

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

UP426 Urban Design and Planning: An Introduction to Creative Thinking and Visual Expression

Time: Fridays, 1:00 PM – 3:50 PM
Location: Temple Buell Hall 227

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Office Hours: by appointment at TBH M224 or via Zoom

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Office Hours: by appointment or via Zoom

INTRODUCTION

UP426 is intended for advanced undergraduate students in various planning and related fields who are seeking an introduction to urban design. As a form of professional practice, urban design interventions aim to creatively improve the built environment, public realm, and civic life. As a field of intellectual pursuit, urban design discourses connect vast territories of knowledge and intersect with a wide array of disciplines. Thus, scholars have long called for a “catholic” approach to urban design education (Moudon, 1992). Acknowledging the complex nature of the field, this introductory course serves as a laboratory for students, especially those with limited exposure to the field, to explore design idea(l)s, experiment with visual expression, and improve creative thinking skills.

Although design and planning scholarship and practice commonly aim to foster new knowledge, critical thinking, and creativity to build better urban futures (Healey et al., 2000; Scott, 2019), gaps between theory and practice can post significant challenges for students. To prepare students for such challenges, this course employs a student-led, project-based pedagogy that embodies an experiential learning approach. This approach enables both reflection on action and reflection in action (Schön, 1983), which is vital for nurturing students’ self-drive and resourcefulness. With these skills, students can better adapt to a changing world and become effective practitioners in increasingly diverse and divided societies.

The classroom is a workshop space for co-working, idea cross-pollination, and democratic learning (Dewey, 1997). Students will carry out a series of collaborative exercises that encourage them to unleash free thinking, explore visual expression methods, brainstorm spatial, social, and ecological conditions of the ideal city, and propose physical and/or policy interventions that aim at more sustainable urban futures. Additional documents and announcements will be shared with the class in due time to explain each exercise in detail. Considering the diverse interests and skills in the

classroom, students should open their minds to new ideas and approaches, get curious about various perspectives, and learn from difference.

Students are required to attend desk crits in full, communicate their ideas through oral presentations and visual representations, and incorporate feedback from the instructors. Through communication and hands-on experiences, students are expected to find their voice and construct compelling visions. Students wishing to continue studying urban design are expected to define their strengths and identify areas for further development.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

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 and desk crits engagement (15%), Exercise 1 (15%), Exercise 2 (25%), Exercise 3 (35%), 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		

GRADING RUBRIC

Grade	Criteria
A+ A A-	The student demonstrates original and critical design thinking and the ability to integrate spatial and social considerations. Their site analysis creatively uses mapping and diagramming to present a thorough understanding of the studied area. The proposed design addresses important social, economic, and/or ecological-environmental issues that are crucial to future development. The ideas are well explained in presentations and the final portfolio, which utilize analytical drawings, good graphics, and clear writing to make storytelling coherent and compelling. The work prioritizes quality over quantity. A succinct portfolio with thoughtful design, concise writing, and selective but high-quality drawings is better than a long, disorganized one. In general, the student is a resourceful learner and good communicator, able to facilitate productive conversations during desk crits and in group work and utilize various feedback to enhance their thinking and verbal and visual expressions.
B+ B B-	The student shows sufficient effort to engage in desk crits and improve their design skills. They have carried out solid research, engaged in group work, completed all phases of the project, and presented satisfying results. However, the work demonstrates less evidence of critical thinking, originality, and/or creative solutions.
C+ C C-	The student participates in classes and group work. However, their understanding of the study area is limited, and their design proposal lacks originality. Their graphic work demonstrates limited improvement over time despite receiving feedback from the instructors.
D+ D D-	The student does not consistently attend the class, lacks input in desk crits and group work, and produces significantly less and/or lower-quality work than their peers. Their communication with the instructors is limited.
Fail F	The student shows little effort to keep up with the course, does not communicate their issues with the instructors, and does not finish the project.

TOOLS AND SOFTWARE

Students may find the following tools useful for desk crits: print-outs, computer, pencil, ink pens, tracing paper, drafting tape, sketchbook, colored pencils, colored sketch markers, engineering scale, and architectural scale. Students can purchase tools online or in a physical store like Blackline Supply (809 S Fifth St Champaign, IL 61820).

Students are encouraged to use software for their projects, including Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe InDesign, ArcGIS Pro, SketchUp, Rhinoceros, and AutoCAD. It can be helpful to install the most used programs on a personal computer. ArcGIS Pro and Adobe Creative Suite are available at the University of Illinois Webstore. SketchUp is available via a web version or can be downloaded by a student user at a significantly discounted price. Students can also check out available software on [DURP Remote server](#) and [AnyWare](#). The latter is a virtual desktop environment allowing students to access licensed software whether remote, on campus, or in class. [FAA's IT services](#) may provide technical support.

Course instructors will provide tutorials and examples of visual representations. Nevertheless, one course cannot cover all tools in depth. Students are expected to proactively utilize extensive resources online to

address their technical questions. After all, the best way to learn a tool is to play with it. Have fun with various computer programs so that each student can identify how these tools can work in concert to enhance their creativity.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Activities
1	8/30	Course Introduction & What is Urban Design? (Exercise 1 begins)
2	9/6	Brainstorming: What would your ideal city look like? (In-class collaborative exercise)
3	9/13	Exercise 1: Precedent Studies—Pin-Up & Pecha Kucha Presentations
4	9/20	Exercise 2: Reimagining A Place (Exercise 2 begins)
5	9/27	Exercise 2 Desk Crits
6	10/4	Exercise 2 Desk Crits
7	10/11	Exercise 2 Pin-Up & Presentations
8	10/18	Exercise 3: Envisioning Alternative Futures (Exercise 3 begins)
9	10/25	Exercise 3 Desk Crits
10	11/1	Exercise 3 Desk Crits
11	11/8	No Class (ACSP conference week)
12	11/15	Exercise 3 Desk Crits
13	11/22	Exercise 3 Desk Crits
14	11/29	No Class (Fall Break)
15	12/6	Exercise 3 Pin-Up & Presentations (Last class)
	12/16	Final Portfolios Due (One portfolio per student. Please include all 3 exercises. Group work is sharable.)

RESOURCES

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 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>.