

USP 542 | Land Use Implementation

Fall 2026 Course Syllabus

Portland State University
College of Urban and Public Affairs
Toulan School of Urban Studies and Planning

Instructor

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Please include USP 542 in the subject line and do not use Canvas messaging unless instructed.

Office Hours: By appointment, typically Wednesdays from 4:00–5:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Meeting Information

Thursdays, 5:30–8:50 p.m.
KMC 245

In-person attendance is expected unless otherwise specified in the Course Calendar or announced by me.

See Course Policies for attendance, illness, and campus disruptions.

1. About USP 542

1.1 Course Purpose

Plans don't get built by themselves.

Land use planning identifies the type of communities and development patterns we hope to create. Implementation is how we move from those ideas to actions, policies, regulations, and development decisions that shape real places.

USP 542 introduces the theoretical foundations and practical tools used to implement land use plans. We'll explore land use regulation systems in the United States with a comparison against other approaches internationally and a particular focus on Oregon's land use review process. We'll

examine other tools that influence development, and how implementation operates within political, social, economic, and geographic systems. We will also examine how implementation intersects with longstanding systemic racism and environmental injustice, and highlight the equity and ethical implications of the choices we make.

A central goal of USP 542 is to help you approach plan-making with implementation in mind from the beginning, rather than treating implementation as something to figure out after the plan is complete. **In the end, the best plans are ones that are actionable, equitable, and realistically structured for success.**

1.2 Course Focus

Throughout the course, we will focus on:

- How zoning and other implementation tools shape development.
- How land use planning operates within political, social, economic, and geographic systems.
- How systems of land ownership and regulation in the U.S. and Oregon differ from approaches in other countries and cultures.
- Practical application of land use regulation and review, particularly in Oregon.
- The relationship between implementation tools and equity, systemic racism, environmental justice, and professional ethics.

- How implementation considerations should influence plans, policies, and planning processes to be most effective.

1.3 Prerequisites & Background

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. USP 542 is designed for students with varying levels of experience with planning and land use regulation, although no specific experience is assumed. A general understanding of land use planning practice will enhance your experience but is not required.

Please contact me if you have questions or concerns about your preparation for the course.

2. How the Course Works

2.1 Course Format

USP 542 meets once each week for an extended studio-style class period. Most class meetings include several types of learning, including:

- Discussion of the prior week's topic and written reflection.
- Lecture and discussion informed by course readings.
- Small-group, collaborative, or applied exercises.
- Guest speakers on selected weeks.
- A break midway through class when possible.

By default, this is an in-person course.

Because discussion and applied activities are central to the course, many in-class experiences cannot be recreated outside the classroom. For weeks where we will meet in person, there will generally not be a hybrid or online participation opportunity unless otherwise announced.

Some class meetings, as shown on the Course Calendar, will be entirely online, via Zoom. In online meetings, students are encouraged, but not required, to keep cameras on if they are in an environment where it is safe and comfortable to do so.

2.2 Required Materials

Two materials are required:

Hirt, S. A. (2014). *Zoned in the USA: The origins and implications of American land use regulation*. Cornell University Press.

American Planning Association. (2022). *Equity in zoning policy guide*. Available through Canvas.

Additional required and optional readings will be provided through Canvas and/or the PSU Library.

2.3 Preparing for Class

To make the best use of our time together, come to class prepared to engage with the week's material. A three-credit graduate course generally assumes approximately six hours of work outside class each week.

You are expected to:

- Complete required readings and pre-work before class.
- Arrive prepared to discuss and apply the material.
- Participate thoughtfully in discussions and activities.
- Carefully prepare and proofread work before submitting it.

USP 542 is reading-intensive, but I do not expect you to retain every detail of every reading. Graduate-level reading includes knowing when to read closely, when to skim, and how to identify an author's central argument, evidence, and implications.

2.4 Read Critically, Engage Constructively

Do not take course readings as gospel.

Professional planners should approach information methodically and critically, paying attention to evidence, assumptions, context, and interpretation.

You are welcome to disagree with course materials — and with me and with one another — but be prepared to explain your reasoning and support it with evidence. At the same time, remain open to new information and to reconsidering your own assumptions.

2.5 Participation & Collaborative Learning

Conversation and collaborative work are central to USP 542. You are expected to participate thoughtfully and respectfully in discussions, small-group work, and other course activities.

