

Environmental Planning

UP 6470, Fall 2023

Mondays, 5:30-8 pm

Office hours by appointment and by Zoom

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This is an introductory level class in environmental planning. The class is intended for students in planning and related fields who expect to make decisions about environmental planning and policy. We discuss the purpose and origins of environmental planning, review the history of environmental policy and regulation, learn about tools to influence and control environmental land use outcomes, and look forward to emerging environmental land use challenges like renewable energy production and conserving ecosystem services.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, students should

- Understand the origins and inherent tensions in the practice of environmental planning and regulation
- Be familiar with the history of environmental planning and regulation in America
- Be familiar with the role of environmental land use planning and regulation in the three core areas of planning practice: planning, zoning, and development review
- Understand the role of compact development on environmental quality
- Understand the relationship between land use, air quality, water quality
- Be familiar with emerging environmental land use issues such as renewable energy and coastal management
- Understand the broadening concept of sustainability

Class format

The practice of a professional urban planner involves a good deal of learning, and the format of the class will resemble the practice wherever possible. Generally, the planner is “the expert in the room” when it comes to environmental planning, and frequently the only one in any given meeting who is there to “speak for the trees.” We’ll be locating data and research, considering policies and regulations, and presenting our findings to each other.

Readings and lectures

Readings are selected from books, articles, stories, and adopted documents, and are meant to offer a range of perspectives, approaches, and voices across the topics covered in the course. I’ll help tie them together and connect them to planning practice during lecture each week.

There is no required textbook. As part of the course, you will identify and contribute your own relevant readings.

Class “issue discussions”

One of the main jobs of a practicing planner is to educate a working audience. A traditional planning position serves as staff to the appointed Planning Commission, which relies on the planner’s technical expertise to provide context and data on specific issues as they crop up. The planner will often be called upon to explain land use issues to elected officials and to the public.

During the first class, we will divvy up the remaining lectures, and each student will be responsible for facilitating a short class discussion on an aspect of the material covered in the previous week’s lecture. You will bring a new resource to the discussion, such as a news item, policy, or research article. In a one-page handout or three-to-five-slide powerpoint, you should present short answers to the following questions:

- Why is this issue important?
- What data is available?
- What policies or regulations are in play?

And you should help the class answer the following questions:

- What are the competing interests?
- What policy or regulation changes are being / should be considered?
- What are intended and unintended consequences to that policy or regulation?

The general purpose of this exercise is to identify a real-world issue, bring relevant information to bear, and solicit and capture input. Soft presentation and facilitation skills are helpful to do this well, and this is meant to be a supportive and low-key opportunity to practice them. Because you will also be asked to bring your professional expertise to a group setting, your grade reflects your thoughtful participation in these and other class discussions.

Short writing prompts

These are a few paragraphs (400-800 words) of your own insights, observations, and responses to prompts related to the issues we discuss in class. They are an opportunity to consider and share your own environmental planning ethic as it evolves.

Memos

A one- to three-page memo is a key deliverable in planning. It allows the planner to:

- define an issue facing the community
- document relevant data and existing policies and regulation
- present possible new policies and regulation, including intended and unintended consequences for each proposal
- make a recommendation that can serve as a direction for action

As we study planning, zoning, and development review processes, you will write two memos addressing environmental policies and regulations.

Presentation

Select an environmental land use issue that you have at least a little passion for and give a five- to ten-minute professional presentation on why we should care and how environmental planning and regulation can help. The presentation should advocate for a specific tool, practice, policy, or law in planners' wheelhouse. The slide deck should also function as an informational tool, and it will be accompanied by a one-page handout summarizing the proposal and its relevance.

Take-home exam

Since a planner should *almost always* be looking right at the source of your information when you provide it, the exam is take-home and open-resource. The purpose is to reinforce the major themes of this class so you can carry them forward in your work.

Student disabilities services (edited statement from the SDS web site)

The Student Disability Services office, located in the Adamany Undergraduate Library (313-577-1851 or TTYD at 313-577-3365), coordinates academic accommodations. Students who are registered with Student Disability Services and who are eligible for accommodations should present this information and documentation to me as soon as possible, and at least one week in advance of a needed accommodation. I will be glad to meet with you privately to discuss your needs.

Academic dishonesty

Academic misbehavior means any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the institution or subvert the education process. All forms of academic misbehavior are prohibited at Wayne State University, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

This class is oriented toward your own synthesis of information and meant to prepare you for professional practice. It is hoped that there isn't much opportunity for academic dishonesty. You are about to become the expert in the room.

Deliverables

- 15% Short writings (3)
- 10% Discussion lead
- 10% Discussion participation
- 30% Memos (2)
- 20% Presentation
- 15% Take-home exam

Wayne State University - Environmental Planning Fall 2023 Syllabus

Date Topic

28-Aug	Introduction	Get to know each other and the class, talk about the point of environmental planning
1	Readings discussed	Syllabus
		Reading list
	Assignment given	Short writing 1: What do you hope environmental planning is about? What do you suspect it's actually about?
	Assignment due	None
4-Sep	OFF	
11-Sep	The triple bottom line; industry as a wealth-generating land use	The basic tension of the practice of environmental planning; the history of the relationship between the environment and economics
2	Readings discussed	Robin Wall Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> , "Windigo Footprints" and "The Sacred and the Superfund"
		John Locke, <i>Second Treatise of Government</i> , "On Property"
		Economic History Association, The Roots of American Industrialization 1790-1860
		National Geographic, Industrialization, Labor, and Life
	Assignment given	Short writing 2: EJ screen tool
	Assignment due	Short writing 1: What do you hope environmental planning is about? What do you suspect it's actually about?
18-Sep	Environmental justice	The relationship between environmental planning, economics, and social organization
3	Readings discussed	Richard Rothstein, <i>The Color of Law</i> , "Racial Zoning" and the first page of "Own Your Own Home"
		<i>Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology</i> , "Linking environmental injustices in Detroit, MI to institutional racial segregation through historical federal redlining," Shkempi, Smith, Neitzel
		<i>International Encyclopedia of Geography</i> , "Environmental Racism," Laura Pulido
		Bloomberg CityLab, "Which Cities Have Concrete Strategies for Environmental Justice?"
	Assignment given	Memo 1
	Assignment due	Short writing 2: EJ screen tool

