Overview

The work of planners involves people, data, and data analysis. We have to define problems, ask the right questions, collect and process information, develop alternative solutions, and provide a well-grounded rationale for decision-making. Fortunately (or unfortunately) there is rarely one way to analyze an issue; likewise, there is rarely if ever one correct outcome of an analysis. An effective planner is inquisitive, willing to work with community members and leadership to identify and define problems, interested in trying new methods of collecting information, and able to explore and critique policy alternatives. This work involves more than just data collection and number crunching (and in fact, many times we do not have access to sufficient quantitative data). Planning at its core requires strong inter-personal skills which ensure relevancy, gain support and provide persons of all walks of life/perspectives an opportunity to be part of the process. Such skills include one-on-one communication along with the ability to work as a team member and with public groups. Finally, a planner must know how to effectively communicate the results of his/her work so that decision makers and the public at large understand the issue and can make sound decisions.

This course is intended to introduce you to fundamental primary (and generally though not exclusively field-based and qualitative) research methods and techniques used in planning practice. We begin by considering the special nature of planning problems as “wicked” problems that can be formulated in multiple ways. The awareness of multiple frames for defining controversial issues is kept in mind as we develop primary data collection instruments and consider analysis from many angles. You will gain hands-on experience in some of the key skills of fieldwork and collecting and analyzing qualitative data, including observations and interviewing. You will also be given an opportunity practice teamwork skills and to hone your professional writing and oral presentations kills.

We will work in close collaboration with a client on a real-life planning issue, in so-called "applied planning research." By the end of the quarter, you will have a planning report for your portfolio. You will also have started to fill a toolbox of planning skills, which you will add to over your next 2 years!
Course learning objectives

This class is formative and foundational for the rest of the MURP Experience, in several different ways. One is that this class exposes you to the basics of planning process and to important planning research tools. In addition, the class lays the groundwork for ongoing prioritization of equity both in interpersonal work as well as in planning practice. Finally, this class is typically a cohort-building opportunity.

Our specific learning objectives are:

1. Apply the planning research process, starting with defining the problem/opportunity/goal and analyzing existing conditions, with a client-driven project.
2. Develop a good interview plan and guide, implement interviews, and analyze interview data
3. Design a survey that minimizes survey error and asks good survey questions
4. Prioritize equity in research, by understanding inequities as rooted in systemic oppression and by applying an equity lens.
5. Reflect on bias, validity and reliability challenges as related to qualitative methods, and identify ways to overcome those challenges, such as triangulation.
6. Employ "best" practice and case study research to make planning recommendations.
7. Document and reflect on your researcher positionality and initiate a practice of reflective planning and critical reflexivity.
8. Develop positive strategies for effective teamwork

Note many of these directly connect to the 10 overall MURP student learning outcomes of the whole program. This class serves as an introduction; you will revisit many of the learning outcomes in future classes.

Topic and Client

Each year, we have a different topic and client. I try to identify issues that intersect deeply with questions of social justice and ecological sustainability, and that expose you to a "wicked" problem in planning in Portland, the larger metro region, and/or Oregon.

For 2019:

For this project you will partner with the City of Portland (client: Ryan Curren) and Proper Portland (Client: Justin Douglas) to plan for equitable economic development along the proposed SW rail corridor. The City of Portland with funding from Metro is beginning to implement the Southwest Corridor Equitable Housing Strategy (See 5), while Metro is wrapping up a complimentary Equitable Development Strategy that includes high level strategies for workforce and small business development (See). However, planners and others in the region are greatly lacking basic information much less an implementation plan for equitable economic development (small business development and commercial real estate development).

Our Planning Methods I and II class will assist in conducting a study of both business and property owners located along a portion of the SW Corridor along Barbur Boulevard between the potential light rail stations at SW Custer and the West Portland Town Center. The study will provide a baseline of
existing conditions, evaluate potential adverse impacts to the business community and commercial real estate market as a result of the SW Corridor Light Rail investment, and outline potential opportunities where Prosper Portland, the City of Portland, TriMet, and others might focus investments. By gathering quantitative and qualitative information on business and property owners, a windshield survey of businesses, intercept interviews of (20?) customers, interviewing (20?) business owners and/or property owners, and a best practice scan of forming culturally specific business associations.

