, form friendships. Usually, this class is a cohort-building experience: You all do a lot of time in the lab together, and you learn collectively. Cong and I will say and do some things to encourage you to form partnerships for reading, writing and bouncing ideas off one another.

Finally, the course syllabus is supposed to be a contract. That can't be the case this year. We'll try to keep changes to a minimum, but change is essential. We have to learn to work together under these conditions. Some things will work about the same with students spread out across continents. Others will need to change. We won't know what to do until we get some experience together, so please be patient with your instructors. And if something isn't working, or you want to try something different: Speak up!

Will the course pay off? Absolutely. You will at a minimum get experience with the following:

- Key data sources for understanding local and regional demographic and economic change;
 - U.S. Census Bureau
 - Bureau of Economic Analysis
 - Bureau of Labor Statistics
 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

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- Analysis at different levels of geography, including county and metropolitan geographies;
 - A working familiarity with software and data management tools including spreadsheets, relational databases, and mapping applications;
 - Familiarity with IPUMS, a valuable but rarely used data source that allows planners to make their own calculations from Census data;
 - Methods for analyzing demographic change and economic structure;
 - Writing to support planning and policy making;
 - The effective design of supporting tables, figures, graphics, and maps;
 - Principles of survey design and analysis;
 - Principles of interviewing and secondary data collection;
 - Smart consumption of the reports, advocacy pieces and think-tank materials that will come across your desk as a professional;
 - Design, implementation, and analysis of focus groups;
 - Ethics in carrying out participatory practices; and
 - The ability to move forward on a question when perfect data, easy choices and clear paths of analysis are unavailable. Which is most of the time!

Course Set-Up

To meet these goals, this course differs from other core courses:

- 1) You will learn by doing. This means weekly assignments (more or less) through October
- 2) In week 1, you will select a medium-population county in the U.S. All of your maps, tables, economic data and survey questions will pertain to this county. Make sure it's interesting!
- 3) Tuesdays will usually be lectures. Thursdays will generally be labs. In our current situations, a "lab" means that Cong and I will hang out in Zoom, and you check in with questions, decisions needing some feedback, and so forth
- 4) Cong and I will each be available for at least one one-hour block per week on Zoom. For this class to work, you have to drop in with questions, issues, ideas, and so forth.
- 5) Lectures cover a lot of ground. Sometimes they will speak directly to the readings, but usually they will not. Reading carefully and closely is important. I won't test you on it in the classroom. The proof you've done the work will come in the assignments
- 6) Get to know me, Cong and your fellow students. You will have a lot of questions about the material. Asking us for clarification *immediately* when a question arises will save you a lot of time.

Data Skills: Necessary for Professional Success, but not Sufficient

In recent years, high-achieving graduates of this program have returned to visit us. Many of them are on the hunt for good graduates to hire. Inevitably, students ask what skills they need to be hired. And the exchange goes something like this:

Student: What skill do I need to be hired?

Future Employer: [Flinches]. Everybody always asks that. A skill is the thing that gets you in the door, but that's not what we're looking for. I want to hire people who can think across issues, who can learn new skills, who can fit things into the picture. People who can communicate, identify new problems and opportunities....

Student: [Cuts the employer off] So, should I learn GIS?

Please, don't be this student. Understanding data skills as the beginning and end of your planning education is a sure way to sell yourself short professionally.

So is deciding that good data skills are a distraction from the real work of planning. You won't go very far if you know everything there is to know about housing or green infrastructure policy, but can't use numbers. We'll start the class with cautionary tales about planners who had great ideas they couldn't express numerically, and skilled data analysts who learned the hard way that numbers aren't enough. This course is designed to help you develop an appreciation of the fact that "left-brain" and "right-brain" thinking go together.

Prerequisites

While there are no formal prerequisites, the course draws on concepts and theories covered in UP 504 (Urban History and Theory). If you are uncertain about your qualifications, please see me to discuss.

Schedule and Readings

The sequence of lectures and labs is designed to help you complete the exercises and reports. Mandatory reading assignments are few. Course resources including assignments, slide sets, recommended readings, and support materials are available in one convenient location on the course's COMPASS 2g site (<https://compass2g.illinois.edu>). You are expected to tap the materials as needed to fill gaps in your knowledge about techniques, software, and concepts. You are also expected to seek out additional sources of information as necessary. Please expect some changes to the schedule, especially from mid-October onward. The schedule won't change much, but it's bound to change some, as I adjust the readings, lecture and assignments to your needs.

Required Equipment

Data Storage

You will want a secure place to store the data that you will be working with. The UIUC Box platform provides 50 gigabytes of free cloud-based storage space for your use (uofi.app.box.com). It's a nice resource, at no cost to you. Alternately, or additionally, you can store the data on a thumb drive. But thumb drives get lost, broken and bent. Stuff happens. Don't learn that the hard way!

Software

This class devotes some instructional time to hands-on work with data. The DURP computer lab (TBH 227) contains computers equipped with all the software that you will need to complete course assignments. DURP has a cloud computing application that will allow you to access DURP lab software from your personal computer (on or off campus). All software is available via the UIUC Webstore (webstore.illinois.edu) to be downloaded to your personal computer:

- Microsoft Office (we will use Excel and a bit of Access)
- ESRI ArcGIS 10.7
- SPSS
- Adobe Acrobat Professional (for converting documents to PDF for uploading)

Data Sources

You will download large data files from the websites of several federal agencies. Primary data sources include the decennial census, the American Community Survey, the population estimates program, and County Business Patterns (CBP) from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce, IPUMS, and several others.

Assignments and Grading

Grading criteria include creativity and resourcefulness, technical competence, quality of writing and graphics. An “A” means outstanding work. A “B” means good, solid professional work. A “C” means that work needs some significant revision or rethinking. Improvement over time, assistance to fellow classmates, contributions to class, and other achievements *may* lead to adjustments in course grades. As often in professional practice, the product counts most. Your course grade will consist of the following assignments and exercises:

Assignment	% of Grade
Exercises 1-6 (5% each)	30
Draft Report Part 1	12
Place Profile	26
Survey Question and Design Analysis (6% each)	12
Primary Data Report and Strategy	20

All assignments should be submitted as a PDF file (unless otherwise noted in the assignment) via the course COMPASS 2g assignment dropbox by the time specified on the individual assignment. Late assignments will only be accepted with prior written permission, and will be automatically graded down 5 points per day (starting from the specified time the assignment is due). The deadlines for your end of course assignments are hard deadlines- late assignments will not be accepted.

Your full participation and presence in all class sessions is expected. Excused absences will be granted on a case-by-case basis, but you need to contact me *prior* to the course session which you are absent from. You get one “free” absence. After that, for each course from which you are absent (excluding excused absences) 2 percentage points will be deducted from your *final course grade*.

Honor Code and Learning Environment

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 data collection, analysis, and writing should be your own. The consequence for violating these expectations may include receiving no credit for the assignment in question, and at the discretion of the instructor, may include automatic failure of the course. The Department of Urban and Regional Planning (DURP) 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 DURP activities, including lectures, discussions, labs, projects, and extracurricular programs. See Student Code Article 1-Student Rights and Responsibilities, Part 1. Student Rights: §1-102.

Course Schedule

The course schedule, assignments, readings and everything else are on Compass.