

UP 511 – Law and Planning
Spring 2025
TuTh 9:30 – 10:50 AM

Instructor: Ben LeRoy
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COURSE SYLLABUS *First Edition*

COURSE OVERVIEW

The purpose of this course is to provide students with a basic understanding of the governmental structure, legal aspects, and practice of local planning, with special emphasis on zoning and land development regulation. This course explores the civic and legal bases for the field of urban planning at a basic level. More detailed exploration of legal topics pertaining to the practices of zoning, subdivision/development regulation, and comprehensive planning will follow. Throughout the course, we will explore questions about how policy goals are given the force of law, who participates in that process and who does not, and to which populations the benefits and burdens of the law flow. This course is intended for graduate students in Urban and Regional Planning and related fields. The course provides a foundation for students as they pursue advanced studies in land use law and urban planning. It also provides practical knowledge for students seeking careers in or connected to local government planning.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

Ben LeRoy

I graduated from the University of Illinois in 2013 with both a Master of Urban Planning and a Juris Doctor (law degree). Upon graduation, I joined the City of Champaign Planning and Development Department, serving first as an Associate Planner and then as the Zoning Administrator. My work there primarily involved land use, bicycling, and pedestrian issues. In 2022, I stepped down from my Zoning Administrator role to pursue opportunities outside of local government. Other relevant experiences in my career include service with the National Zoning Atlas, various leadership roles in APA-IL, and leading an independent land use consulting practice. Today, of course, I serve as the DURP academic advisor and teach in both this department and the College of Law. I look forward to sharing some of my real-world experiences with you as we explore local government and urban planning through the lens of the legal system.

I have reserved 8:30-9:30 AM on Tuesdays and Thursdays as standing office hours for this class. However, I have a flexible schedule and welcome meetings about the course on other days and times with advance notice (you can also swing by the office without notice, although I may be busy with other responsibilities). I encourage you to email me at bleroy@illinois.edu to get in touch about the course. I check this account sporadically on weekday evenings and during weekends. In an emergency, you can call or text my personal cell phone at 217-766-5045.

Natalie Crown

Natalie Crown is a MUP 2 who earned her BAUSP in 2024 as part of the 4+1 program. She took UP 511 in Spring 2024. Her professional experience includes internships with the Illinois Tollway, the Village of Hinsdale, and Teska Associates, Inc. If you have questions or concerns about the course that you would like to direct towards Natalie, you can contact her at ncrown2@illinois.edu.

ORGANIZATION AND APPROACH

The course is designed as a participatory lecture. I will identify required readings and present lecture materials for each class meeting. Students will be asked to participate in the lecture in a variety of ways, from individual question-and-answer to small group breakout discussions. You are required to complete all readings, assignments, and exams, and participate in class discussions and presentations.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course objectives are to understand:

1. The Civic and Legal Basis for Planning

We will look at governmental structures at the federal, state, local, and regional levels as they pertain to the field of planning. We will review the federal and state constitutional principles that guide the practice of planning and zoning, including property rights, due process, equal protection, religious freedom, public purpose, and free speech. Students will follow local planning issues to learn about local governments in action.

2. Legal Topics Within the Practice of Planning

We will explore a range of legal topics that pertain to the practice of planning, zoning, and development as manifested in the common law. Topics include eminent domain, regulatory takings, impact fees, religious freedom, nuisance law, inclusionary zoning, free speech and signage regulation, historic preservation, and environmental law. Students will learn from a variety of primary and secondary sources, including state and federal legislation and judicial decisions and local land use regulations.

3. Legal Processes Within the Practice of Planning

We will investigate different legal processes within the practice of planning, including by-right development, various methods of relief from zoning laws, changes to ordinance language, enforcement, conflict between competing sets of rules, administrative discretion, private legal rules, and lawsuits.

4. An Overview of Subdivision Regulations

We will study the legal tools for subdividing land and preparing sites for development, including the legal basis for the control of land division (Plat Act), linkage to comprehensive planning and zoning, subdivision layout, the platting process, and public improvements. Current trends in street, sewer, and stormwater management design will be discussed. Students will conduct a subdivision platting exercise based on a real-life example.

