

Course Outline:

PLA1106 Workshop in Planning Practice

Fall 2021, Tuesdays, 5 – 8pm

Virtual Classroom on Zoom Platform

Instructors

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Course Description

Workshop in Planning Practice is designed to help students develop and exercise planning competencies by undertaking a planning project as part of a team. Students gain experience in project management while applying the research and decision methods taught in previous courses in the core curriculum of the Master of Science in Planning program. Above all, students have the opportunity to cultivate professional skills and etiquette that will be expected of them should they pursue a career in planning or a related discipline.

In this course, each student is assigned to a team and each team is assigned a unique research question related to a planning problem typical of those that professional planners face in this region at this time. Each team is required to prepare a planning report for an external Client with guidance from an external Adviser and the course instructors. Reports must include research, analysis, conclusions and recommendations that suggest solutions or conceptual frameworks to confront the problem, including regulatory, administrative, programmatic or design approaches, taking into account available mechanisms for change, as well as the current economic, political, social, and environmental contexts. At the end of term, each team presents an executive summary of their report to a semi-public audience of classmates, stakeholders in the projects and invited guests; the session includes a question-and-answer period.

By placing students in a simulated professional setting with both internal and external supports, this course provides hands-on experience working with the concepts, methods and theories acquired in core and concentration gateway courses completed earlier in the program. In this way, it enables students to “bridge the imagined gap between theory and practice” along with other core aims of the [Graduate Planning Program Mission Statement](#).

Learning Outcomes

Planners draw on an extensive skill set. The [Professional Standards Board for the Planning Profession in Canada](#) defines the following as the “enabling competencies” of a Planner:

- **critical thinking skills**, such as: decision making; research; analysis; change management
- **interpersonal skills**, such as: collaboration; consensus building; facilitation; conflict management
- **communication skills**, such as: listening; written and oral presentation; internal/external relations
- **leadership skills**, such as: vision; team building; responsiveness; influence
- **professional and ethical behaviour**, such as: continuous learning; professionalism; code of ethics

In this course, students exercise and improve their own set of enabling competencies, while also contributing to a healthy team environment in which all teammates have space to grow and develop their enabling competencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Team Members (Students)

The project is done by the Team. Team members are pre-assigned to the project by the Instructors, based in part on information about the students' interests, abilities and learning goals that students provided to the Department in their 2nd Year Plan of Study. Working with teammates and on topics that are delegated, rather than chosen, is an important and intentional part of the course. This dynamic simulates the nature of planning roles in the majority of workplaces, and creates conditions that promote the learning outcomes.

Clients

The project is done for the Client. The Client has defined the goals, objectives and deliverables of the project in collaboration with the Instructors, based on a current need of their organization. They have also helped to identify data and resources available. Clients will:

- attend the project kick-off meeting
- receive a copy of the Work Plan (and may provide feedback at their discretion)
- provide any proprietary data or personal introductions required
- receive a copy of the Draft Report (and may provide feedback at their discretion)
- sit on the evaluation panel at the Final Presentation, and participate in evaluation
- receive a copy of the Final Report, and participate in evaluation

Advisers

The project is done with the Adviser. The Adviser is available to support the team in a mentoring capacity. They have been selected based on their experience in the subject matter. Advisers typically support by helping students find sources of information (written or human), identifying opportunities/barriers of a research approach or method, and helping students anticipate the needs and concerns of their Client and other stakeholders. Adviser will:

- attend the project kick-off meeting
- receive a copy of the Work Plan and provide feedback and direction
- provide guidance and support throughout the research process on an on-call basis
- receive a copy of the Draft Report, and participate in evaluation
- sit on the evaluation panel at the Final Presentation, and participate in evaluation
- receive a copy of the Final Report

Instructors

The project is done at the direction of the Instructors. Instructors conduct classroom learning to help cultivate skills and facilitate progress through the project process. Each team is assigned a Primary Instructor who serves as their main support and provides specific feedback at each evaluation milestone outlined in the timeline below. Students are welcome to seek additional insight from their Secondary Instructor as needed.

Course Organization

Access to Course Materials & Readings

Course materials will be accessible on the course site on Quercus.

Submissions

Assignments will be submitted through the course site on Quercus. Select assignments are also submitted to Clients and Advisers by email, as detailed below.