People participate and communicate in different ways. If conventional classroom participation or a particular activity in class creates a barrier for you, please contact me so that we can discuss other ways for you to demonstrate engagement with and understanding of course material. Please be patient and respectful of your fellow classmates and how they choose to engage in our work together.

Discussion — whether written or verbal — must always remain respectful and support a safe learning environment.

2.6 MURP Student Learning Outcomes

USP 542 focuses on the following MURP Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO #3: MURP students will understand planning as a political act and an act of intervention on behalf of a more desired, collective view of the future.

SLO #4: MURP students will understand planning as a reflective practice, and engage in plan making as reflective practitioners.

SLO #7: MURP students will design planning processes, make plans, and create strategies for plan implementation.

3. Assignments & Grading

3.1 How Your Grade Is Calculated

Your final grade in USP 542 is based on the following components:

Component	Weight
Assignment 1: Zoning Analysis	20%
Assignment 2: Staff Report	20%
Assignment 3: Code Amendment Project Proposal	20%
Weekly Reflections	20%
In-Class Discussions, Participation, and Exercises	20%
Total	100%

Final grading scale

94/A | 90/A- | 87/B+ | 84/B | 80/B- | 77/C+ | 74/C | 70/C- | 67/D+ | 64/D | 60/D- | 0/F

Note: Fractional percentages are not rounded up or down when determining final grades.

3.2 Assignments

Three assignments comprise 60% of your final grade. They are intended to apply concepts discussed in class to practical situations you are likely to encounter as a planning practitioner.

Assignments are graded on a scale of 0–20 with a defined rubric explained in the assignment materials. Specific requirements, grading criteria, and deadlines will be provided with each assignment in Canvas.

For non-MURP students, I may provide an alternative assignment when appropriate.

3.3 Weekly Reflections

Weekly reflections comprise 20% of your final grade. Each week's class will include a prompt or question for the written reflection.

Responses should generally be written as though you were responding to a colleague in your office about a planning question or issue. Prompts and detailed instructions will be provided in Canvas.

Reflections are intended to be short — typically 150–250 words, sometimes more — and written in a professional style. Responses are graded on a scale of 0–10. **A score of 10 requires a response that fully addresses the prompt, uses appropriate professional writing style, and contains no typos or other errors.** Late reflection submittals, like other late work, are not eligible for a score of 10.

3.4 In-Class Participation & Exercises

20% of your final grade is based on participation in class discussions and exercises. Most weeks will include a group activity, worksheet, or other exercise completed physically or digitally.

In-class participation is graded each week on a scale of 0–2:

2: Participation as expected

1: Partial or ill-prepared participation

0: Unacceptable or no participation, including absence

If you miss class, participation points cannot be made up, although extra-credit opportunities may allow you to earn points in this grade category.

3.5 Professional Writing

Most of your grade is based on written work. Assignments will center professional writing, which differs in important ways from conventional academic writing and is more representative of what you are likely to use in day-to-day planning practice.

A guide to the difference between academic and professional writing is provided on

Canvas. We will reinforce professional writing throughout the course. In general, expect to:

- Write clearly and concisely.
- Use a conversational, accessible and professional voice rather than unnecessarily-complex academic prose.
- Organize information for the intended audience, putting the most important information first ("reverse pyramid").
- Appropriately identify the sources informing your work using casual, in-line citations.

The quality of your writing will have a significant impact on assignment grades. Students are encouraged to use the Portland State University Writing Center and its resources for graduate students if necessary.

3.6 Deadlines at a Glance

Deadlines in USP 542 follow this general pattern:

Coursework	Usual Deadline (unless otherwise stated)
Weekly Reflections	Mondays at 11:59 p.m.
Assignments	Wednesdays at 11:59 p.m. (on applicable weeks)
In-Class Exercises	Before the end of the applicable class meeting
Extra Credit	As specified with the opportunity

Some assignments or weekly reflections may not follow this pattern. **Always check the relevant instructions for deadlines and**

submission requirements, or contact me for clarification. In the event that dates conflict in multiple locations, the deadline shown in the [assignment instructions](#) will prevail.

3.7 Submitting Your Work

Unless otherwise stated, all assignments must be submitted through Canvas in PDF format. It is your responsibility to confirm before the deadline that:

- The correct file has been submitted.
- The submission is complete.
- The file is readable.

