

## UP312 Communication for Planners

### Class Meetings

Lecture: Tuesdays, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM (225 Temple Buell Hall)  
Lab: Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM (328 Armory)

**Instructor:** Professor Arnab Chakraborty, [arnab@illinois.edu](mailto:arnab@illinois.edu)  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM or by appointment  
TBH M230 or Zoom (please email in advance for link)

**Teaching Assistant:** Sharanya Varma, [svarma5@illinois.edu](mailto:svarma5@illinois.edu)  
Office Hours: Fridays, 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM and TIME or by appointment  
TBH 224 or Zoom (please email in advance for 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 professionals<sup>1</sup> 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 almost 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 covered in this course.

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

### Course Organization:

This course is built around regular cycles of learning and applying skills. Digital copies of required readings will be posted on Canvas. Typically, on Tuesdays a lecture will cover a central idea; we will discuss some readings and review the prior week's work; and homework may be assigned. On Thursdays,

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

a lab session will apply that idea through a designed activity or training on a software program. Specific weekly activities will help you make progress toward reports and presentations for larger assignments.

*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 one point for the initial delay and one additional point for every subsequent 24 hours delay. [There will be an extra credit opportunity to make up one missed memo].

*Major Assignments:* You will complete two major assignments, one ending in a report and the other ending in a recorded video presentation with supporting materials. These assignments will ask you to tackle larger and more complex issues by synthesizing and compiling work done for brief memos, and creating 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 efficiently. 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 major assignments.

*Final Project:* The final project will be a planning process simulation in which the class will be divided into groups and each group will develop a detailed argument advocating for their proposal or perspective. Grades for the final project will be based on an interim report, a final presentation and a poster, and an individual reflection of the project and group work. *There will be no final examination in this course.*

*Please note:* You will submit all deliverables through the Canvas 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.

*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 sometimes employ small group discussions and offer opportunities to grow your skills and confidence. As stated in Section § 1-501 of the Student Code “*regular class attendance is expected of all students at the University.*” If you cannot be present for any session, please get in touch with the instructor ASAP. When a student has to miss an individual session, they will be expected to review all posted materials for that session within 24 hours of the class meeting and post an approximately 250-word reaction to the session on a designated Canvas discussion board page. 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 by deliverables:

- Memos 1 through 3 (10% each): 30%
- Assignment 1 Final Report: 15%
- Assignment 2 Final Presentation: 15%
- Final Project (interim memo, final poster, and presentation): 30%
- Class Participation: 10%

**COURSE OUTLINE:**

<b>Tuesday</b>		<b>Thursday</b>		<b>(following) Monday</b>
8-23	Course Overview	8-25	Communications and Planning Practice;	
8-30	Professional Writing; Project Review	9-1	Memo Writing	<i>Memo 1 due</i>
9-6	Visual Display of Quantitative Information	9-8	Data Tools	
9-13	Seeking Evidence, Forming Arguments	9-15	Small Group Activity	<i>Memo 2 due</i>
9-20	Crafting Compelling Reports	9-22	Adobe InDesign	
9-27	Work Session: Report Review	9-29	NO CLASS (IL-APA Conference)	<i>Assignment 1 Report due</i>
10-4	Planning, Zoning and the Development Process	10-6	Plan Review Activity	
10-11	Visualizing Your Community	10-13	Adobe Illustrator	
10-18	Imagining Community Futures	10-20	Adobe Photoshop	<i>Memo 3 due</i>
10-25	Small Area and Site Plans	10-27	Work Session	
11-1	Presentations	11-3	Presentations	<i>Assignment 2 Presentation due</i>
11-8	NO CLASS (Election Day)	11-10	Introduction to Final Project	
11-15	Negotiations and Mediation	11-17	SketchUp – 3D rendering	<i>Interim Memo due –one per team</i>
11-22	NO CLASS (Fall Break)	11-24	NO CLASS (Fall Break)	
11-29	Work Session; Extra Credit Exercise	12-1	Work Session; Presentation/Poster Review	
12-6	Final Presentations			<i>Final Posters and Individual Reflections due</i>

## DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE

### FUNDAMENTALS OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

#### Week 1: 8/23, 8/25 – Course Overview

Tuesday: Course overview

Reference: *CareerOneStop*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 15, 2022, from [//www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org). [Urban Planning](#)

Thursday: Communications and Planning Practice

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

In-class Activity: Tell us about your community.