Course Schedule

The course will be taught online. There will be an option to arrange for feedback meetings with Instructors to take place in-person, at the team's (students') discretion (see weeks 4, 9 and 12).

Teamwork out side of the classroom makes up a significant part of the learning in this course; each team will decide whether to conduct their meetings online, in-person, or in a hybrid model.

Table 1 Summary of activities scheuled for each week of of the course, and indiciation of weeks with due dates.

Week	Date	Class Activity	Due Dates
1	September 14	Course Orientation & Project Initiation 5:10 – 5:45 welcome and course overview 5:45 – 6:45 teaching on professionalism & teamwork 6:45 – 7:00 <i>stretch break</i> 7:00 – 8:00 project initiation meeting	
2	September 21	Kick-Off Meeting with Client & Research Ethics 5:10 – 5:30 arrival and set-up 5:30 – 6:30 kick-off meeting with Client and Adviser 6:30 – 7:00 team debrief 7:00 – 7:15 <i>stretch break</i> 7:15 – 7:50 teaching on research ethics 7:50 – 8:00 expectations for Work Plan	
3	September 28	Work Plan Presentations 15-minute presentation by each team, followed by 10-minute question and answer session.	Work Plan Due; Work Plan Presentation Due
4	October 5	Feedback Meeting with Primary Instructor Each team will have a one-hour meeting with their Primary Instructor. <i>[NOTE: can be booked as in-person with call in option]</i>	
5	October 12	Showing Up In/For/At Work This session will explore how positionality, personality and well-being shape the way we show up in, for, and at our work/work teams/workplaces.	Focus week for Participation grade
6	October 19	Client-Consultant Relationships A panel of practitioners will share insights and experiences from opposite sides of the client-consultant relationship.	
7	October 26	Professional Writing This session will focus on how to make the transition from academic to professional writing. Some time will also be dedicated to discussing expectations for the Report Outline and Progress Update.	Focus week for Participation grade

Week	Date	Class Activity	Due Dates
8	November 2	Midterm Reflection In this session students will share lessons learned with one another by participating in a facilitated discussion, designed to reflect on and learn from risk and issue management on projects so far.	Report Outline Due; Progress Update Due; Focus week for Participation grade
9	November 9	Feedback Meeting with Primary Instructor Each team will book a one-hour meeting with their Primary Instructor. <i>[NOTE: can be booked as in-person with call in option]</i>	
10	November 16	Open Work Time (No Class) Teams to decide amongst themselves how best to use this time to prepare for upcoming deadlines.	
11	November 23	Public Speaking & Final Presentation Preparation Discussion of expectations and logistics for the Presentation Outline and Final Presentation, with guidance on how to best showcase yourself and your work.	Draft Report Due
12	November 30	Feedback Meeting with Primary Instructor Each team will book a one-hour meeting with their Primary Instructor. <i>[NOTE: can be booked as in-person with call in option]</i>	Presentation Outline Due
13	December 7	Project Showcase (Final Presentation Night) Each team will give a 15-minute presentation, followed by a 20-minute Q&A session. <i>[NOTE: this session will be 4 hours long and is open to guests. A poster will be prepared that students may use to invite stakeholders, colleagues, mentors and friends.]</i>	Final Presentation Due Report
14	December 14	Due Date Only (No Class)	Final Report Due
14	December 17 (Friday)	Due Date Only (No Class)	Debrief Statement Due

Deliverables and Evaluation

Team Evaluation

Table 2 Summary of Deliverables prepared and graded on a team-basis.

Team Deliverables	Due Date	Weight
Work Plan	September 28, 2021	15%
Work Plan Presentation	September 28, 2021	Pass/Fail
Report Outline	November 2, 2021	10%
Progress Update	November 2, 2021	5%
Draft Report	November 23, 2021	25%
Presentation Outline	November 30, 2021	5%
Final Presentation	December 7, 2021	20%
Final Report	December 14, 2021	15%

Individual Evaluation

Table 3 Summary of Individual components of evaluation.

Individual Evaluation	Due Date	Weight
Participation & Professional Conduct	Throughout the course	5%
Project Debrief Statement	December 17, 2021	Pass/Fail

Assignment Details

Work Plan & Presentation

Due: September 28, 2021 | Weighting: 15%

Work Plan to be submitted on Quercus, as well as emailed to Client and Adviser, copying Instructors. Presentation to be made in class, with a copy of slides submitted on Quercus.

