PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF URBAN AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Course:	USP 550 Participatory Planning
Term:	Fall 2026
Credits:	3
Instructors:	Matthew Gebhardt and Ayano Healy
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Course Description
This course examines principles, methods, and programs for communicating with and engaging with communities in the development and implementation of public plans, policies, and programs. The class considers participation from the perspective of both the community member and the government and will cover how participation intersects with diversity, equity, and inclusion. It examines the variety of processes and techniques for achieving participation goals and objectives and for identifying and responding to the specific needs of different communities.

Learning Outcomes
This course is typically taken at the start of the second year of the MURP program, leading into Planning Workshop. As such, it is meant to build upon and refine concepts introduced in previous coursework and prepare students for a key component expected of every Workshop project - public engagement. The course learning objectives below are associated with program student learning objectives (SLOs) as noted.

A student who successfully completes this class will be able to:

- Understand the rationale for public participation and the implementation challenges involved (SLO1 - Equity and Social Justice and SLO3 - Planning as a Political Activity);
- Identify the range of processes used in policy and plan making participation (SLO7 - Plan Making and Implementation);
- Identify the range of tools being used in planning practice for engaging community members (SLO7 - Plan Making and Implementation);

- Learn how to properly decide which tools to use for which engagement objective throughout a planning process (SLO1 - Equity and Social Justice, SLO3 - Planning as Political Activity, and SLO7 - Plan Making and Implementation); and
- Formulate and justify a plan for public involvement similar to those formulated by public sector actors and/or private planning consultants (SLO7 - Plan Making and Implementation and SLO10 - Collaboration and Teamwork).

Teaching Methods
This course is taught through a once weekly seminar format where we will actively discuss concepts from readings and other materials related to course topics. Course concepts will be deployed in practice through a term-long engaged project with a client.

Texts and Readings
There are no required texts for this course. Instead, readings and other resources will be made available online either through the University Library's website or other sources. **Note: please regularly check the online version of the syllabus and reading list as readings may change or new readings or resources may be added during the term.**

Assignments and Grading
Your course grade will be based on the assignments and examinations listed below. Each will be graded on a 100-point basis, weighted for your final grade by the percentages listed next to the item. For a variety of reasons, including a desire to reduce paper, all assignments will be submitted online, through which you will also receive your grades and feedback.

● Assignment 1: Public Engagement Practice	70
● Assignment 2: Participation Evaluation	20
● Assignment 3: Reflection	10
● Total	100

The basic rubric used to grade graduate-student work is as follows:
- A: Demonstrates original thought and synthesis of ideas, sophisticated, cogent analysis, and is clearly written or presented. Excellent work.

- A- or B+: Presents above average analysis with appropriate evidence to support the ideas and is clearly written or presented. Good work.
- B or B-: Shows a basic level of understanding, with analysis limited to the most obvious arguments. Writing is competent. Adequate work.
- C+ or below: Misunderstands or misrepresents the material, or is so poorly written presented as to obscure the analysis. Inadequate work for a graduate-level course.

The following represent summaries of the assignments; further guidance and detailed instructions about the four assignments will be provided in class and via Canvas.

Late Assignments: Late assignments create a variety of issues related to equity, pedagogy and integrity. Please try to avoid them if at all possible, but extensions will be granted where circumstances merit. Communication is important, so please try to let me know in advance if you believe you will need an extension.

Academic Integrity: All work done for the course must be your own. The work must be original and prepared for this class. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Copying the work of another and not citing it; lifting text from the Internet; or even presenting ideas that are not your own without proper attribution are all examples of plagiarism. Use of AI to write assignments is not acceptable in this course. Any violations of academic integrity will result in a zero for that assignment and may result in further academic discipline.

Access and Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

PSU values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to fostering mutual respect and full participation for all students. Our goal is to create a learning environment that is equitable, useable, inclusive, and welcoming. If any aspects of instruction or course design result in barriers to your inclusion or learning, please notify me. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) provides reasonable accommodations for students who encounter barriers 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 Disability Resource Center to schedule an appointment and initiate a conversation about reasonable accommodations. The DRC can be contacted at: 503-725-4150, drc@pdx.edu, https://www.pdx.edu/drc.

If you already have accommodations, please contact me to make sure that we have received a faculty notification letter and discuss your accommodations.

Sexual Assault and Harassment

As instructors, one of our responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment for our students and for the campus as a whole. We take this responsibility very seriously, and we expect a culture of professionalism and mutual respect in our department and class. You may report any incident of discrimination or discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, to either the Office of Equity and Compliance (https://www.pdx.edu/diversity/office-of-equity-compliance) or the Office of the Dean of Student Life (https://www.pdx.edu/dos/student-conduct-at-psu).

PSU's Student Code of Conduct (https://www.pdx.edu/dos/psu-student-code-conduct) makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are strictly prohibited and offenses are subject to the full realm of sanctions. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources on PSU's Enrollment Management & Student Affairs: Sexual Prevention & Response website at http://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault.