5. Zoning: Use, Bulk, and Design

We will explore various tools and concepts from the realm of zoning, using Emily Talen's *City Rules* and the City of Champaign Zoning Ordinance as a practical guide. Topics to be covered include the origins of zoning, use, bulk, and design regulations, nonconformities, and special applications of zoning. Additionally, we will discuss the relative merits of complexity vs. simplicity in a zoning code and the way zoning can produce unintended consequences. Students will conduct a zoning exercise based on a real-life example.

6. An Overview of Comprehensive Planning

We will look at the role of comprehensive planning in development regulation and growth management, primarily reviewing local examples. We will discuss the legislative basis for comprehensive planning, topic-specific plans adopted as elements of a comprehensive plan, and the relationship of comprehensive planning to zoning and subdivision regulations. We will also discuss the role of public participation in generating large-scale plans.

7. Racial and Socioeconomic Impacts of Planning Law and Practices

We will explore the contributions of municipal planning to historical and existing patterns of racial and socioeconomic segregation, using Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* and additional articles as our guides. We will seek to answer questions about whose interests the law actually serves, who is able to navigate processes vs. who is shut out by processes, and whether planners have ethical obligations to proactively remedy injustice.

8. The Role of the Planner

Throughout the course, we will explore issues that arise for planners as they practice their craft, including balancing your technical expertise against conflicting direction from the public and/or elected officials, the tradeoffs involved in creating new plans vs. implementing existing plans, and understanding how planners mesh with other participants in the planning and development process: architects, developers, engineers, and neighbors.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Requirements for UP 511 students are as follows:

Attendance

Regular attendance and participation are essential components of your success in this class. However, as in the professional world, perfect attendance is neither realistic nor expected. Therefore, while attendance will be taken and forms a component of your final grade, you are entitled to **four absences** without a negative impact on your grade. Unlike some other courses, this course does not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences as you are entitled to four penalty-free absences for any reason that arises. Accordingly, you do not need to email me to explain your absences either before or after the fact. Absences in excess of four may result in a lower course grade, unless such absences are the result of a serious medical or family emergency. Please contact the instructional team as soon as possible if you believe you will have difficulty meeting attendance requirements.

Participation

Active, constructive participation as both a presenter and a listener will enhance your final grade. I do not expect to deduct points for poor participation except in circumstances where a student is either consistently disruptive or largely nonparticipatory for the entire semester. I will note that late arrival to the classroom is disruptive behavior that interferes with your classmates' ability to focus on the material being discussed.

This class employs the "on call" method for some lecture and discussion questions. For one or more class sessions this semester, you may be "on call" and expected to answer some questions directed to you about the day's material. Students will not be notified in advance that they are "on call" to incentivize preparation and engagement with every class session.

Readings

Students are required to complete assigned readings prior to class in order to better follow the lecture materials and to participate more successfully in class discussion. Completion of readings will contribute to mastery of the course and its assessments.

Assessments

Students will complete multiple assessments over the duration of the course. More specific information will be provided for each assignment when assigned.

Civics, Government, & Law Exam

Students will take an in-class exam on material covered in the first two units of the course.

Comprehensive Plan Assignment

Students will be given an assignment tasking them with understanding an adopted plan from a municipality.

Subdivision Exercise

Students will be given an exercise requiring the analysis of subdivision platting requirements for a local development example.

Zoning Exercise

Students will be given an exercise requiring the identification and analysis of the zoning requirements for a local development example.

Mock ZPC (Zoning and Plan Commission) Case

Students will work in small groups to draft a report and deliver a presentation to a mock Zoning and Plan Commission on a hypothetical land use scenario.

GRADING

As discussed above, this course requires you to participate in class as both a speaker and a listener, to demonstrate your factual knowledge through various assessments, and to display your analytical skills through a group assignment that places you in the role of a practicing urban planner. If you attend class regularly, participate in discussions, and complete all of the assessments in a timely manner, you will be successful in this class and have a good mastery of the subjects covered.

