

UP312 Communication for Planners Fall 2017

Class Meetings:

Lecture: Mondays; 1:00 PM - 1:50 PM, 225 Temple Hoyne Buell Hall (TBH)

Lab: Wednesdays; 1:00 PM – 2:20 PM, 70 Wohlers Hall

Instructor:

Prof. Arnab Chakraborty, arnab@illinois.edu

Office: TBH M230; Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Teaching Assistant:

David Mischiu, mischiu1@illinois.edu

Location: TBH 227, Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM

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, say, the direction of your community, or the challenges and opportunities it faces. You will also need to persuade your audience of the value of your recommendations.

A survey of planning and planning-related professionals¹ 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 the key challenges, and communicate your analysis and recommendations to intended audiences. 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 exercises will complement readings, lectures, and lab, and will require significant amount of time every week. As an advanced composition gen-ed, this course 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 skills.
2. have a sense of the relevance of these skills in practical planning situations.
3. be comfortable with using different software applications taught in this course.

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

Course Organization:

This course is built around weekly cycle of learning and applying skills. Typically, on Mondays there will be a lecture on that week's central theme, we will review the prior week's work, and homework will be assigned. On Wednesdays, you will learn technical aspects of particular programs and have the opportunity to work on exercises in class. You will be able to discuss exercise related questions with the course instructor and TA. You may also visit us during our office hours so that we can provide additional help.

Weekly Exercises

Weekly exercises will focus on the development of specific skills. Exercises will be graded on a scale of 1 to 10. Most submissions will be due at 11:59 PM on Saturdays on Illinois Compass. Certain exercises may require presentations in class or printed submissions. **Late submissions of weekly exercises will not receive any credit.** [Student may receive one extra credit opportunity toward the end of the semester to make up for one missed or delayed weekly exercise].

Major Assignments

There will be two major assignments for the course. Each will receive a letter grade. The assignments will build on weekly exercises. A dedicated student with command of the materials will be able to incorporate work from many of the weekly exercises into the larger assignments with some modifications.

Final Project

The final project will be a planning process simulation in which the class will be divided into groups (such as planning department, chamber of commerce, homebuilders, etc.) 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 report, and an individual assessment of the project and group work.

Participation and Attendance Policy

Your active and interested participation in the course is counts for 10% of the grade. Attendance to all lectures and lab sessions is mandatory. More than two unexcused absences (3 late arrivals count as 1 absence) will result in a lowered grade.

As per University policy, I will reasonably accommodate a student's religious beliefs, observances, and practices in regard to class attendance and work requirements if the student informs me of the conflict within one week after being informed of the attendance or work requirements.

Assignments and Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

- **Weekly Exercises: 20%**
- **Assignment 1: 20%**
- **Assignment 2: 20%**
- **Final Project: 30%**
- **Class Participation: 10%**

Final course grade will be based on the following distribution: 100-97 points = A+, 96.9-94 = A, 93.9-90 = A-, 89.9-87 = B+, 86.9-84 = B, 83.9-80 = B-, 79.9-77 = C+, 76.9-74 = C, 73.9-70 = C, 69.9-67 = D+, 66.9-64 = D, 63.9-60 = D-, and 59.9-0 points = F

Course Materials

Readings for this course are limited but important. Most instructional readings are for Monday lectures. They include some chapters from each the following books and some journal articles:

- Berke, P., D. R. Godschalk, E. J. Kaiser, and D. Rodriguez. Urban land use planning. University of Illinois Press, 2006.
- Dandekar, H. C. The planner's use of information. Planners Press, 2003.

Digital copies of all the above readings will be posted on Illinois Compass. You do not need to purchase these books. Additional lectures, readings, exercises, and a number of tutorials will also be posted on Illinois Compass in advance of the classes. For all the assigned readings, you may print them out or read online. The syllabus will also be posted on Illinois Compass.

Prerequisites

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

Course Policies

The volume of material to be covered and the cumulative nature of the material require your consistent participation and punctual attendance to class and lab sections. Remember that this is a professional communications course, and our professional behavior is one of the most important aspects of it.

I strongly discourage using phones of any kind in the classroom. If you must use a laptop computer, please ensure that you use it for course-related purpose only and that you do not distract students sitting near you. During lab sessions, students should avoid using earphones and visiting websites that are unrelated to the class session.

All homework assignments are to be submitted electronically through Illinois Compass and **should be in PDF file format only**. For online submissions, please put your name in the filename *in addition to* in the actual document. Other file formats will be penalized, and if we are unable to open them it may lead to your submission being considered void. Do not submit any work files via email attachments.

You are encouraged to talk to us in the class, during office hours and via the discussion board on Compass. You are encouraged to post content-related questions on the discussion board, rather than emailing to the instructor or TA, so that your fellow students can participate and benefit from the discussions such questions generate. Initiating and contributing to discussions in the class and on Compass discussion boards is the best way to score high on the participation grade.

