Fall 2024
Department of Urban and Regional Planning
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

UP312 Communication for Planners

Lectures: Tuesdays, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM (227 Temple Buell Hall)
Labs: Thursdays, 2:00 PM – 3:20 PM (70B Wohlers Hall)

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is not only fundamental to the quality of our everyday lives but also the most valued competency for planning and planning-related practices.[1] Planning professionals engage with officials, developers, and community members, mediating between various interests to define and promote the "public" interest. As cities and societies grow increasingly pluralistic, diverse, and divided, communication skills become more crucial for planning professionals who must manage conflicts, find common ground, and facilitate collective action. This means that the better planning professionals understand people, places, and societies, the more effective their actions can be. Improved communication enhances their ability to diagnose issues, conduct scientific analyses, and convey their ideas. As planning practices are inherently future-oriented, stronger communication skills also empower planning professionals to gain stakeholder buy-in for their visions and grant them more transformative agency during plan implementation.

Planning professionals engage in a wide array of communicative processes in their daily practices. They develop in-depth knowledge of people and places through interactions in the field. They synthesize various forms of information, including textual, oral, visual, and spatial, to comprehend complex societal issues and envision alternative futures. Their solutions and ideas are often communicated through writings, visual representations, oral presentations, and interactive media. In these practices, mastering communication with a blend of technical and soft skills significantly enhances creativity in problem-solving.

This course adopts an experiential learning approach. It promotes learning by doing through a combination of lectures, in-class activities, mini field research, and desk crits. Students will form groups and complete hands-on tasks that synthesize skills in research, debating, writing, imagination, graphics, and (re)presentation. Building on an overall structure shared by the whole class, instructors will provide phased and customized guidance in small-group settings to accommodate the diverse backgrounds and

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

interests that students bring. Students are required to present their progress each week and discuss their ideas and questions with the instructors. Through a progression of investigative, interactive, and creative activities, students will experiment with how planning professionals investigate communities, generate analyses, identify challenges and opportunities, convey forward-looking ideas, and present recommendations in a compelling way.

This course involves substantial research and writing to fulfill the requirements of General Education and Advanced Composition on campus. By the end of this course, you will:
1. have gained experience in social research, writing, oral communication, visual representation, and storytelling;
2. have developed a general understanding of what skills matter to communication in planning-related research and practice;
3. be able to employ various computer programs to generate infographic deliverables; and
4. be rewarded by the efforts invested and create deliverables that will be directly useful for your future portfolios.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Prerequisites: Junior standing. You are expected to understand basic planning terminology and have the ability to use internet research tools and basic word processing software.

Syllabus, Announcements, and Canvas: The course syllabus, supplemental handouts, and announcements are great references for students to get organized, make plans, and address general questions about the schedule, assignment structure, grading rubric, submission instructions, and other logistics. If a student misses any information during class time, all documents and announcements are available on Canvas. Students are welcome to email the instructors to ask clarifying questions and make suggestions. However, repeated inquiries about already stated logistics could reflect a lack of accountability.

Attendance: As stipulated in the Student Code, all students should maintain regular class attendance. In case of potential absence, please promptly notify the instructors and your groupmates. While poor attendance will not automatically result in a failing grade, it will be reflected in the participation component of your final grade. Please see page 6 for the policy on irregular attendance.

Participation: Your active participation significantly contributes to the success of this course. Meaningful engagement in class and work sessions will yield high score on the participation component of your grade. Your perspectives, experiences, and questions are encouraged, as are your responses to questions from instructors and peers. You are also encouraged to contribute to collaborative work, small group discussions, and peer reviews, all of which offer opportunities to refine your arguments, develop negotiation skills, and practice public speaking.

Group Work: Collaboration and negotiation skills are valuable in many professional settings. Due to the complex nature of urban issues, group work brings its advantages by enabling collective brainstorming, cross-pollination, and productivity sharing. Breaking down a class into small groups also foregrounds interpersonal communications and customized learning experiences. As each project, each student's interest, and each student's role in a group bear uniqueness, the instructors will pay close attention to individuals' contributions to group work and assess individuals' learning based on their input. Students

are welcome to have confidential conversations with the instructors should concerns about team dynamics arise. At the end of the semester, each student will fill out a peer assessment form, which will provide additional references for performance evaluation.

Desk Crits: Well-prepared desk crits will yield constructive feedback and ensure effective utilization of precious class time. This means preparing topics, questions, drawings, and other materials BEFORE each desk crit so that the instructors can understand where you are in project development and what help is relevant to you.

Software: Students are strongly encouraged to be proactive and resourceful in developing software skills that align with their aspirations. Please consider utilizing the great number of tutorials and troubleshooting posts on the internet. The instructors will suggest computer programs to use and answer relevant questions.