#### Week 2: 8/30, 9/1 – Professional Writing in the Urban Context

Tuesday: Principles and applications of professional writing

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

Illustrative videos: Zoning and Subdivision Regulations (CMAP) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDzbrSvZ7Xs&t=5s>; How Zoning Laws Are Holding Back America's Cities (IHS) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pq-UvE1j1Q>

Reading: Badger, Emily and Quoc Trung Bui, Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/06/18/upshot/cities-across-america-question-single-family-zoning.html>, The New York Times: 6/18/2019

In-class Activity: What is zoning? What's all the fuss about zoning reform?

Thursday: Memo Writing Workshop

[Memo 1 Due 11:59 PM Monday 9/5]

#### Week 3: 9/6, 9/8 – Visual Display of Quantitative Information

Tuesday: Visual Display of Quantitative Information

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

Thursday: Data Tools Review

Reference: 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](https://www.cutr.usf.edu/oldpubs/CIA/Chapter_4.pdf)

Reference: The Community Toolbox: <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/describe-the-community/main>

In-class Activity: Developing your community profile with Data and Maps<sup>2</sup>

#### **Week 4: 9/13, 9/15 – Seeking Evidence, Forming Arguments**

Tuesday: Basic Components of an Argument

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.

Thursday: In-class Activity: Honing your arguments

[Memo 2 Due 11:59 PM Monday 9/19]

#### **Week 5: 9/20, 9/22 – Crafting Compelling Reports**

Tuesday: Crafting Compelling Reports

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

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: In-class Activity: Adobe InDesign Workshop. Bring a basic outline of your report.

#### **Week 6: 9/27, 9/29 – Concluding Assignment 1**

Tuesday: Work Session: Report Review

Thursday: NO CLASS (APA-IL Conference)

[Assignment 1 report due 11:59 PM Monday 10/3]

### **VISUAL COMMUNICATION AND PLAN MAKING**

#### **Week 7: 10/4, 10/6 – Communication in Plan-Making**

Tuesday: Planning, Zoning 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.

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to Social Explorer you reviewed in a previous session, American Community Survey is a good source for information about community profile and economic, social, and demographic information in detailed or summarized format <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.

Reference: Check out the following video on how a regional planning agency like CMAP communicates its role and mission: <https://youtu.be/L63zWVb2uSs>

Thursday: In-class Activity: Review planning documents and zoning codes

### **Week 8: 10/11, 10/13 – Visualizing your community**

Tuesday: Visualizing your community

Reading: Lynch, Kevin. *The image of the city*. Vol. 11. MIT press, 1960.

References: Check out some recent big data informed city maps here:

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-01-17/a-digital-window-into-your-city-s-urban-form>

Thursday: Adobe Illustrator Workshop

In-Class Activity: Context Mapping

### **Week 9: 10/18, 10/20 – Imagining Community Futures**

Tuesday: Local Planning and the Development Process

Reading: Frank, A., Chapter 10: Graphic Communication. In Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) *The planner's use of information*. Planners Press, 2003

References: Check out a variety of urban transformation renderings here:

<https://www.urban-advantage.com/images-page-1>

Reference: For a more map oriented visioning, see here:

<https://urbanfootprint.com/case-studies/envision-utah-valley-visioning/>

Thursday: Adobe Photoshop Workshop

In-Class Activity: Envisioning Community Future(s)

[Memo 3 Due 11:59 PM Monday 10/24]

### **Week 10: 10/25, 10/27 – 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.

Reference: For a variety of focus area and neighborhood plans in Champaign, see here:

<https://champaignil.gov/planning/long-range-planning/neighborhood-plans/>

Thursday: Work session – Physical planning, Illustrator and Photoshop review; Presentation tips

Reading: *5 Ways to Get Over Your Fear of Public Speaking*. (n.d.). Retrieved August 23, 2021, 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, 2021, 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

**Week 11: 11/1, 11/3 – Preparing Persuasive Presentations**

Tuesday: Presentations

Thursday: Presentations

*[Assignment 2 Updated and Recorded Final Presentations Due 11:59 PM Monday 11/7]*

**Week 12: 11/8, 11/10 – Introduction to Final Project**

Tuesday: NO CLASS (Election Day)

Thursday: Introduction to Final Project

In-class Activity: Team building and project planning

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.

