Tufts University
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning

Syllabus

UEP 234: Qualitative Skills for Planning and Public Policy
Instructor: Justin Hollander, PhD, AICP
Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays, 11am-12pm and by arrangement (see note below on scheduling meetings), 2nd Floor, 97 Talbot Avenue.

Fall 2015
Class meets at 97 Talbot Avenue
Thursdays, 1:30-4:00 p.m.

Course Description

Planning and policy professionals need a broad array of skills in the 21st century non-profit, governmental, or consulting workplace. Today’s practitioner uses a suite of new and emerging skills, including case studies, field research, surveys, photography, focus groups, interviewing, and content analysis. This course will introduce students to each set of skills and provide an opportunity to practice them in real world environments. The course will prepare students for using qualitative skills in the fields of planning and public policy, meeting students’ needs across a broad set of disciplines and sub-fields including: environmental studies, housing, community development, land use policy, education, child and family studies, occupational therapy, law, management, and urban studies.

Course Objectives: Competencies & Skills

The objectives of this course are to aid students in: 1) increasing their knowledge and understanding of research question development and methodology selection; and 2) developing a set of qualitative skills for answering those questions. The Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning identified a set of core competencies and skills for students enrolled in the M.A. in Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning. Among those competencies and skills, below are those which this course focuses on:

Skills

(1) Critical thinking skills

(2) Individual Problem Identification and Research Methodology Selection & Primary and Secondary Data Gathering and Analysis Skills;

(3) Written, Oral & Graphic Communication Skills;
(4) Data Analysis Skills

(5) Qualitative Analysis Skills

Course Grade

The course grade will be based on the following:

Class Participation (20%)
Skill Assignments (30%)
Final Project Oral Presentation (10%)
Final Project (40%)
Extra Credit Research Paper

Class Participation

A substantial percentage of each student’s grade will be based upon the extent and quality of their participation in group activities and discussions during class. Attendance in class is a prerequisite for active participation; therefore unexcused absences will result in a low class participation grade.

Writing Assignment

The first assignment in the class will be a one to two page paper answering the question: what do I want to learn most from this course and how? The paper should be introspective and should reveal something about who you are. Give examples of activities that you will do to individualize your learning (i.e. an extra-credit paper? Travel? Extra-readings?) Please bring a hard copy to class on 9/17.

Skill Assignments

For each skill we will study, you will use the Internet and library databases to identify at least one example of where the skill was used in practice. A good place to find policy and planning reports is the Tisch Library Policy Report Collection http://researchguides.library.tufts.edu/UEP_Policy. You can also find sample reports on the course TRUNK site.

You will bring a hard copy of the study, report, article, or book chapter where the study was published to class on the day indicated on the syllabus (for long reports, only bring relevant excerpts). For each skill, also write a 3-5 page (double-spaced, 12 point font) analysis of the study, what research questions were asked, how data was analyzed, why that skill was employed, your assessment of the success of the data collection and analysis, and whatever questions you have about using that skill in the field. Your job is not to summarize the study, but instead to use the paper to examine the use of each qualitative skill in practice. Bring the paper you write to class on the day indicated on the syllabus, along with the report.
Final Project

All students will be required to complete a final project demonstrating their understanding of the range of skills available to them and demonstrating their abilities in using two skills. The project must involve an actual community issue and should be related to a student’s broader career interests. The selection of skills will depend on the types of questions being studied. A final report of roughly 15-20 pages will be submitted at the end of the semester detailing the project. Be sure to draw directly on course readings and lectures in the final report and use the Chicago Manual of Style for correct citations. A hard copy of the proposal for the final project is due in class on October 29th. The final project is due at 97 Talbot Avenue on December 17th by 4PM. More details about the final project will be disseminated in class.

Extra Credit Research Paper

Students may complete an optional research project to receive extra credit. The paper can be on any topic related to qualitative skills. A proposal for the extra credit paper is due no later than November 12th. The final paper is due at 97 Talbot Avenue on December 17th at UEP office by 4PM. Late papers will not be accepted.

Setting up a Meeting with Prof. Hollander

To schedule a meeting with Prof. Hollander, go to the below website and make a "comment" to reserve a time (it will send me an automatic email). Just make sure no one else has already signed up for that date/time in the other comments.

https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/display/JustinsMeetingSignUpSheet/

Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students

You can find Tufts University’s policy on academic integrity for graduate and undergraduate students at: <http://uss.tufts.edu/studentAffairs/documents/HandbookAcademicIntegrity.pdf>. Students’ work will be closely scrutinized for plagiarism and violations of the University policy will not be tolerated.

Style Guidelines

All written work must be produced consistent with the style guidelines of The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th edition (The University of Chicago 2010), The Chicago Manual of Style Online, or another style guideline approved by the instructor. The Chicago Manual provides clear guidance for citing and referencing other works. Such a skill is essential to avoid unintentional plagiarism. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase their own copy of the Chicago Manual or an online subscription to the Chicago Manual of Style Online.

Required/Recommended Texts
Gaber, John and Sharon Gaber. 2007. *Qualitative analysis for planning & policy: Beyond the numbers*. Chicago: APA Planners Press. [Required]


The required books can be found at the Tufts Bookstore. The *Chicago Manual of Style* can be obtained in nearly any bookstore.

**Course Calendar**

**Class Introduction**

**Thursday, 9/10**
Introductions

**Thursday, 9/17**
Gaber and Gaber: chapters 1 and 2
*Writing Assignment DUE*

**Thursday, 9/24** (No class, Southern New England Planning Conference)
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**Basics of Field Research & Interviewing**

**Thursday, 10/1**
Kvale: skim chapters 1-3, read chapters 4-5
*Skill Assignment for Interviewing (#1) DUE*

**Thursday, 10/8**
Kvale: read chapters 6-7

**Photographic Research and Case Studies**
Thursday, 10/15
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 3
Yin: Chapter 1 (available on Trunk website)
Recommended: remainder of Yin
Skill Assignment for Photographic Research (#2) DUE

Conducting Focus Groups

Thursday, 10/22
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 4
Skill Assignment for Focus Groups (#3) DUE
Guest Speaker: Sarah Morton, Black Pepper, Inc.

Thursday, 10/29
Bradburn, et al: skim chapters 1 and 8, read chapters 2-7, and 9
Final Project Proposal DUE

Survey Research

Thursday, 11/5
Bradburn, et al: read chapters 10-12
Skill Assignment for Surveys (#4) DUE

Content Analysis / Big Data

Thursday, 11/12
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 5
Hollander, et al. 2015 (available on Trunk website)
Skill Assignment for Content Analysis (#5) DUE
Extra-credit paper proposal DUE

Organizing and Analyzing Qualitative Data

Thursday, 11/19
Kvale: chapters 9 and 10

Thursday, 11/26 (No class – Thanksgiving Break)
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Thursday, 12/3
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 6

**Draft Final Project Presentations**

**Thursday, 12/10 (Last class)**  
Student Presentations

Final paper is due on December 17th at UEP office by 4PM