A Work Plan is a tool to ensure that team members literally are 'on the same page' about what needs to be done, how it will get done, by whom and by when. Each team will prepare a Work Plan, approximately five to ten pages in length containing:

- a project purpose statement developed through the team's interpretation of the Project Brief, and kick-off discussion with the Client and Adviser
- a description of the intended audience for the findings/recommendations in the report
- an outline of the research method(s) that will be used
- a 'work breakdown structure' which maps out clusters of tasks and how they relate
- a team organization structure which indicates how responsibilities will be allocated among team members and any specialized roles have that have been defined
- a schedule (Gantt chart) indicating when tasks are to be done and by whom
- a list of risks that could threaten the project, with strategies for mitigation/management
- a reading list of the key literature and information resources on the situation or problem, building on the list provided in the Project Brief
- a list of any key informants the team plans to speak with in their research
- a description of how project data will be secured and stored

The Work Plan should be emailed to the Client, and Adviser attached to a succinct, professional, email that invites them to provide comments. Both Instructors should be copied on the email.

Each group will present highlights of the Work Plan to their classmates to introduce their project. This is a pass/fail assignment. Please upload a copy of your slides before the start of class for your Instructors' reference. You will 'share screen' when giving the presentation.

Report Outline

Due: November 2, 2021 | Weighting: 10%

Report Outline to be submitted on Quercus.

The report writing process begins with organizing the ideas and information that go into the report. Each team will prepare a Report Outline containing:

- a report title (as it will appear on the Showcase Night poster)
- a project cover image (as it will appear on the Showcase Night poster)

- a bullet point skeleton of the report structure (i.e. a preliminary table of contents)
- an overview of the contents that will go into each section (i.e. preliminary summary of the points/arguments to be made and supporting evidence to be used. This may be bullet form or a descriptive paragraph, at the team's discretion)

It is normal for some of the contents to be unclear or undecided at this stage in the process. The Outline may contain placeholders indicating where further research or decision making remains.

Each team will meet with their Primary Instructor to talk through the Outline. Instructors will have feedback prepared, but students are also expected to come to the meeting prepared to pose discussion questions/topics important to them.

Progress Update

Due: November 2, 2021 | Weighting: 5%

Progress Update to be submitted on Quercus.

The art of project management often comes down to striking a balance between the discipline to keep to a work to plan, and the agility to react effectively when things don't go to plan. Preparing the Report Outline is a good way to take stock of how close a project is sticking to the Work Plan. After preparing the Report Outline, each team will prepare a Progress Update, approximately two to five pages in length, containing:

- a high-level summary of the work completed to date and tasks yet to come
- a description of any changes or redirections made since the Work Plan, making reference to the original work breakdown structure and project schedule
- a description of any issues encountered and the team's strategy for handling them
- an updated list of risks, and strategies for avoiding and/or managing them

The Progress Update can be a casual document for Instructors' use; it should not be circulated to the Client and Adviser. However, teams may choose to reach out to their Adviser at this milestone to provide an update and seek guidance on navigating the next phase of work.

There will be an in-class guided reflection to help reinforce 'lessons learned' from the project to date, and develop ideas of how 'lessons learned' can be applied to contribute to the success of the next phase of the project. Participation in the Midterm Reflection is mandatory.

Draft Report

Due: November 23, 2021 | Weighting: 25%

Draft Report to be submitted on Quercus, as well as emailed to Client and Adviser, copying Instructors. Please submit in .docx format.

In professional practice, "Draft" is a way of indicating humility. Rather than implying partially finished work, "Draft" implies that the author recognizes their work cannot be considered finished until it is endorsed by a higher authority (e.g. a boss, a client, a council, or a board). In that spirit, the Draft Report should be an "as close to finished as possible" version of the *text, figures, maps, graphics and images* of the Final Report. It should be comprehensive, but may lack some elements. The Draft should use specific placeholders to clearly indicate any final inputs that are still to come. The Draft should not be a fully-designed document; the Final Report is the

appropriate time for advanced formatting and beautification. The Final Report is required to include an Abstract and Executive Summary; it is beneficial, but not required, to include these in the Draft Report to receive feedback.

The Draft Report should be emailed to the Adviser and Client (either together or separately) attached to a succinct, professional, email inviting them to provide feedback at or before the Final Presentation night. Advisers are expected to provide feedback; Client feedback is optional. Both Instructors should be copied on the email(s).

