

Course Syllabus

 Edit

USP 311-U: Introduction to Urban Planning

Nohad A. Toulan School of Urban Studies & Planning

Portland State University

Spring 2026

Instructor: Yu Xiao, Ph.D., AICP., Associate Professor Email: yxiao@pdx.edu
(<mailto:yxiao@pdx.edu>)

Office Hours: By appointment, over Zoom or in Urban Center 370 G

Credits: 4 undergraduate hours (This course is a required core course for the Community, Urban Studies, and Planning major)

Recommended Prerequisite: upper-division standing

Course Website: This class uses canvas (<http://canvas.pdx.edu>) in support of learning. You can log in with your Odin username and password.

Class Description and Objectives

Class Description: An interdisciplinary perspective on planning theories, principles, and practice. Focuses on the planning process, particularly at the local level. Explores the political, economic, social, and legal forces that influence the planning function and the roles of planners.

Learning Objectives: by the end of the class, students should:

- Know the history of planning
- Know the contemporary practice of planning
- Know various sub-fields in urban planning
- Understand the political, economic, social, and legal forces that influence the planning function

- and the roles of planners, and
- Apply what you learned in this class to discuss how to create a better future

CUSP Program Student Learning Outcomes

SLO 1 Urban Theory, History & Systems

Use interdisciplinary approaches to analyze and synthesize key historical and contemporary theories of community and urbanization, and apply them to cities and regions.

SLO 2 Analysis of Power & Politics

Analyze how bias, marginalization, and structural racism operate within systems of power to apply strategies for confronting social inequities.

SLO 6 Professional Communication

Develop verbal, visual, and written skills to effectively communicate complex ideas, policy recommendations, and research findings to diverse audiences of concern.

COURSE WORK

Term Project: A Better Future for My Neighborhood

Through this project, you will study a neighborhood in local areas in or around Portland, OR. You will explore urban planning in the neighborhood, identify at least two urban issues with first-hand information, explore the history of these issues, explore the current planning procedure and practices related to these issues, consider best practices from other places, and provide implementable strategies to address the issues and make the neighborhood better.

Week 1: Pick a neighborhood in local areas around Portland, OR

Week 2: Describing your neighborhood

Week 3: Research urban planning in your neighborhood

Week 4: Identify urban Issues (at least two) in your neighborhood (via interviews with 3 persons)

Week 5: Edit, update & improve your project

Week 6: Explore urban issue #1

Week 7: Explore urban issue #2

Week 8: Polish your work considering instructor's feedback and publish it for peer review

Week 9: Comment on your peer's work

Week 10: Presentation & final turn-In

Your work from week 3, 6, and 10 will be graded substantively. Your work from other weeks will be checked for submission only.

Quizzes: The quizzes will be based on the assigned course materials for that week.

Discussions: Each week, you are expected to participate in class discussion on-line.

Expectations

- Students must post **one original response** to the discussion prompt each week.
- Students must respond to **at least two classmates (starting from week 2)**.
- Posts should demonstrate engagement with course materials.

Quality of Discussion Posts

Strong discussion posts should:

- Address the discussion question clearly
- Reference course readings or materials
- Provide thoughtful analysis or reflection
- Ask questions or extend the conversation
- Be respectful and constructive
- Use clear and professional writing

Short or superficial responses such as “I agree” or “Good point” will not receive full credit.

Respectful Communication

Students are expected to maintain a respectful and inclusive learning environment.

- Be respectful of different perspectives
- Avoid offensive or inappropriate language
- Provide constructive feedback
- Engage in civil and professional dialogue

Grading (All assignment should be submitted via Canvas):

Quizzes	25%
Discussions	25%
Term project:	50%
Total:	100%

Course grades will be assigned on a criterion-reference scale as follows:

A: 93-100% A-: 90-92%

B+: 87-89% B: 83-86% B-: 80-83%

C+: 77-79% C: 73-76% C-: 70-72%

D+: 67-69% D: 63-66% D-: 60-62%

F: <60%

In case that a grade is on the borderline, classroom participation will be used to determine the final grade.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance Policy: Attendance in this online course is measured by timely participation and completion of weekly work. Students are expected to log into the course regularly and complete

each week's assigned activities on time.

Expectations

- Students are expected to complete **weekly readings, discussions, assignments, and activities by the posted deadlines.**
- Students should check course announcements and materials, post and respond to discussions **at least 2–3 times per week.**

Assignment guidelines

Students are encouraged to have study groups and help each other with the assignment. However, the work specified as individual work must be individual work. Plagiarism will be prosecuted.

Late Submission Policy

In fairness to all students, especially those who work hard to meet deadlines, late course work will be penalized 5% per day. Course work more than 7 days late will not be accepted.

Students are expected to submit assignments by the stated deadlines. However, extensions may be granted in certain circumstances with a valid reason.

