

University of Massachusetts  
Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning

**RP 675: Regional Planning Studio**

Fall, 2011

101 Hills North

M, W, F 9 - 12; Credits: 6

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Instructor:	Dr. Elisabeth Hamin 415 Hills North 577-4490 <a href="mailto:emhamin@larp.umass.edu">emhamin@larp.umass.edu</a>	Office Hours: 11- 1 on Tuesdays or by appointment
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RP 675 is intended to integrate skills and knowledge from conventional courses taken during the first program year and apply them to representative planning problems. This provides students with experience in the integration of social, physical, environmental, economic, and organizational aspects of program planning, development, and implementation.

By nature and design, studio courses vary significantly from seminars. Studios stress professional competencies and responsibilities demonstrated through project work. Success in the studio is defined by how thoughtful, useful and integrative is the knowledge you develop and apply, by how well you cooperate within a team, and how well you communicate with clients and the public. Our clients expect the results to be imaginative, but useful; comprehensive, but focused; informed by expertise but oriented to public values and goals. These expectations are high, and you will be held to them. Students should plan for approximately 18 hours per week working *outside* of class, and potentially more during 'crunch' periods.

The syllabus is posted on SPARK, and you will be able to post assignments and share resources there as well.

### Studio Objectives

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General objectives for this studio include the following:

1. Bridging theory and practice: The best practitioners are able to use theory to inform his/her practice, and reflect on their practice to inform theory. Donald Schön's phrase of 'reflective practitioner' captures this goal well.
2. Managing the planning/design process: The success of the studio projects rests primarily on the organization, management and control of process within each studio team and the class as a whole. Getting the job done right, on time, and as expected is a highly valued skill.
3. Demonstrating practical imagination: Imagination and vision are what set great planners apart from bureaucrats, but good bureaucrats know how to get the job done. Demonstrate both.

4. Analyzing data appropriately: All teams will gather and analyze baseline data relevant to their project, and most will use GIS in their analyses. Rather than amassing a standard set of data, planning goals should direct which data are worth gathering for a particular project. However, which data one chooses to have at hand influences problem identification and thus possible solutions, and which data is chosen is often a politically (as well as an efficiency) based decision. Awareness of these conundrums is a mark of an effective yet ethical planner or designer.
5. Gaining concrete awareness of the interconnected nature of regulations, community process, and design outcomes: All projects must show very clear connections between data, client or community goals/concerns/processes and recommendations.
6. Effective communication: All teams and individuals are expected to demonstrate high levels of oral, written, graphic, and technical presentation skills.
7. Maintaining high standards of professionalism in interactions within the team, and with instructors, clients and the public. Patience, kindness, and delivering the agreed-upon product on time are likely the most important skills one has in planning.

## Course Organization

We are subcontractors to Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Our task is to prepare significant sections of the next version of the Pioneer Valley Sustainability Plan (PVSP). In particular, we will focus on developing a highly inclusive definition of environmental justice (EJ), and then apply it to various planning sectors to both test the definition, and to follow its consequences for that sector. A smaller group of students will focus on climate planning for the PVSP.

**Each Monday at 9 a.m promptly** teams will present their current status and findings, present info the other teams need to know, etc. Presentation leadership should rotate among team members, and teams should not go beyond 10 minutes without explicit permission from instructor. Instructor will then present goals for week and other information needed by students. **Wednesdays** and the remainder of Mondays will be for desk crits by the instructor or guests. **Fridays** be for team or field work, or desk crits if more instructor-team interaction time is helpful. Instructor will announce on Monday what the attendance policy is for any particular Friday based on class needs at that time.

### Weeks 1-4:

**ALL:** Read PVSP, review scope, meet with PVPC to learn about overall project

**Group DATA:** Region and census data analysis. Divide into teams based on interest areas. Develop a current conditions summary for the PVPC service area for your particular topic:

- Overall demographics
- Income and employment trends

- Housing inventory
- Land use in region
- Environmental conditions, including open space preserved, CSO locations, floodplains, etc.
- Transportation conditions: bus and rail routes, major planned road or transit infrastructure projects, areas of particular need.

