

## **Course Syllabus • Fall 2017**

### **UP426: Urban Design and Planning**

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#### **Summary**

The objectives for this course are focused toward preparing students for more effective interdisciplinary work in urban design. This can be accomplished through an introduction to the concepts and techniques of urban analysis, plan making, and implementation, built upon the basic skills of graphic communication.

The semester will begin with an introduction to urban design and fundamental graphic techniques, both manual and computer-generated. Exercises will include the quantitative and qualitative analyses of a block in Champaign to provide the critical skills for urban design.

The first project will begin as a typical urban design study of an urban area, in which students will examine both socio-economic and physical/environmental aspects. Through the application of urban design concepts, the goal will be to define a neighborhood within this area. Analysis will lead to recommendations for strengthening the neighborhood.

The second project will begin with more in-depth analysis of the neighborhood. Examining strengths and opportunities, and determining GOSM (goals, objectives, strategies, measures), the focus will be to provide recommendations and design interventions to improve its health, vitality and definition.

This is a very intensive time-consuming course, designed to provide skills that we, as professional planners, believe that all planners need. It also provides great insight for non-planners (engineers, architects, LA's, etc.) to urban design and planning, so that all professions can cooperate in improving our urban environments.

#### **Course Description**

What many practicing planners, engineers and architects, as well as many public servants do not often realize is that through their daily duties they are shaping the urban form of their cities, and in essence are more active urban designers than other professions. Urban design is about creating neighborhoods, districts, cities and regions, extending far beyond yet being inclusive of architecture, streetscape, aesthetics and the design of a plaza or building. It is about arranging land uses, transportation networks and amenities in order to create a fabric that can foster healthy, functional and vibrant communities.

This course will explore the fundamentals of urban design as they relate to all scales of the built environment – focusing on the block and the neighborhood - and will reinforce the basics of sound community planning.

With these foci as the quintessential building blocks, we will explore how parts of cities change, and how the advent of the automobile, rapid suburbanization, and past planning practices have created challenges for today's planners and urban designers.

The curriculum will include learning how to analyze and measure design, how to apply its principles, and how to understand the design process for creating new areas. It will focus on the fundamentals of retrofitting existing neighborhoods, and why connectivity, density and walkability are critical to healthy communities.

All of this will be premised on fundamental graphic communication skills. Nothing can be learned or explained without basic skills in manual and computer-generated graphics, studio techniques and technologies, and presentations.

Finally, the question that should be answered through this course, is how a planner/engineer/architect/landscape architect/public servant/resident can impact the design of a city positively without designing buildings, and what tools are available to implement urban design plans and policies.

### **Objectives**

To introduce students to the application of basic urban design;  
to gain practice in the basic skills of urban design analysis;  
to gain an appreciation of both the process and product of the design of the built environment;  
to emphasize the need for planners to learn design, and designers to learn planning;  
to provide practice in visual, graphic and spatial literacy.

### **Method**

This course emphasizes an appreciation of experiential learning and the interdependence of procedural and substantive knowledge. Fundamental for experiential learning is the studio method, which is typical of all design schools, and often used in workshop courses elsewhere.

The studio method includes lectures, instructional sessions and discussion, but the emphasis is on student work. Learning by doing through exercises and projects is the focus that is supported by collaboration with colleagues in a cooperative, interactive milieu.

Lectures and discussions, enhanced by the extensive real-world professional experiences of the instructors, will be supplemented by multiple exercises and group projects that will provide students with practical experience for a fundamental understanding of urban design.

### **Student Projects, Exercises and Evaluation**

All exercises and projects are to be scanned and submitted digitally on Compass, unless otherwise noted in class. These will also be subject to multiple oral/visual presentations in class. Please be ready to work hard and long, and contribute your best to group work!

You will be rewarded in your professional life! Through much experience, we know this to be true.

### **Graphic Exercises**

The tools for urban analysis may now seem to be mostly digital, but there continues to be a need for manual graphic skills. From taking notes at a community meeting (requiring good lettering skills), to creating simple sketches on a napkin or a board at a meeting, (requiring basic drawing skills), the planning profession still benefits from those that can “do it by hand”.

These lessons and exercises will add more low tech skills to the repertoire of high tech tools, including the proper use of markers, paper and scales. Most exercises will be started in class, with completion and practice as homework.

0. Cognitive Map
1. Lines, Squares and Circles
2. Lettering
3. Illustrated Block Plan
5. Analytical Diagram
4. Scaled Block Plan
6. Digital Block Plan
7. Basic Axonometrics

### **Project #1: Discovering and Defining a Neighborhood**

The goal of this project is to define a neighborhood, based on both physical/environmental and non-physical terms. The neighborhood is the fundamental building block of cities and regions; urban design at any scale is built upon this. Based on an inventory (“discovery”), and application of analytical tools of the given area, the final product will include recommendations for strengthening the defined neighborhood.

### **Project #2: Analysis and Design Interventions for a Neighborhood**

The finale of the semester, to be presented to a panel of professional planners and academics, provides the opportunity for in-depth analysis, planning recommendations and design interventions for the neighborhood. This is the most difficult, yet FUN creative part of the course. It includes the rigors, rules and frameworks that guide design, while providing the opportunity to question them.

### **Evaluation**

Exercises	30%
Project 1	20%
Project 2	25%
Mid-Term Exam	20%
Final Test	5%

Please note that there is no grade for attendance.

There is no need, as your grades in every other category will suffer dramatically if you do not attend every required class.

### **Readings and References**

Jacobs, Jane (1961). *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Vintage Books.  
Lynch, Kevin (1960). *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.  
Simmons, Jason (2010). *The Designer’s Desktop Manual, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Cincinnati, OH: How Books.

Articles and websites as provided

### **ATTENDANCE**

It is extremely difficult to miss a single class in this course. If you must be absent, please notify us by email to both instructors as far ahead of time as possible.

We will discuss and excuse attendances at conferences (such as IL-APA).

If you are experiencing illness, or any other last minute problem, please notify both of us by Wednesday 6 p.m., and arrange for a classmate to take notes and cover for you. We do usually not check emails after that time.

### **COUNSELLING**

Our course can be time-consuming and difficult. If you are finding it a problem in balancing it with your other courses, please do not hesitate to talk with us, your advisor and/or consult <https://counselingcenter.illinois.edu/>.