Unreadable assignments will receive a grade of 0. Submitting the wrong file is not an acceptable reason for an extension, and resubmission may not be accepted.

3.8 Late or Revised Work

Assignments may be accepted after the deadline under certain conditions and are

subject to penalty. If a medical, personal, or other difficulty is delaying your work, please contact me before the deadline to make arrangements.

Late work submitted without prior communication may not be accepted.

Unless other arrangements are made, late work will receive a penalty of 20% per 24-hour period or portion thereof beyond the deadline.

Unless otherwise provided in the assignment instructions, revised or resubmitted work is generally not accepted after submission.

3.9 Extra Credit

There will be at least one opportunity for extra credit during the quarter. Individual extra-credit opportunities will identify the eligible grade component(s) and applicable deadline(s).

4. Course Policies

4.1 Attendance & Absences

USP 542 relies heavily on discussion and collaborative work, so regular attendance is important. You are a graduate student and are expected to manage your own attendance, and I hope you will find the course valuable enough to attend as consistently as possible.

I also recognize that graduate students are balancing school with work, family, health, caregiving, and other responsibilities. If

circumstances are significantly affecting your ability to participate or complete coursework, please communicate with me so that we can identify an option that allows you to continue meeting the requirements of the course.

If you need to miss class, please contact me in advance by email when possible. In-class participation points cannot be made up after an unexcused absence, although extra credit may be used to earn points in this category.

If you miss class, you are still expected to complete the weekly reflection using the prompt provided in Canvas. Some reflections may rely partly on classroom discussion, so you are encouraged to connect with a classmate to understand what was discussed.

4.2 Illness & Personal Health

Do not come to class if you or a household member are feeling sick or have had a recent exposure to a communicable illness.

Please notify me as early as possible, and I will work with you on an appropriate accommodation.

Masks are not required in our classes, but individuals may choose to wear one. Students are expected to respect their classmates' individual health decisions.

4.3 Campus Closures and Other Disruptions

We will follow all PSU alerts and instructions regarding campus operations and closures. Depending on circumstances and available time, I may move a class meeting to Zoom, shift work to an asynchronous format, cancel or reschedule a class meeting, or revise the Course Calendar.

Do not make an unsafe trip to attend class.

If PSU remains open but circumstances make your individual trip to campus unsafe, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss options.

Unless otherwise announced, campus disruptions or closures do not automatically change assignment deadlines.

Other events affecting access to campus may also require changes to course format or reasonable flexibility in attendance. Any changes will be communicated through PSU email and/or Canvas.

4.4 Communication

Unless otherwise directed, please contact me at aray@pdx.edu and include USP 542 in the subject line. **Do not use Canvas messaging.**

I will generally respond within 48 hours. I may occasionally send course information to your pdx.edu email address. Important announcements will generally also be posted in Canvas, but students are expected to monitor both PSU email and Canvas regularly.

4.5 Technology

Proficiency with Canvas, PSU email, and standard computer tools such as Google Workspace is required for this course. You will need consistent access to functioning computer equipment and internet service throughout the term.

If technology access becomes a barrier to participating in the course, please contact me as early as possible.

4.6 Academic Dishonesty

Students are expected to be ethical not only in the classroom, but also out of the classroom. It is in all students' interest to avoid committing acts of academic dishonesty and to discourage others from committing such acts.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following examples: engaging in any form of academic deceit; referring to materials or sources or using devices not authorized by the instructor for use during any quiz or assignment; providing inappropriate aid to another person in connection with any quiz or assignment; or engaging in plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the act of claiming someone's work as your own through copying it without giving the creator of the work credit. Plagiarism can also include using another person's theories, ideas, or phrases without proper attribution. The simplest way to avoid plagiarizing is to always cite the sources from which you gather information or develop arguments—just cite anything you use from someone else. It actually makes your work stronger.

Plagiarism is a serious issue and is a violation of the PSU Student Conduct Code. University policy requires instructors to report instances of plagiarism and penalize the perpetrator(s) according to applicable guidelines. Please see me if you ever have questions about how to cite your work.