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Date	Topic	
25-Sep	Major environmental regulation	Why state / federal action is necessary; major legislative and legal influences; introduction to brownfields
4	Readings discussed	Rachel Carson, "Silent Spring," The New Yorker 1962
		Congressional Research Service, "The National Environmental Policy Act: Background and Implementation"
		Federal environmental laws
		Michigan Guide to Environmental Regulations - JUST skim the "Purpose and Applicability" and "Agencies and Laws" section of each chapter
		Bridge Magazine, "Governor Whitmer signs law allowing Michigan to pass stricter environmental rules"
		Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, "The Value of Brownfield Remediation," pages 1-6 and 39-45
	Assignment given	(Memo 1 in progress)
	Assignment due	(Questions, clarifications on Memo 1)
2-Oct	Comprehensive Plan and environmental plans	The basis of performing environmental inventories; approaches to land conservation; environmental policy-setting
5	Readings discussed	Land Information Access Association, "Planning for Resilience in Michigan"
		Jason King, <i>The Climate Planner</i> , "Coauthoring the Plan with the Public"
		Ypsilanti Master Plan and Sustainability Plan
		Plan Ferndale and Climate Action Plan
		EPA Watershed Handbook
	Assignment given	None
	Assignment due	Memo 1
9-Oct	Field trip: Wayne State Stormwater	What environmental planning looks like in the actual field
16-Oct	OFF	
23-Oct	Zoning ordinance I: Smart Growth and Natural Features	The relationship between zoning regulation and environmental planning
7	Readings discussed	EPA, "About Smart Growth" webpage. Read the page, then pick one topic and read the "Smart Growth and..." link, review the publications, and skim any additional links provided

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Date	Topic	
		EPA SmartGrowth Code examples: Read the page, and choose one or two communities to review the linked examples
		Kalamazoo Natural Features Ordinance phase 1 website: Read the page; note participation and adoption process
		Kalamazoo Natural Features Ordinance phase 2 website: Read the page, draft ordinance, and fact sheet
	Assignment given	Presentation topic, resources, outline
	Assignment due	None
30-Oct	Zoning ordinance II: Trees, wastewater, stormwater	The relationship between zoning regulation and water quality
8	Readings discussed	Jill Johnson, <i>Urban Forests</i> , "Having Cities Work with Forces of Nature" and "Don't Trees Clean the Air?"
		Warren Master Plan, iTree analysis
		Plymouth Canton Patch, "Canton Defends Tree Ordinance, Despite Legal Setbacks"
		Jason King, The Climate Planner, "South Miami's Septic Tanks"
		Bridge magazine, "Flush with cash, Michigan lawmakers try again to pass state septic code"
	Assignment given	Memo 2
	Assignment due	Presentation topic, resources, outline
6-Nov	Development review / project planning	Role of the planner in managing environmental issues; role of environmental management in development review and community input
9	Readings discussed	City of Lincoln Park Landscaping and Parking Lot requirements
		Detroit Stormwater hub website
		EGLE, "Materials Management in Michigan" website, also "Solid Waste Planning" link
		Katherine Levine Einstein, "Neighborhood Defenders," Chapter 4 Land Use Regulations and Public Input
		Holland & Knight Law Firm, "Linking CEQA to California's Housing Crisis"
	Assignment given	(Memo 2 in progress)
	Assignment due	(Questions, clarifications on Memo 2)

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Date Topic

13-Nov	Climate change through the land use lens	The basics of climate adaptation planning; the energy transition
10	Readings discussed	Jason King, The Climate Planner, "All Change Brings Both Good and Bad,"
		A2NetZero Plan
		MI Healthy Climate Plan
		Wayne County Hazard Mitigation Plan - select sections
		Ferndale Greenhouse Gas emissions report
	Assignment given	(Final presentation in progress)
	Assignment due	Memo 2
20-Nov	Managing the water/land interface	Coasts, floodplains, lakes, wetlands
11	Readings discussed	Jason King, The Climate Planner, "Virginia Boulevard Levee," and "Where Did My House Go?"
		EGLE "Building Coastal Resilience" video series
		Congressional Research Service, "Introduction to the National Flood Insurance Program"
		Protecting Michigan's Inland Lakes: A Guide for Local Governments
		EGLE, "Local Wetland Protection" and "Protecting Michigan's Wetlands: A Guide for Local Governments"
	Assignment given	Short writing 3: Triple bottom line
	Assignment due	None
27-Nov	Equity	The broadening concept of sustainability
12	Readings discussed	Robin Wall Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> , "Defeating Windigo" and "Epilogue"
	Assignment given	(Final presentation in progress)
	Assignment due	Short writing 3: Triple bottom line
4-Dec	Presentations	Take-home final distributed
11-Dec	Presentations	
13-Dec	Finals start	
19-Dec	Finals end	