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 the direction in which your community is headed, 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 professionals\(^1\) 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 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 software applications taught in this course.

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Course Organization:
This course is built around a weekly cycle of learning and applying skills. Typically, on Tuesdays a lecture session will cover the basics of a central idea; we will discuss some readings and review the prior week’s work; and homework will be assigned. On Thursdays, a lab session will provide an opportunity to apply that idea through a new software program or group activity. You will be able to discuss questions about your homework assignments with your instructor and TA. For additional help, you may visit us during our office hours or set up an appointment.

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 5:00 PM on Mondays via 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. 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. For each major assignment, students will receive a letter grade.

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 report, and an individual assessment of the project and group work. There will be no final examination in this course.

Participation and Attendance Policy
Your active participation in the course is counted 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 in a timely manner.

Assignments and Grading
Your grade for this course will be based on the following:
- Weekly Exercises: 20%  - Final Project: 30%
- Assignment 1: 20%  - Class Participation: 10%
- Assignment 2: 20%

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 Tuesday lectures. They include some chapters from each the following books and some journal articles:

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.

**Counselling 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/](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: 8/27, 8/29 – Professional Communications
Tuesday:  Course overview
Thursday:  Professional Communications
          In-class practice exercise; Introduce Assignment 1 and Exercise 1: Briefing memo

Week 2: 9/3, 9/5 – Writing Memos
Tuesday:  NO CLASS (Labor Day)
Thursday: Memo writing workshop

Week 3: 9/10, 9/12 – Working with Data
Tuesday:  Visual Display of Quantitative Information
          Reading: Yen, M. and York, G., Chapter 3: Information from secondary sources.
          Introduce Exercise 2: Writing with Data
Thursday: MS Excel Training

Week 4: 9/17, 9/19 – Crafting Arguments
Tuesday:  Planning as argumentation
          Exercise 3: Analyzing and developing arguments
Thursday: Argumentation Activity

Week 5: 9/24, 9/26 – Organizing Reports
Tuesday:  Synthesizing information and writing reports
          Exercise 4: Report draft in Adobe InDesign
Thursday: Adobe InDesign Training
          Handout: Presentation guidelines
Week 6: 10/1, 10/3 – Preparing Persuasive Presentations

Tuesday: Presenting to the public

Thursday: Class Reviews

[Assignment 1 final report due on Monday, 10/7 at 5:00 PM; submit on IL Compass]

COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND PLANNING

Week 7: 10/8, 10/10 – Planning, Zoning and the Development Process

Tuesday: Planning, Zoning and the Development Process

Introduce Assignment 2
Introduce Exercise 5: Site Analysis

Thursday: Context Mapping with Kevin Lynch’s Five Elements
Review planning documents and zoning codes

Week 8: 10/15, 10/17 – Small-Area and Site plans

Tuesday: Considerations in Small Area Planning

Introduce Exercise 6: Small Area Plan

Thursday: Adobe Illustrator Training

Week 9: 10/22, 10/24 – Imagining Community Futures

Tuesday: Visualizing a plan’s impact on urban form

Introduce Exercise 7: Imagining the future
In-class Exercise: Listing physical changes to the site

Thursday: Adobe Photoshop Training
Week 10: 10/29, 10/31 – Tying It All Together

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

Thursday: Adobe Tool Refresher; Work Session

[Assignment 2 final report due on Monday, 11/4 at 5:00 PM; submit on IL Compass]

COMMUNICATION IN PLANNING PRACTICE

Week 11: 11/5, 11/7 – Planning with Interests

Tuesday: 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

Thursday: Sketch Up Training

Week 12: 11/12, 11/14 – Planning as Negotiation

Tuesday: Negotiation

Thursday: Work Session, Final Project Updates

[Final Project Interim Memos Due on Friday, 11/22 at 5:00 PM; submit on IL Compass. I will share these reports on Compass for other groups to see]

Week 13: 11/19, 11/21 – NO CLASSES: Fall Break

Week 14: 11/26, 11/28 – Polishing Your E-Portfolio

Tuesday: From Planning to Action

Thursday: Websites, Resumes, and Cover Letters


In-class Exercise: Update your E-Portfolio: Prepare a cover letter and resume for an internship position
Week 15: 12/3, 12/5 – Project Activities
Tuesday: Final Project Updates; Feedback on draft presentation outlines.
Thursday: Final Presentations.

Week 16: 12/10 – Conclusion
Tuesday: Course summary.

[Final Reports and Confidential Assessments are due on Friday, 12/13 at 5:00 PM; submit on IL Compass]

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