Academic Integrity Statement

[PSU's Student Code of conduct \(https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/psu-code-student-conduct-and-responsibility\)](https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/psu-code-student-conduct-and-responsibility) prohibits all forms of academic misconduct, including but not limited to:

- “a) cheating, such as copying the work of another, allowing another to copy from one's own work, unauthorized use of notes or sources during an exam, giving or receiving unauthorized information prior to or during the examination.
- b) plagiarism, such as word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer's ideas;
- c) the buying or selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers;
- d) performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) in another person's stead;
- e) unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information;
- f) falsification of research data, sources, or other information represented in an academic

assignment;

g) unauthorized collaboration;

h) using the same paper or data for several assignments or courses without proper documentation;

i) unauthorized alteration of student records; and

j) academic sabotage, such as destroying or obstructing another student's work.”

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

PSU values diversity, equity, and inclusion. My goal is to create a learning environment that is accessible, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. I am committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, the Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides accommodations in the learning environment.

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this class and feel you need accommodations, contact the DRC to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC works with students who have physical, learning, cognitive, mental health, sensory, chronic illness, and all other disabilities.

If you already have accommodations: Please contact me to make sure that I have received your Faculty Notification Email, and to discuss your accommodations.

The DRC is located in Smith Memorial Student Union, Suite 116. You can also contact the DRC at 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, or visit the DRC website (<https://www.pdx.edu/disability-resource-center>).

Title IX Reporting Obligations

Portland State is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and PSU policies prohibit discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sex/gender and sexual harassment, which includes sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking. We expect a culture of mutual respect in our department and class. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the **Title IX Coordinator**, [Office of Equity and Compliance](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/file-complaint-discriminationharassment&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092479&usg=AOvVaw3NOJGuQ0qbsb) (<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/file-complaint-discriminationharassment&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092479&usg=AOvVaw3NOJGuQ0qbsb>).

, or the [Office of the Dean of Student Life \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/reporting-options&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092606&usg=AOvVaw2QwIwCP2oYhY88GgpqW4aB\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/reporting-options&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092606&usg=AOvVaw2QwIwCP2oYhY88GgpqW4aB).

Please be aware that as an instructor, I have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual and relationship violence and/ or other forms of prohibited discrimination to PSU's [Title IX Coordinator \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/title-ix&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092803&usg=AOvVaw3bka3ZoXHwBwa1xaf40JyP\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/title-ix&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092803&usg=AOvVaw3bka3ZoXHwBwa1xaf40JyP), the [Office of Equity and Compliance \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/equity-compliance&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092874&usg=AOvVaw1kBnsatNPNmWT1CA5M4iFV\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/equity-compliance&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092874&usg=AOvVaw1kBnsatNPNmWT1CA5M4iFV)

or the [Dean of Student Life \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092936&usg=AOvVaw2gQblfRWUzuaFCXAVf569o\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505092936&usg=AOvVaw2gQblfRWUzuaFCXAVf569o) office (<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/dean-student-life/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093006&usg=AOvVaw0tddaZqOBVPpue-rTyuY6>)

and cannot keep information confidential. However, the information will be kept private and only those with a need to know will be provided with what you disclose. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment or sexual and relationship violence to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact a [confidential advocate \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/womens-resource-center/sexual-and-relationship-violence-response-program&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093203&usg=AOvVaw0AvJsS06-eOuWxSjclrjM7\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/womens-resource-center/sexual-and-relationship-violence-response-program&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093203&usg=AOvVaw0AvJsS06-eOuWxSjclrjM7) at 503.894.7982 or by scheduling [online \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://psuwr.c.youcanbook.me/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093286&usg=AOvVaw2r2oVTe\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://psuwr.c.youcanbook.me/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093286&usg=AOvVaw2r2oVTe). You may also contact other confidential employees found on the [sexual misconduct resource webpage \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093364&usg=AOvVaw1cAfs5jenXNYM1AFoaYez\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093364&usg=AOvVaw1cAfs5jenXNYM1AFoaYez).

Please complete the required student module [Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/understanding-sexual-misconduct-and-resources-student-module&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093567&usg=AOvVaw1piPOPW0c77H2cOKfl8fQu\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/understanding-sexual-misconduct-and-resources-student-module&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093567&usg=AOvVaw1piPOPW0c77H2cOKfl8fQu) in Canvas, which provides information about PSU policy and resources.