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 (<http://www.admin.uiuc.edu/policy/code/>). 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, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, and to the Senate Committee on Student Discipline.

Counseling Center

The Counseling Center 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. (<https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>)

Special Accommodations

If you have any condition, such as a physical or learning disability, which will make it difficult for you to carry out the work as outlined or which will require academic accommodations, please notify me during the first week of the course.

COURSE OUTLINE

FUNDAMENTALS OF PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATIONS

Week 1: 8/28, 8/30 – Professional Communications

Monday: Course overview

Wednesday: Professional Communications

Reading: Sheridan G., Hawkes A., Lesson from Don Draper (For Planners), Planetizen Feature, Accessed August 8, 2017.

In-class practice exercise; Introduce Assignment 1 and Exercise 1: Briefing memo

Week 2: 9/4, 9/6 – Writing Memos

Monday: NO CLASS (Labor Day)

Wednesday: Memo writing workshop

Week 3: 9/11, 9/13 – Working with Data

Monday: 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

Introduce Exercise 2: Writing with Data

Wednesday: MS Excel Training

Week 4: 9/18, 9/20 – Crafting Arguments

Monday: Planning as argumentation

Reading: Kneupper, C. W. "Teaching argument: An introduction to the Toulmin model." College Composition and Communication 29, no. 3 (1978): 237-241.

Exercise 3: Analyzing and developing arguments

Wednesday: Argumentation Activity

Week 5: 9/25, 9/27 – Organizing Reports

Monday: Synthesizing information and writing reports

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

Exercise 4: Report draft in Adobe InDesign

Wednesday: Adobe InDesign Training
Handout: Presentation guidelines

Week 6: 10/2, 10/4 – Preparing Persuasive Presentations

Monday: Presenting to the public
Reading: Storey, A. W. Chapter 8. Speaking Skills for Presentations. Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) The planner's use of information. Planners Press, 2003

Wednesday: Preliminary Presentation Recordings Due; Class Reviews

[Assignment 1 final report and presentation recordings due at 11:59 PM on Saturday, 10/7; submit on IL Compass]

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND PLANNING

Week 7: 10/9, 10/11 – Planning, Zoning and the Development Process

Monday: 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.
Introduce Assignment 2
Introduce Exercise 5: Planning process*

Wednesday: Context Mapping with Kevin Lynch's Five Elements
Review planning documents and zoning codes

Week 8: 10/16, 10/18 – Small-Area and Site plans

Monday: 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.
Introduce Exercise 6: Develop a Small Area Plan

Wednesday: Adobe Illustrator Training

Week 9: 10/23, 10/25 – Imagining Community Futures

Monday: Visualizing a plan's impact on urban form
Reading: Frank, A., Chapter 10: Graphic Communication. In Dandekar, H. C. (Ed.) The planner's use of information. Planners Press, 2003
Introduce Exercise 7: Imagining the future

In-class Exercise: Listing physical changes to the site

Wednesday: Adobe Photoshop Training

Week 10: 10/30, 11/1 – Tying It All Together

Monday: Planning for redevelopment

Reading: John Houseal, AICP, and Devin Lavigne, AICP, Delivering Better Plans, American Planning Association, PAS Memo — January/February 2012

Wednesday: Adobe Tool Refresher; Work Session

[Assignment 2 final report and presentation recordings due at 11:59 PM on Saturday, 11/4; submit on IL Compass]

COMMUNICATION IN PLANNING PRACTICE

Week 11: 11/6, 11/8 – Planning with Interests

Monday: Stakeholders in the planning process

Reading: David Morley Community-Based Brownfield Redevelopment, American Planning Association, PAS Memo — January/February 2008

Introduce Final Project and Team Assignments

Wednesday: Google Sketch Up Training

Week 12: 11/13, 11/15 – Planning as Negotiation

Monday: Negotiation

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

Wednesday: Work Session, Final Project Updates

[Final Project Interim Memos Due at 11:59 PM on Saturday, 11/18; submit on IL Compass. I will share these reports on Compass for other groups to see]

Week 13: 11/20, 11/22 – NO CLASSES: Fall Break

Week 14: 11/27, 11/29 – Polishing Your E-Portfolio

Monday: Websites, Resumes, and Cover Letters

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.

In-class Exercise: Update your E-Portfolio: Prepare a cover letter and resume for an internship position

Wednesday: Work Session, Final Project Updates

Week 15: 12/4, 12/6 – Project Activities

Monday: Work Session, Final Project Updates

Wednesday: Course summary; Feedback on draft presentation outlines.

Week 16: 12/11, 12/13 – Conclusion

Monday: Final Presentations.

Wednesday: Final Presentations.

[Final Reports and Confidential Assessments are due at 11:59 PM on Saturday 12/16; submit on IL Compass]