Presentation Outline

Due: November 30, 2021 | Weighting: 5%

Presentation Outline to be presented to Primary Instructor during Feedback Meeting.

It is critical to block out the 'story' of the project before spending a lot of energy preparing the slide deck to tell that story. Each team will prepare a Presentation Outline containing:

- a time budget showing how the 15 minutes will be used
- an overview the contents that will covered in each time block

Teams will bring their Presentation Outline to a meeting with their Primary Instructor, to facilitate a discussion and seek feedback. The Outline can be submitted in whatever format the team prefers (one-pager, skeleton slide deck, etc.)

Final Presentation

Due: December 7, 2021 | Weighting: 20%

Final Presentation to be submitted on Quercus, and presented on-screen at Showcase Night.

Each team will give a 15-minute presentation supported by a slide deck, followed by a 20-minute Q&A session. The first round of questions will come from a panel of the Instructors, Client and Adviser. Audience members will have an opportunity to ask questions if any time remains. Students are welcome to invite colleagues, mentors, friends and family.

This class will be a special session that runs for 4 hours. Presentation time for each team will be determined in advance. Students are expected to be there for all presentations to support and learn from one another; Clients, Advisers and guests may come and go between presentations.

Final Report

Due: December 14, 2021 | Weighting: 15%

Final Report to be submitted on Quercus, as well as emailed to Client and Adviser, copying Instructors. Please submit in .pdf format.

The Final Report will be the result of revisions made to the Draft Report based on feedback and insight gained in the Final Presentation, and any written feedback from the Client, Adviser and Instructors. The Final Report will also be in its fully-designed format. Teams must submit any original signed consent forms, if applicable, and a statement indicating that an Executive

Summary of the research or copy of the Final Report was provided to any research subjects that requested one.

Final Reports should be emailed to the Client and Adviser (either together or separately) attached to a succinct, professional, email that thanks them for their role in the team's academic and professional growth. Both Instructors should be copied on the email(s).

Project Debrief Statement

Due: December 17, 2021 | Weighting: Pass/Fail

Project Debrief Statement is a survey to be completed online.

The Project Debrief Statement is an opportunity for individual reflection on the project experience. The statements are strictly confidential and are intended to help students consolidate 'lessons learned' that will be applied in professional life. The statement will also help the Instructors understand the nature of teamwork on each project, as an input to the final Participation & Professionalism marks for individuals. If there is evidence that one or more members of the team performed an unfair share of the work, the individuals' marks for Professional Conduct may be adjusted after a private discussion with them.

NOTE: if a team experiences challenges with teamwork that cannot be resolved among the team members, concern should be raised with Instructors at the time. Remarks in the Debrief Statement should say whether problems persisted. The Debrief Statement should not be the first time Instructors hear of the challenge.

Participation & Professionalism

5% of the Final Grade

This course is only as strong as the students' participation. Students must exercise the professional values of accountability and transparency and must practice giving and receiving critical feedback. The grade for participation & professionalism is based on the extent to which the student aspires to those professional qualities and is respectful, engaged, and reliable in their teamwork as well as in the classroom. Students who are unable to attend class in a given week must inform the instructor as early as possible to receive full marks for this grade, and should show the same courtesy to their teammates for group meetings.

Late Policies

There will be a penalty of 5% per business day on all late assignments.

Extensions without penalty will be granted for reasons of accommodation, illness or emergencies when appropriate documentation is submitted to the instructor. Reweighting of assignments/grades is not permitted.

Course Expectations

Communication

In the first two weeks of class, team members establish understandings with each other, their Client and their Advisers about the preferred frequency and channel(s) of communication. Instructors are available to meet students anytime by appointment, which can be arranged by phone or email, or to answer quick questions directly by phone or email.

Classroom Environment

This course is designed for students to exercise and improve their own set of skills and professional etiquette. This requires each student to contribute to a healthy team environment in which all teammates have space to grow and develop. In the classroom, and on project teams, students are encouraged to regard one another as colleagues, regardless of the nature of their relationship outside the classroom.

Time Management

This course is made up of several meeting series, of which classroom sessions are only one. Student teams also have meetings with their Client, Adviser, project stakeholders and one another throughout the term, as well as needing time to work independently. Time management is a critical skill set that is developed through this course.

