Syllabus

UEP 0294-06: Qualitative Skills for Planning and Public Policy
Instructor: Justin Hollander, Ph.D., AICP
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11AM-12PM and by arrangement, 2nd Floor, 97 Talbot Avenue (Brown House).

Spring 2009
Classes meet in Anderson 211.
Wednesdays, 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 field research, surveys, photography, focus groups, interviewing, content analysis, and online community building. This course will introduce students to each set of skills and provide an opportunity to practice them in real world environments through community-oriented projects.

Course Objectives: Competencies & Skills

The objective of this course is to aid students in understanding the range of skills and methods available to them in studying communities and to develop depth in executing several of these skills. 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 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-page paper answering the question: what do I want to most learn 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?)

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. 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 1-page description of the study, 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. Also, bring that 1-page paper 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 aptitude 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 proposal for the final project is due February 18th. The final project is due April 22nd at 4:30PM. 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 March 26th. The final paper is due at the Brown House office on May 4, 2009 at 10AM. Late papers will not be accepted.

**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://studentservices.tufts.edu/dos/. 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, 15th edition* (The University of Chicago 2003) 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*.

**Required/Recommended Texts**

Gaber, John and Sharon Gaber. 2007. *Qualitative analysis for planning & policy: Beyond the numbers*. Chicago: APA Planners Press.


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**

*Wednesday, 1/14*

Introductions
Wednesday, 1/21 (No class – Monday’s schedule)
Writing Assignment Due at Brown House office or via email by 5PM
Gaber and Gaber: chapters 1 and 2

**Basics of Field Research & Interviewing**

**Wednesday, 1/28**
Kvale: skim chapter 1-3, read chapters 4-5
*Skill Assignment for Interviewing (#1) DUE*

**Wednesday, 2/4**
Kvale: read chapters 6-7

**Photographic Analysis**

**Wednesday, 2/11**
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 3
*Skill Assignment for Photographic Analysis (#2) DUE*

**Conducting Focus Groups**

**Wednesday, 2/18**
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 4
Final Project Proposal Due
*Skill Assignment for Focus Groups (#3) DUE*

**Survey Research**

**Wednesday, 2/25**
Bradburn, et al: skim chapters 1 and 8, read chapters 2-7, and 9
*Skill Assignment for Surveys (#4) DUE*

**Wednesday, 3/4**
Bradburn, et al: read chapters 10-12

**Content Analysis**

**Wednesday, 3/11**
Gaber and Gaber: chapter 5
*Skill Assignment for Content Analysis (#5) DUE*

**Wednesday, 3/18 (No class – Spring Break)**
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The document contains information about an online community building class, including readings and assignments. It also provides details on organizing and analyzing qualitative data, and final presentations and assignments. The text is clear and readable.