As some background, there is not an existing typical business association on the area, nor is there an obvious organization for communities of color. That does not mean there are not already leaders in the area; hopefully our outreach efforts will reveal more insight. You also should be aware that TriMet has already been doing outreach in the area but mainly to residents and only those businesses that may be directly displaced due to the potential alignment and construction of the light rail project. Some business owners and employees may have already been engaged on that front, but many may not have.

We are not doing a full community engagement process, but rather targeted information gathering. As you engage in this planning methods project, you should represent yourself as a PSU MURP student who is helping the City of Portland and Prosper Portland better understand existing conditions and the perspectives of local businesses- be careful to relay honestly the scope of your involvement and to frame it as information-gathering (do not over-promise specific action items).

Readings

All readings will be available via D2L/electronically, sometimes via the PSU library online. You do not need to purchase any books.

Weekly Topics (follow the link for readings and etc.)

- Week 1: Introduction to Planning Methods
- Week 2: Client Meeting & Existing Conditions
- Week 3: Ethics and Equity in Planning Research
- Week 4: Field Observations
- Week 5: Interviews
- Week 6: Survey Design & Questions
- Week 7: Best Practices & Recommendations
- Week 8: Focus Groups & Analyzing Qualitative Data
- Week 9: Communication Tips: Report-Writing and Presentations
- Week 10: Practice & Client Presentation
- Exam Week: Class Debrief

Assignments and Key Dates

While you will work in teams, there is also an emphasis on a lot of individual work in this class. This is to enable you to individually practice all of the skills from class, and also to enable me (the professor) the opportunity to gauge each of your individual progress.

There is typically ONE assignment due per week, either a team or individual assignment, though on a few weeks there is more than one item due. While this may sound like a lot, the idea is that I have
broken all the skills, learning objectives, and the overall client project into many small parts, so you will do a little bit each week. All of the assignments culminate into a final report and presentation to the client, followed by our own class reflections.

Most of the due dates are for the Sunday evening at 11:30pm following that week of classes (with the exception of Exam Week)- you are encouraged to turn items in earlier than that if possible. I aim to evaluate each assignment in a timely fashion. You should read my feedback and incorporate changes into the final team presentation and report as relevant and feasible.

The assignments are below (check their individual Dropbox for further details. Please do not get ahead in assignments as I will give complimentary instruction in class, and because we may gain insight from the client and from own fieldwork which could shape the specific details of the later assignment directions and expectations).

- **Week 1: Positionality Reflection**
- **Week 2: Individual Existing Conditions Analysis Section**
- **Week 2: Team Agreements**
- **Week 3: Individual Equity Lens**
- **Week 4: Individual Field Observations**
- **Week 5: Team Interview Plan**
- **Week 6: Survey Assignment**
- **Week 7: Best Practice/Case Study/Recommendation Assignment**
- **Week 8: Interview Analysis**
- **Week 9: Nothing due; work on team presentation and report!**
- **Week 10: Team Final Presentation**
- **Exam Week: Team Final Report**
- **Exam Week: Final Teamwork and Reflexivity Survey**

**Evaluation of Student Learning**

Each of the weekly assignments (10 total) are worth 5 points each, or 5% of your overall grade out of 100% in the class.

The two final client deliverables (final team presentation and final report) are each worth 25 points, or 25% of the your overall grade out of 100% in the class.

You can check your overall progress and grade in the class by navigating to "Grades" on this D2l site.

Individuals will get individual grades and feedback for their individual assignments; while all team members will receive the same grade and feedback for team assignments. (If I learn from student feedback including the final teamwork survey that there has been a very unfair distribution of work within a group or other signification problems, it may affect individual student's grades on teamwork. My goal is that teams avoid that kind of situation.)
OVERALL GRADING SCALE:

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A &= 95 - 100 \quad B+ = 87 - 90 \quad C+ = 77 - 79 \quad D+ = 67 - 69 \\
A- &= 91 - 94 \quad B &= 83 - 86 \quad C &= 73 - 76 \quad D &= 63 - 66 \\
B- &= 80 - 82 \quad C- &= 70 - 72 \quad F &= 0 - 62
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