You may also report sexual and relationship violence to law enforcement on campus with [Campus Public Safety Office \(CPSO\). \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/campus-safety/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093725&usg=AOvVaw25pTHIPHpW7-9ji6QRtAb9\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/campus-safety/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093725&usg=AOvVaw25pTHIPHpW7-9ji6QRtAb9)

<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/a/pdx.edu/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGJ2EsjqRT9MBkEkQCAuaeLfvZBiRDfHztvIEzIAnonymousReportForm&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505093772&usg=AOvVaw3CslmnyCwHyYf3-TRYI9a8>)

Or you may file an [_ \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/a/pdx.edu/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGJ2EsjqRT9MBkEkQCAuaeLfvZBiRDfHztvIEzIAnonymousReportForm&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094101&usg=AOvVaw2OcG0z_otND2hZjiz9Jmru\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/a/pdx.edu/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScGJ2EsjqRT9MBkEkQCAuaeLfvZBiRDfHztvIEzIAnonymousReportForm&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094101&usg=AOvVaw2OcG0z_otND2hZjiz9Jmru) with **Campus Public Safety Office** (<https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/campus-safety/make-report&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094169&usg=AOvVaw2zkGDodtPrtE5EwgOJKZuW>) or a [_ \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://web.imaging.pdx.edu/AppNet/UnityForm.aspx?key%3DUFKey&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094244&usg=AOvVaw2gAhGtr9vC1vO_Vj6hwOqNBiasIncidentReportForm&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094311&usg=AOvVaw3V8UonYidKsxf3ke9I5cBR\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://web.imaging.pdx.edu/AppNet/UnityForm.aspx?key%3DUFKey&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094244&usg=AOvVaw2gAhGtr9vC1vO_Vj6hwOqNBiasIncidentReportForm&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094311&usg=AOvVaw3V8UonYidKsxf3ke9I5cBR) with the [_ \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/bias-review-team&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094420&usg=AOvVaw3E43yh0VXIXGP_eYbDEI8\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/bias-review-team&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094420&usg=AOvVaw3E43yh0VXIXGP_eYbDEI8) **Bias Review Team (BRT)**. [_ \(https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/bias-review-team&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094501&usg=AOvVaw0U_Xc4nTxw4_wNxj8ZWBg\)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/bias-review-team&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1742518505094501&usg=AOvVaw0U_Xc4nTxw4_wNxj8ZWBg) PSU does not typically investigate the reports that are made through these two avenues. These reports help PSU understand what students and employees are experiencing on and around campus and provide support where needed.

Submitting work online

For assignments that require uploading files to Canvas, it is the student's responsibility to verify that (1) all files are submitted in Canvas prior to the deadline and (2) all submitted files are those that the student intends to be graded for the assignment. Submitting the "wrong" file by accident is not acceptable grounds for a deadline extension. Assignment grades will be based on the file submitted prior to the posted deadline. Files submitted in a format that cannot be accessed by the instructor cannot be graded and will therefore receive a 0. Acceptable file formats are MS Office formats (e.g. Word, Excel, Powerpoint) or PDF files. Individual assignment instructions may contain a required file format.

Technology access

Proficiency in the use of canvas, PSU email, and other computer tools such as Zoom or part of

google suite is required for this course. This course requires consistent access to functioning computer equipment and Internet access throughout the length of the course.

[Collapse All](#)[Export Course Content](#)

▼ Introduction to the Course



Introduction to the Course- Let's get started here!

▼ Week 1 (3/30-4/3) : Introduction-What is Urban Planning?



Learning Objective: know what urban planning is.

▼ Week 2 (4/6-4/10): History of Urban Planning



Learning Objective: understand the history of urban planning and the forces/events that shaped urban planning.

▼ Week 3 (4/13-4/17): The Contemporary Planning Process



Learning Objective 1: Comprehensive plan and zoning; and be able to tell the differences between the two.



Learning Objective 2: Subdivision regulations. Understand the development review and permit process.

▼ **Week 4 (4/20-4/24): Planning Ethics and Inclusion**



Learning objectives: know the AICP Code of Ethics and understand what it implies.

▼ **Week 5 (4/27-5/1): Housing**



Learning objectives: know the planning issues related to housing, understand the factors that affect housing and be able to discuss housing issues.

▼ **Week 6 (5/4-5/8): Transportation Planning**



Learning objectives: know what is transportation planning and its impacts on cities and know what transportation planners do.



Learning objectives: know the issues related to transportation planning, understand the complexity of the issues, and be able to discuss them.

▼ **Week 7 (5/11-5/15): Economic Development Planning**



Learning objectives: know what economic development planning is, understand the complexity of the economic development planning issues, and be able to discuss them.

▼ **Week 8 (5/18-5/22): Environmental Planning**



Learning objectives: know what environmental planning is, understand the complexity of the environmental planning issues, and be able to discuss them.

▼ **Week 9 (5/25-5/29): Food Systems Planning**



Learning objectives: know what food systems planning is, understand the complexity of the food systems planning issues, and be able to discuss them.

▼ **Week 10 (6/1-6/5): Community Resilience Planning**



Learning objectives: know what community resilience planning is, understand the complexity of the community resilience planning issues, and be able to discuss them.

6d **You are currently logged into Student View**

Resetting the test student will clear all history allowing you to view the course as a brand new student.