**Week 13: 11/15, 11/17 – Project Management and Development**

Tuesday: Final Project Activities

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

In-class activity: Project research and development

Thursday: Introduction to SketchUp

*[Final Project Interim Memos Due 11:59 PM Friday 11/18]*

**Week 14: 11/22, 11/24 – – NO CLASSES: Fall Break**

**Week 15: 11/29, 12/1 – Project Activities**

Tuesday: Final Project Updates; Extra-credit activity.

Extra Credit Activity: 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.

Thursday: Work session: Feedback on draft poster and pitch outlines

**Week 16: 12/6, 12/8 – Final Presentation and Wrap up**

Tuesday: Team Presentations with Posters; Course summary and wrap up.

*[Final (updated) posters and individual reflections are due by 11:59 PM Monday 12/12]*

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**COURSE POLICIES AND RESOURCES**

**Readings:** All readings will be available through the Canvas website or are accessible through hyperlinks on the syllabus: Some files may require VPN when off campus (<https://techservices.illinois.edu/services/virtual-private-networking-vpn/details>).

**Deadlines and grades:** Please note the deadlines for all submissions. I recommend adding these to your calendar. Late submission will incur an initial 10% penalty and additional 10% penalty for every 24 hours thereafter. Late submission penalty may be waived in certain situations, such as for sudden illness or family crisis. Please let the instructor know about any possible delays as early as possible. Final grades will be assigned as follows:

GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS
A+	98 to 100	B	84 to 87	C-	71 to 73
A	94 to 97	B-	81 to 83	D+	68 to 70
A-	91 to 93	C+	78 to 80	D	64 to 67
B+	88 to 90	C	74 to 77	D	61 to 63
				F	<60

**Counseling Center:** Resources are available on campus if you find yourself in need of mental or emotional support. The Counseling Center (<https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>) 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.

**Disability Services:** This course will accommodate students with documented disabilities. Please refer to the Disability Resource and Education Services website (<https://www.disability.illinois.edu>) for more information and inform the instructor of any requests at the beginning of the semester.

**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.

**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 (<https://studentcode.illinois.edu>). 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 and the College of Fine and Applied Arts.

**Irregular Attendance:** Class attendance is expected of all students at the University of Illinois, however instructors must reasonably accommodate a student’s religious beliefs, observances, and practices in regard to class attendance and work requirements if the student informs his or her instructor of the conflict within one week after being informed of the attendance or work requirements. It is the instructor’s decision as to when a student’s absences become excessive and should be reported. If in the opinion of an instructor the attendance of a student becomes so irregular that his or her scholarship is likely to be impaired, the instructor may submit an [irregular attendance form](#) to the Associate Dean of the student’s college. A copy is forwarded to the student, who should contact the instructor immediately to work out a solution. If irregular attendance continues without excuse, the instructor may request the student be withdrawn from the course. This request for withdrawal would result in a grade of E for the course. Extenuating circumstances will always be considered when supporting evidence is presented. See [Rule 1-501](#) and [Rule 1-502](#) in the Student Code for more information.

**Software:** Software used in this course are accessible to students through DURP Remote server: <https://static.ics.illinois.edu/remote-list/>. Software are also available from [AnyWare](#), a virtual desktop environment allowing student to access licensed software whether remote, on campus, or in class. Some software are available for free download for students ([Adobe Cloud](#), [Office 365](#)).

**Emergencies (Run > Hide > Fight):** Emergencies can happen anywhere and at any time, so it’s important that we take a minute to prepare for a situation in which our safety could depend on our ability to react quickly. Take a moment to learn the different ways to leave this building. If there’s ever a fire alarm or something like that, you’ll know how to get out and you’ll be able to help others get out. Next, figure out the best place to go in case of severe weather – we’ll need to go to a low-level in the middle of the building, away from windows. And finally, if there’s ever someone trying to hurt us, our best option is to run out of the building. If we cannot do that safely, we’ll want to hide somewhere we can’t be seen, and we’ll have to lock or barricade the door if possible and be as quiet as we can. We will not leave that safe area until we get an Illini-Alert confirming that it’s safe to do so. If we can’t run or hide, we’ll fight back with whatever we can get our hands on. If you want to better prepare yourself for any of these situations, visit [police.illinois.edu/safe](https://police.illinois.edu/safe). Remember you can sign up for emergency text messages at [emergency.illinois.edu](https://emergency.illinois.edu).

**COVID-19 POLICY** Following University policy, all students are required to engage in appropriate behavior to protect the health and safety of the community. Students are also required to follow the campus COVID-19 protocols. See here for up-to-date information: <https://covid19.illinois.edu>