Please be aware that as faculty members, we have the responsibility to report any instances of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about sexual harassment or sexual violence to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can find a list of those individuals here: https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/get-help. For more information about Title IX please complete the required student module Creating a Safe Campus in your D2L or find more information about it here: https://www.pdx.edu/sexual-assault/safe-campus-module.

Other Campus Resources

The PSU Food Pantry offers supplemental food items to currently enrolled PSU students. The pantry is located in SMSU 325. For more information, you can email foodhelp@pdx.edu. For more information on food and wellness assistance for students visit: https://www.pdx.edu/student-access-center/.

The Office of Diversity & Multicultural Student Services (Smith Memorial Union 425) provides structured, academic support service, advising, referrals, and advocacy for first-generation college students, low-income and others facing special challenges. Visit http://www.pdx.edu/dmss/ for info.

Services are available for students with children, including childcare subsidies and family events, a lending library and clothing closet, lactation spaces, and a Family Resource Room. More information can be found at: https://www.pdx.edu/students-with-children/our-services.

The Learning Center (Millar Library 245) mission is to foster the learning process by empowering PSU students to accomplish their academic and personal goals. In addition to helping with current coursework, academic support services can assist in developing effective learning strategies. See http://www.pdx.edu/tutoring/ for more info.

The Writing Center (Cramer 188) will help you with all varieties of projects, including class assignments, resumes, application essays, presentations, and creative writing. It aims to help writers at any stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to the final draft. You can schedule an appointment online: http://www.writingcenter.pdx.edu/. Their website also contains resource pages that suggest ideas and strategies for completing writing projects.

Student Legal Services provides legal advice and assistance on a range of areas of law including family, landlord-tenant, and immigration. More information can be found at: https://www.pdx.edu/sls.

Course Outline

Below is an evolving list of topics that are planned for inclusion in the course. It is likely to undergo substantial revision as the term progresses and we collectively work through the participation process with our community partner. We will adjust topics and add materials based on what we identify as gaps and needs.

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1 (Sept 28)	**INTRODUCTION TO PARTICIPATORY PLANNING** ● **Intro and ethos of the course, pedagogy** ● **What is public participation?** ○ *Broader practice, professionalization, and specialization* ● **Foundations of meaningful public participation** ● **Ethical practice** **READINGS:** ● IAP2 2022-2024 Strategic Plan ● Planners' Changing Relationships with Participation: The Impact of New Training Certification Schemes ● The Public Participation Handbook - Chapter 1 **ACTIVITY:** ● Introductory Blurb	
Week 2 (Oct 5)	**DRAFTING YOUR BLUEPRINT** ● **Design** ● **Project considerations** ● **Context** ● **Scope** **READINGS:** ● Designing Public Participation Processes ● Going Beyond "It Depends": The Role of Context in Shaping Participation in Natural Resource Management	

	● The Public Participation Handbook - Chapter 3 **ACTIVITY:** ● Project Scoping	
Week 3 (Oct 12)	**UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE(S)** ● **People** ○ Empathy mapping ○ Power / community mapping ● **Audience** **READINGS:** ● Power Analysis ● Empathy Map ● BPS Equity Toolkit **ACTIVITY:** ● Power Analysis	
Week 4 (Oct 19)	**CLARIFYING YOUR PURPOSE & MEASURED IMPACT** ● **Purpose and objectives** ● **Evaluation and influence** ○ Evaluation measures, what is important ○ Previous workshop experience; feedback from past clients, etc. ○ Rational vs Experiential goals **READINGS:** ● Evaluation of Public Participation: The Practices of Certified Planners **ACTIVITY:** ● Drafting Goals and Objectives	
Week 5 (Oct 26)	**COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK** ● **Informational Documents** ● **Performance Reviews** ● **Providing Feedback** **READINGS:** ● To Be Added	1-pager handout

	ACTIVITY: ● 1-Pager Review and "Performance Evaluation"	
Week 6 (Nov 2)	**DRAFTING YOUR PLAN** ● **Plan and Planning Documents** ● **Sequencing** ● **Governance** ● **Resources** ● **Assessing and mitigating risks** ● **Final review and plan endorsement** **READINGS:** ● To Be Added **ACTIVITY:** ● Drafting a Plan	
Week 7 (Nov 9)	**METHODS - INTERVIEWS** ● **Key Person Interviews** **READINGS:** ● To Be Added **ACTIVITY:** ● Presentation and argumentation	
Week 8 (Nov 16)	**METHODS - FOCUS GROUPS** ● **Focus Groups** **READINGS:** ● To Be Added **ACTIVITY:** ● Running focus groups	
Week 9 (Nov 23)	**METHODS - EVENTS** ● **Planning the Second Event** ● **Tabling** ● **World Cafe** ● **Charettes**	

	READINGS: ● To Be Added **ACTIVITY:** ● TBD	
Week 10 (Nov 30)	**METHODS - DIGITAL** ● **Online Platforms** **READINGS:** ● Handwaving Participatory Planning: The "Ongoing Experiment" **ACTIVITY:** ● TBD	Public Participation Evaluation
Finals (Dec 7)	**ENGAGEMENT TOP CHEF**	Reflection