Graded components of the course include:

1. Attendance and Participation (see guidelines above)	10%
2. Civics, Government, & Law Exam	20%
3. Comprehensive Plan Assignment	10%
4. Subdivision Exercise	15%
5. Zoning Exercise	15%
6. Mock ZPC Case	30%

As a general rule, work that is submitted after the deadline is subject to a penalty commensurate to the length of the delay. However, I understand that life is messy and complicated and that students juggle many personal and academic responsibilities over the course of the semester. If you feel you cannot meet a course deadline, I am happy to entertain reasonable requests for extensions. I will consider any extension request that contains both of the following components: (1) a brief explanation of why you cannot meet the original deadline, and (2) your suggestion for a new deadline you can meet. I will respond to extension requests as promptly as possible. Finally, I will not grant extension requests received at the last minute unless they involve truly emergency situations. Additionally, extensions are not available for the Plan Commission Report & Presentation, as this component of the class involves group presentations scheduled over a few class sessions at the end of the semester.

There may be a graded component where the class as a whole performs worse than I expect. In such cases, I view the issue as one of my own creation; perhaps the assignment was too confusing, too difficult, etc. In such cases, I apply a curve to the grade distribution. Any time I curve grades, I will explain the impact of the curve. The grading curve can only help you and never harm you.

Your final class grade is final. I do not offer additional assignments after the semester for extra credit.

READINGS, ONLINE RESOURCES, AND NOTE TAKING

This course has a Canvas page containing certain readings and course documents. Should you run into difficulties with Canvas, please contact me so I can address it.

This course employs a variety of readings ranging from academic to practical. Readings are listed in the syllabus and are either posted on Canvas, linked directly from the syllabus, or come

from one of three required course books. These books are easily found at online retailers and are also available from the Illini Union Bookstore. The assigned books are:

1. Salkin, Patrica E. and Jennie R. Nolon (2021). *Land Use Law in a Nutshell* (3d Edition). West Academic Publishing.

[Note: I will be teaching from the most recent edition of this book. Previous editions back to the 2006 printing (blue cover) are likely fine to use for this class, but please note that our reading assignments will be geared towards the 3d Ed., and it will be up to you to make sure you're reading the right content if you're using an older edition.]

2. Rothstein, R. (2017). *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton & Company.
3. Talen, E. (2012). *City Rules: How Regulations Affect Urban Form*. Washington, D.C: Island Press.

Other useful documents and materials are hosted by a variety of local government agencies. I will distribute a resource sheet containing links to these materials later in the semester.

Many of our readings this semester will be electronic, with the remainder coming from our three assigned texts. Please bring your reading material to each class session, as you'll be able to follow the lecture better if you can revisit the reading in real time. I recommend bringing a laptop or tablet, but of course you can print electronic readings if you prefer. If you do not have a laptop or tablet and you are worried about the burden of printing electronic readings, let me know and we can work on strategies to minimize this burden.

When I ask you to "skim" a reading, it will almost always be the text of an actual law: the US Constitution, the Illinois Constitution, a zoning ordinance, etc. Just get a sense of the broad structure of the law by paying attention to headings and subheadings. You don't need to read everything in depth. If I want you to know a section of a law in depth, I will ask you to read it instead of skimming it.

Some thoughts on note taking: Consider taking some outline-style notes as you do the readings. Most good nonfiction writing is structured via an outline format, and many of our readings will be explicit about this through the use of headers and sub-headers. Jotting a few notes about the main points of the readings as you read them is a good way to understand the material or realize where you may have questions.

Try to structure your in-class notetaking in an outline rather than a running narrative. This is an acquired skill, so don't worry if it takes you awhile to get the hang of it. I structure my lectures outline style: I'll introduce a broad topic, talk about some subtopics underneath that topic, move on to another broad topic, etc. Often my lecture outline will roughly follow the outlines I pull from the readings, so that's another reason that thinking about the readings in outline-style may help you. I utilize the computer in class to show videos, maps, and other visuals; my use of Powerpoint is more intermittent. I make frequent use of the whiteboard and put important

concepts and topics on the board throughout each class period. Please don't hesitate to ask me to explain a concept further if you don't understand it the first time around. I am here to help you make sense of all the information in the course!

If you leave a lecture feeling confused, consider skimming or rereading the assigned reading afterwards. When I was in school, I experienced several lectures where I was confused by both my initial reading and the in-class lecture. Revisiting the reading a second time often helped things click for me.

SUPPORTING YOU

Students registering with Disability Resources & Educational Services (DRES) may utilize many different types of academic accommodations. I encourage you to explore DRES if you need accommodations including (but not limited to) note-taking services and testing accommodations. I am happy to provide accommodations upon the provision of a Letter of Academic Accommodations from DRES. If you require accommodations, please provide your letter to me at your earliest convenience so we can work out a plan together. I am unable to provide accommodations without such a letter from DRES.