4.7 Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools can be useful in planning and other professional settings. They can be helpful for overcoming writing blocks, exploring different ways to explain complex topics, or generating ideas about how to structure an argument. **However, they are not a substitute for your own analysis, professional judgment, or engagement with course material.**

In USP 542, use of AI may be acceptable in limited circumstances as a writing or brainstorming aid. These tools may not be used to replace your own thinking or analysis, avoid engaging with assigned material, or generate whole portions of work submitted as your own. Do not use AI to create images, maps, or other graphics for assignments in this course.

Specific assignments may establish additional requirements or restrictions on AI use. Students who use AI are responsible for the accuracy, appropriateness, and potential bias of any material it produces.

5. Learning Environment, Access & Support

5.1 Additional Resources Available on Canvas

Part of maintaining a safe, welcoming, and supportive learning environment is making sure you know where to find help when you need it. Portland State University and the Toulon School provide a range of academic,

personal, financial, health, reporting, and other support resources.

Please see the Student Support & University Resources page on the USP 542 Canvas for additional information including:

- Academic and student support resources

- Basic needs, financial assistance, and food resources
- Health, counseling, and wellness services
- Reporting concerns, discrimination, bias, and misconduct
- Academic appeals and student rights
- Career and professional development resources
- Immigration resources and response

5.2 Inclusive Learning Environment

In USP 542, we will sometimes discuss difficult or contested issues. Everyone enters the course with different identities, experiences, perspectives, communication styles, and ideas about planning and how communities should change.

We will work together to create a classroom where people can ask questions, test ideas, disagree thoughtfully, and learn from one another. Respectful discussion does not require agreement, but it does require listening, curiosity, and awareness of how our words and actions affect others.

We also share responsibility for our own learning. When appropriate, we should be willing to seek additional information, challenge their assumptions, and engage perspectives that differ from their own.

If the tenor or structure of classroom discussions is preventing you from meaningfully participating or sharing your perspective, please let me know.

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

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that may affect your work in this course 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. 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](#).

Please refer to the [Environmental Health and Safety](#) webpage for information about emergency preparedness and the Evacuation Assistance Registry.

5.4 Title IX / Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment

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 course. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the [Title IX Coordinator](#), [Office of Equity and Compliance](#), or the [Office of the Dean of Student Life](#).

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, the Office of Equity and Compliance or the Dean of Student Life office 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](#) at 503.894.7982 or by scheduling online. You may also contact other confidential employees found on the [sexual misconduct resource webpage](#).

Please complete the required student module [Understanding Sexual Misconduct and Resources](#) 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 \(CPSO\)](#).

Or you may file an [anonymous report](#) with Campus Public Safety Office or a Bias Incident report with the [Bias Review Team](#). 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.

5.5 Land and Territory Acknowledgment

This Land and Territory Acknowledgment statement is the first – but not nearly the last – step in reframing the conversations with Indigenous communities that have been typically held by those in a place of privilege and power.

Portland State University is based in Portland, Oregon in Multnomah County. With this Statement and our actions, we honor the Indigenous people whose traditional and ancestral homelands this includes, including the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, the Tualatin Kalapuya and many other indigenous nations of the Columbia River. It is important to acknowledge these ancestors and to recognize that we are here as a result of sacrifices forced upon them. In remembering these communities, we honor their legacy and their descendants. We hope that this Statement and our on-going dialog fosters thoughtful conversations with the Indigenous communities that currently live, work and thrive today in Portland and across Oregon.

6. Course Calendar

6.1 Using the Course Calendar and Canvas

The Course Calendar identifies weekly topics, meeting format, assignment releases and deadlines, and other pertinent details about each week's meeting. Canvas materials are synchronized with the Course Calendar as follows:

- The **Modules** page contains required and optional readings for each week, slide sets (posted after class), and links to materials introduced in class.
- The **Assignments** page contains assignment requirements and grading rubrics, weekly reflection prompts, and extra credit opportunities. Links on the Assignments page should be used to submit all work in the course.

You should review the current Course Calendar and Canvas each week before beginning readings or coursework. Please contact me if you have questions or need clarifications before beginning work.

6.2 Changes and Revisions

The syllabus, Course Calendar, and Canvas materials may be revised as needed during the term.

I will make every reasonable effort to communicate changes through Canvas and/or PSU email, but you are responsible for reviewing current course information each week. Please contact me proactively if you have any questions.