

Planning and Public Policy Program, Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University

Senior Seminar, 10:762:494:01, Fall 2011, 3 credits

Monday, 1:10-4:10, Room 112, Civic Square Building, College Avenue Campus (Note: first class is Thursday, September 8.)

Instructor is Frank J. Popper, Room 356, Civic Square Building, College Avenue Campus, 732-932-4009, X689, fpopper@rutgers.edu, fpopper@princeton.edu. Instructor's website is policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/popper, where more copies of this syllabus are available.

Office hours: Monday and Thursday mornings, both 10-12, before or after class, or by appointment

Text: William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, "Elements of Style (fourth edition, 1999 or later, also online), available at Rutgers Bookstore at Ferren Mall. There may be other assignments as needed.

In this seminar you do a senior thesis on a topic of planning and public policy. The paper should be about 20 double-spaced pages, represent your best work and serve as a possible writing sample for employers or graduate schools.

The thesis can be on any topic of planning and public policy that you choose and I approve. The thesis goes through at least four stages: a proposal, a first draft, a class presentation and a final draft. (In some cases more drafts may be needed.) You need have no have previous experience with the topic. The thesis should review existing literature and offer an original analytic contribution, not just a descriptive one. The analysis may consist of a case study, a fieldwork investigation, a policy suggestion, an assessment of an ongoing program, a test of a new idea or a creative mix of any of these.

One goal of the course is to engage your imagination to produce original work. Another is to teach you to help each other do good work. Thus the course offers you serious intellectual and professional opportunities.

50% of your grade comes from the final draft of the thesis. 10% comes from the proposal, 20% from the presentation to the class and 20% from class participation and general conscientiousness, including getting work in on time. I expect all written work to meet advanced collegiate standards of writing and will lower the grade of any that does not. I expect you to attend all classes. Rutgers has a new university-wide protocol for student's self-reporting of reporting individual absences. Please also get in touch with me directly if you must miss a class.

Our class may deal with sensitive matters: issues of race or ethnicity, economic disparities and fairness, gender and sexuality, or simply differences between cities and suburbs or varying kinds of each. Our class ought to be a safe place to talk about these uncomfortable subjects. Let's be civil to each others. There are, and always have been, nasty national models of political behavior. We should not be

that way. We should do our good-faith best to learn from each other and from our differences, and to help each other in our work. These possibilities are among the main assets of academia.

I do not know all of the planning and policy fields. No one does. So I will often refer you to specialists, in the Bloustein School and elsewhere, including beyond Rutgers, who know more about particular subjects than I do. When I do that, I'm not putting you off. I'm putting you on to specific sources of knowledge.

I expect you to know, understand and live up to Rutgers' standards of academic integrity explained at academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/students. If you have questions about them, please ask me. Rules of thumb: if you think you may be violating them, you probably are. To avoid plagiarism, do original work.

Schedule

September 5 No class: Labor Day

September 8 Introduction. Note: it's a Thursday.

September 12 No class: individual meetings in instructor's office on possible topics.

September 19 Class meeting about possible topics 1.

September 26 Class meeting about possible topics 1.

October 3 Class meeting about possible topics 2.

October 10 Three-page proposals due.

October 17 No class: individual meetings in instructor's office on proposals.

October 24 Student presentations.

October 31 Student presentations.

November 7 No class: first drafts due.

November 14 No class: individual meetings in instructor's office on first drafts.

November 21 No class: Thanksgiving.

November 28 Peer editing

December 5 To be announced

December 12 Thesis due in instructor's office at noon

A note on sources

As a specialist in land-use and environmental planning, I offer intellectual and bibliographic help in my undergraduate courses on these subjects. If you are thinking of doing papers on them, go to my Rutgers website, policy.rutgers.edu/faculty/popper, and click on the courses. At the end of some syllabi you will find “A note on sources” longer than this one. If you are considering other subjects, see if you can find comparable material. If you need help, ask me.

There are decent guides available on how to do an undergraduate thesis—for instance, Nataly Kogan, “Conquering Your Undergraduate Thesis” (2002), Denis Reardon, “Doing Your Undergraduate Project” (2006) and Nicholas Walliman, “Your Undergraduate Dissertation: The Essential Guide to Success” (2004). Jane Miller of our program has written two excellent guides to presenting numbers, “The Chicago Guide to Writing about Numbers” (2004) and “The Chicago Guide to Writing about Multivariate Analysis” (2005). Edward Tufte has written several wonderful books on the presentation of visual information. (He is not a PowerPoint fan.) Kate Turabian’s books and the associated “The Chicago Manual of Style: The Essential Guide for Writers, Editors, and Publishers” (sixteenth edition, 2010 or later, also online) offers style and bibliographic instruction beyond Strunk and White.

Wikipedia and other encyclopedias and dictionaries, online or off-, are good places to begin research and terrible places to end it. Use them as starting points. Please don’t cite them.