The University of Illinois offers a number of student support resources outside of DRES as well. I am not an expert in these offerings, but I am happy to help connect you to them if you find yourself struggling with this class or anything else. I am also happy to work one-on-one or connect you to a colleague to help you through any situations that prevent you from being an effective student and mentally well human being during our semester. Speaking from personal experience, it is almost always harder and scarier to make the initial ask for help than to do whatever comes afterwards to resolve the issue together. Accordingly, the two most important things you can do to help yourself and me succeed in this area are to (1) communicate open and honestly with me, and (2) err on the side of asking for help.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Reading note: Underlined readings are web links accessible directly from the syllabus. Non-underlined readings are accessible on Canvas or in your required course texts.

Tuesday, January 21

Class Introduction

- Assignment: Read syllabus
- Assignment: Freyfogle, "Property's Functions and the Right to Develop"

I. Civic and Governmental Structures

Thursday, January 23

Civics 101: U.S. Constitution, Federal Legislation, Federal Courts, Federal Agencies

- Reading: Excerpts from Chemerinsky *Constitutional Law* casebook
- Reading: Skim US Constitution. Pay attention to what each Article and Amendment is about, generally.

Tuesday, January 28

Civics 102: Illinois Constitution, Illinois Legislation, Municipal Authority, Legislative Tracking and Case Access, State Controls over Municipal Authority

- Reading: Excerpts from Briffault and Reynolds *State and Local Government Law* casebook
- Reading: Illinois State Constitution: skim Articles I, II, IV, V, VI, and Amendments; read Article VII “Local Government”
- Reading: California SB9
 - Read the Legislative Counsel’s Digest of the bill
 - Skim the text of the bill
 - Click the “Bill Analysis” tab and read the Aug. 28, 2021 Senate Floor Analysis

II. Legal Bases and Topics

Thursday, January 30

Property Rights, Nuisance, Legal Challenges, Judicial Review

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapters 1 (§1 through §3) and 11 (§1 and §4)

Tuesday, February 4

Procedural and Substantive Due Process

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 5 (§1 and §2)
- Reading: *Klaeren v. Village of Lisle*
- Reading: *Village of Belle Terre v. Boraas*

Thursday, February 6

Takings, Regulatory Takings, Exactions, Impact Fees

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 5 (all remaining sections) and Chapter 4 (§5)
- Reading: Strong Towns, “Impact Fees Don’t Mean Development is Paying for Itself”

Tuesday, February 11

Other Statutory and Constitutional Considerations for Land Use Planning

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 6 (§1 through §3) and Chapter 8 (§7)
- Reading: Excerpt from Elliott *A Better Way to Zone*
- Reading: Syllabus of Opinion, *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*
- Reading: Summary article re: *City of Austin v. Reagan National Advertising of Texas*

Thursday, February 13

State and Local Entities in Law and Planning

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 2 (§3 and §4)
- Reading: Standard Zoning Enabling Act
- Reading: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, “The State of Local Zoning: Reforming a Century-Old Approach to Land Use”

Tuesday, February 18

Online Resources + Review

- You are strongly encouraged to bring a computer to this class session so you can follow along the online resource presentation.

Thursday, February 20
Civics, Government, & Law Exam

III. The Comprehensive Plan

Tuesday, February 25

Introduction to the Comprehensive Plan

- Assignment Begins: Comprehensive Plan Assignment
- Reading: Zoning Practice, “Practice Consistency”
- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 2 (§5)
- Reading: Planetizen, “What are Comprehensive Plans?”
 - Watch the ~7 minute video displayed at the top of this article as well

Thursday, February 27

The Comprehensive Plan, Public Participation, Direct Democracy

- Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 11 (§2)
- Readings on the Zoning Referendum in the Town of Milton, MA [TENTATIVE]
 - “What to know about Milton's high-stakes housing vote today,” WBUR (Feb. 14, 2024)
 - “Milton voters reject multifamily rezoning plan,” WBUR (Feb. 15, 2024)
 - Explore the informational websites published by the Town of Milton and the Yes! For Milton campaign. What sort of information does each site present? How are they alike, and how are they different? Do you think they present information effectively? If so, how? If not, what changes do you suggest?