Deadlines: Please note the deadlines for all submissions. Late submission can be excused in exceptional situations, such as for sudden illness or family crisis. Please let the instructors know about any possible delays as early as possible.

Submissions: All deliverables should be submitted through the Canvas course site unless specified otherwise. Please ensure that all submissions have recognizable file names (e.g., last names and project title) and appropriate file sizes.

Grading: Grade calculation is based on the following breakdown: class attendance (10%), in-class participation and desk crits engagement (25%), final deliverables (55%), adjustment based on individual contribution to group work (10%). Final grades will be assigned as follows:

GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS	GRADE	TOTAL PTS
A+	98 to 100	B	84 to 87.9	C-	71 to 73.9	F	<60
A	94 to 97.9	B-	81 to 83.9	D+	68 to 70.9		
A-	91 to 93.9	C+	78 to 80.9	D	64 to 67.9		
B+	88 to 90.9	C	74 to 77.9	D-	60 to 63.9		

COURSE SCHEDULE

	Tuesdays		Thursdays	Tasks
Aug 27	Introduction (L+A)	Aug 29	Collective Learning: Communication Principles & Ethics (A)	Debate preparation: 1) Sign up for a debate topic 2) Look for debate tips and techniques and incorporate them into your debates 3) Research the topic and synthesizing the insights as a group

				Phase I: Public Life Research
Sep 3	Debates: Part I (A)	*Sep 5*	Debates: Part II (A)	
Sep 10	How to Study a Place? (L)	*Sep 12*	Plan Your Place-Based Research (DC)	1) Meet with group members to identify a study area and generate work plans
Sep 17	How to Learn from People? (L)	*Sep 19*	Enrich Your Research Design (DC)	2) Study precedents of public life studies and find good examples of writing, mapping, and diagraming
Sep 24	Finalize Your Field Research Plan (DC)	*Sep 26*	Attend APA-IL (A)	3) Design your research and mini fieldwork
Oct 1	Research Progress Check (DC)	*Oct 3*	Research Progress Check (DC)	4) Implementing the plan 5) Present the findings in 1,500 to 2,000 words, accompanied by at least 4 maps, and 4 diagrams (*Please submit the write-ups and presentations by 11:59 PM, Oct 11*)
Oct 8	Phase I Presentations (A)	*Oct 10*	Phase I Presentations (A)	
Oct 15	Presentation Feedback & Phase II Start (DC)	*Oct 17*	Presentation Feedback & Phase II Start (DC)	Phase II: Envisioning the Future 1) Collect feedback from Phase I and continue improving the write-ups and drawings
Oct 22	What is Your Vision? How to Present it? (DC)	*Oct 24*	What is Your Vision? How to Present it? (DC)	2) Study good examples of report/plan structures, story maps, portfolio graphic design, and visual representations
Oct 29	Developing Your Visual Representations (DC)	*Oct 31*	Developing Your Visual Representations (DC)	3) Produce a vision statement, delineate strategies/principles for planning and design, and outline a report/plan to present your vision
Nov 5	*No Class (Election Day)*	*Nov 7*	Work Session	4) Gain extra points by using SketchUp to model a future scenario and/or using Photoshop to render before-versus-after street views
Nov 12	Phase II Progress Check (DC)	*Nov 14*	Phase II Progress Check (DC)	
Nov 19	Draft Deliverable Review (DC)	*Nov 21*	Draft Deliverable Review (DC)	5) Compile an infographic report/plan in InDesign and pay attention to storytelling and graphic design
Nov 26	*No Class (Fall Break)*	*Nov 28*	*No Class (Fall Break)*	6) Present your report/plan in class, collect feedback, make revisions, and submit the final report/plan by 11: 59 PM, Dec 16th
Dec 3	Phase II Presentations (A)	*Dec 5*	Phase II Presentations (A)	
Dec 10	Post-Presentation Feedback (Last Class) (DC)	*Dec 16*	Final Deliverables Due	7) Complete a confidential peer review form and send it to the instructors via email by 11: 59 PM, Dec 16th

Note: Activities (A), Lecture (L), Desk Crits (DC)

RESOURCES

Counselling 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 is 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 is ever a fire alarm or something like that, you will know how to get out and you will be able to help others get out. Next, figure out the best place to go in case of severe weather – we will need to go to a low-level in the middle of the building, away from windows. And finally, if there is ever someone trying to hurt us, our best option is to run out of the building. If we cannot do that safely, we will want to hide somewhere we cannot be seen, and we will 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 is safe to do so. If we cannot run or hide, we will 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 and watch this two-minute video. Remember you can sign up for emergency text messages at emergency.illinois.edu.

COVID-19 Information: Keeping everyone safe and healthy remains our top priority. As the federal government's COVID-19 national emergency declaration has ended, students who test positive for COVID-19 can follow the current CDC guideline. See here for up-to-date information: https://covid19.illinois.edu.