Consider that are typically three main types of project meetings:

1. *Progress Meetings* - routine team meetings, recommended to be succinct and weekly, to track tasks, make decisions, identify risks, deal with issues, and determine next steps
2. *Working Meetings* - scheduled blocks of time dedicated to collaborating on a shared task
3. *Reporting Meetings* - meetings to convey or receive information, typically with a goal of quality control (e.g. required feedback meetings with Instructors)

Students should be mindful of whether their objectives are suitable for the type of meeting that has been scheduled and should consider requesting additional time or another meeting if their need falls far outside the originally intended agenda.

Policies

The department's full [Graduate Course Policies](#) apply to all courses offered.

Accessibility Services

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations because you are disabled, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

Where there is an accommodation recommended by [Accessibility Services](#), the department and/or instructors will be provided with an accommodation letter.

Academic Integrity

Academic misconduct by graduate students is taken very seriously. The University's policy on academic misconduct is found in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) (the Code). Students in graduate studies are expected to commit to the highest standards of integrity and to understand the importance of protecting and acknowledging intellectual property. For example, it is assumed that they bring to their graduate studies a clear understanding of how to cite references appropriately, thereby avoiding plagiarism.

Regarding plagiarism, the Code includes the following statements:

B.i.1. It shall be an offence for a student knowingly:

(d) to represent as one's own idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e., to commit plagiarism.

Wherever in the Code an offence is described as depending on "knowing," the offence shall likewise be deemed to have been committed if the person ought reasonably to have known.

Other academic offences include the possession and/or use of unauthorized aids in examinations, submitting the same paper for different courses without the knowledge of the instructors, forgery (whether of academic records or other documents), concocting facts or references to sources, personating someone, and other forms of cheating and academic dishonesty. Please refer to sections B.i.1. and B.i.3. in the Code for detailed descriptions of offences applicable to students.

The [SGS Academic Integrity Resources webpage](#) outlines the policy on academic misconduct and the process for handling an allegation of academic misconduct.

Religious Accommodations

Students must alert instructors in a timely fashion to any upcoming religious observances and anticipated absences. Instructors will make every reasonable effort to avoid scheduling tests, exams or other compulsory activities at these times. In the case of an unavoidable conflict with a compulsory activity, every reasonable effort is made to give students the opportunity to make up missed work.

Copyright in Instructional Settings

If a student wishes to record (tape, video, photograph, etc.) any lecture presentations or other similar materials provided by the instructor; the instructor's written consent must be obtained beforehand. Otherwise, all such reproduction is infringement of copyright and prohibited. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, the instructor's consent shall not be unreasonably withheld.

Extension Requests

The authority to grant an extension to submit coursework beyond the sessional grade deadline is with the department and not the instructor of the course. To request a formal extension beyond a grade deadline, students must submit a Coursework Extension Form, completed by both the student and course instructor, to the relevant graduate department prior to the final grade deadline.

In order to ensure fairness in granting extensions, the department must be reasonably certain that:

- The reasons for delay are serious and substantiated.
- The student is not granted unfair advantage over other students in the course.
- The student has a reasonable chance of completing the outstanding work within the time allotted.
- The normal and satisfactory completion of any new coursework is not in jeopardy.

Extension requests for medical reasons (e.g. short-term illness) must be accompanied by a medical note. Extension requests for students with accommodations due to disability must be supported by documentation from Accessibility Services. Extension requests for other reasons must be detailed in the form or a note to the department.

Mental Health Statement

As a student at U of T, you may experience circumstances and challenges that can affect your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate fully in daily activities. An

important part of the University experience is learning how and when to ask for help. There is no wrong time to reach out, which is why there are resources available for every situation and every level of stress.

Please take the time to inform yourself of available resources, including:

- [Geography & Planning Mental Health Support Website](#)
- [Graduate Wellness Services](#)
- [Student Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Emergency support if you're feeling distressed](#)

An important part of the University experience is learning how and when to ask for help. Please take the time to inform yourself of available resources.

Other Student Services and Support Resources

- The School of Geography & Planning [Links to Additional Student Services and Support Resources](#) page provides links to general services and support for students, international student support, Health & Wellness, financial aid and professional development
- The School of Graduate Studies [Centre for Graduate Professional Development](#) offers free workshops and training courses covering several of the skills in focus in the PLA1106 classroom and may more, with the opportunity to meet graduate students in other disciplines. Visit their website to see a calendar of upcoming events.