Tuesday, March 4

Local Comprehensive Planning – Guest Panel

- Readings TBD

IV. Zoning

Thursday, March 6

Origins of Zoning

- Assignment Begins: Mock ZPC Case
- Assignment Begins: Zoning Exercise
- Reading: *Spann v. City of Dallas*
- Reading: *Ambler Realty Co. v. Village of Euclid* (District Court)
- Reading: *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.* (Supreme Court)

Tuesday, March 11

Zoning by Use – Districts, Rezoning, Primary vs. Accessory Uses, Home Occupations

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 3 (§1; §4-§6; §8-§9)
- Reading: *LaSalle Nat. Bank v. County of Cook* (1957)
- Reading: City of Champaign Council Bill 2018-138
- Reading: Skim City of Champaign Zoning Map
- Reading: Skim City of Champaign Zoning Ordinance, Article III “Use Regulations”

Thursday, March 13

Development and Design Standards for Structures

- Reading: Talen, Chapter 5
- Reading: Skim City of Champaign Zoning Ordinance, Article IV “Development Standards”
- Reading: Staff report for City of Champaign Plan Commission Case PL18-0031

Friday, March 14 [Not a class day]

Assignment Due: Comprehensive Plan Assignment

Tuesday, March 18 – Spring Break

No class

Thursday, March 20 – Spring Break

No class

Tuesday, March 25

Zoning Special Relief: Planned Developments, Special Use Permits, and Variations

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 3 (§3 only)
- Reading: Staff report for City of Champaign Plan Commission Case PL17-0017 (pages 1-7 of PDF)
- Reading: City of Champaign Council Bill 2017-020
 - Note: Make sure to read both the staff report (pages 21-26 of PDF) as well as the Special Use Permit itself (pages 3-5 of PDF)
- Reading: City of Champaign Zoning Board of Appeals Case PL18-0001.
 - Note: You do not need to read the application itself (pages 15-25 of PDF), but read the report and other attachments, especially Attachment E.

Thursday, March 27

Zoning Administration, Enforcement, and Text Amendments

- Reading: Talen, Chapters 6 and 7
- Reading: City of Champaign Council Bill 2017-222
- Reading: Champaign Municipal Code, Article XII “Nonconformities”, Divisions 1 and 2 only (i.e. Sections 37-631 through 37-635).
- Reading: Skim Champaign Municipal Code, Article XIII “Administration and Enforcement”

Tuesday, April 1

Mock ZPC Case Workday

V. Subdivision and Development Review

Thursday, April 3

Subdivision I

- Assignment Due: Zoning Exercise
- Assignment Begins: Subdivision Exercise
- Reading: Talen, Chapter 1

- Reading: Salkin & Nolon, Chapter 4 (§1 and §2)
- Reading: Juergensmeyer and Roberts, “Subdivision”

Tuesday, April 8

Subdivision II

- Reading: Talen, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3
- Reading: Skim Champaign Municipal Code Chapter 31, “Subdivision Regulations”

VI. Themes for Practicing Planners

Thursday, April 10

Racial Intent, Racial Impact

- Reading: Rothstein, Preface & Chapters 1-4

Tuesday, April 15

Racial Intent, Racial Impact II + Private Covenants

- Reading: Rothstein, Chapter 5
- Reading: Excerpts from Fogelson’s *Bourgeois Nightmares*
- Reading: Explore the website for the Cherry Hills subdivision
- Reading: Skim Cherry Hills Phase 9 Covenants

Thursday, April 17

Mock ZPC Case Workday

Tuesday, April 22

Racial Intent, Racial Impact III

- Reading: Rothstein, Chapters 6, 8, 9, 11, and 12
- Assignment Due: Subdivision Exercise

Thursday, April 24

Fostering Emergent Urbanism

- Assignment Due: Subdivision Exercise
- Reading: *Unleash the Storm: Reviving Small-Scale Development in America’s Cities*, Chapters 1-3
- Reading: City of Champaign Study Session SS 2024-005

Tuesday, April 29

[Floating Day TBD]

Thursday, May 1

[Floating Day TBD]

Friday, May 2 [Not a class day]

- Assignment Due: Mock ZPC Case Reports

Monday, May 5 – Wednesday, May 7

Assignment Due: Mock ZPC Case Presentations