Each person/team will prepare a 4-5 page report and one or two maps, describing the current status (“snapshot”), key changes from 1980-2010 at ten year intervals (“big picture”), and detailed analysis of the changes from 2000-2010 (“recent changes”).

Two students will:

- 1) develop initial format template
- 2) gather findings into an appendix
- 3) prepare a 2-3 page executive summary of the data.

**Group EJ:** Develop report detailing and comparing various EJ definitions in use today, including those of Massachusetts, other RPAs/MPOs, HUD, Dept of Transportation, EPA, etc. Develop and test several possible definitions, present these to whole class & to client, make final determination of EJ definition for use in the rest of the semester.

Team will:

- 1) follow format developed by Group DATA above in written report
- 2) gather full findings into an appendix, with special attention to a ‘references cited’ section so the readers can find the various definitions and information considered
- 3) prepare a 2-3 page executive summary of the EJ definition.

**Group CLIMATE:** Develop a report identifying key principles that will inform the rest of the process, as follows:

- Find and summarize case studies and guidance documents for municipal adaptation and mitigation planning
- Develop report outlines & workplans for adaptation and mitigation
- Identify vulnerability assessment protocols. Compare these to the emerging EJ definition.
- Identify key sources of information for GhG emissions, as well as preliminary highest potential reduction actions
- Identify information sources for climate scenarios for region through 2100. Prepare brief summary of likely conditions or range of conditions that need to be addressed.

Team will:

- 1) follow format developed by Group DATA above in written report
- 2) gather full findings into an appendix, with special attention to a ‘references cited’ section so the readers can find the various definitions and information considered
- 3) present to class how mitigation and adaptation can be mainstreamed into their coming chapters
- 4) prepare a 2-3 page executive summary of the findings.

**Weeks 5-7: Collaboration, revision, test mapping, final mapping, presentation preparation, presentations, report finalization. EJ and DATA groups combine.**

**Products:**

- 1) Recommended EJ definition
- 2) Map of EJ areas within PVPC territory
- 3) Comparison of socio-economic indicators within EJ areas and outside of them, based on above definition
- 4) Report preparation (executive summaries + appendices)
- 5) Hills and Client presentations
- 6) Data disks – maps must be supported by linked data and delivered in format approved by PVPC. Include presentation files.

**Weeks 8 – 12**

Divide into Area Groups:

- Land Use
- Food Security
- Transportation
- Mitigation
- Adaptation

Products:

- 1) Workplan--Each team prepares this based on scope of project and meetings with PVPC lead contact. This should include project goals, due dates, anticipated data sets and case studies, division of responsibility among team members, and proposed report table of contents.
- 2) Report (2-5 page executive summary + appendices + presentation slides) in approved report format.
- 3) Data disks – maps must be supported by linked data and delivered in format approved by PVPC. Include presentation file.
- 4) Presentation to Hills and PVPC.

**Weeks 13 – 15: Collaboration, revision, final mapping, presentation preparation, presentations, report finalization. Products:**

- 1) Reports from each team (Executive Summary + Appendices + Maps + GIS data)
- 2) Hills and Client presentations

**Class Supporting Tasks:** There are a variety of things that must occur for the overall project to be successful. Each student is expected to undertake one of these general activity for the benefit of everyone. See list below and sign up sheet on SPARK.

**Grading**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Percent of Grade</b>
First half team	

• Written report	20
• Presentation	10
• Peer and/or client evaluations, participation and leadership	10
Second half team	
• Workplan	5
• Written report	20
• Presentation	10
• Peer and/or client evaluations, participation and leadership	10
Class Supporting Task	15
Total	100%

**Please note -- Each team must deliver:**

- Printed report, electronic word version of report, pdf of final report, all in the class' agreed-upon format;
- Powerpoint file of slides.
- GIS maps and data in format specified by PVPC.

**Each team must turn in all of these pieces to receive a grade!!!!!!** If any part is missing or in a format different than the directions given, no grade will be issued.

**Key Dates**

First Half (SIX WEEKS TO PRESENTATION, SEVEN TO FINAL REPORT):

- 9/6: First class, decide teams
- 9/8: Develop tentative workplan
- 9/12: Catherine Ratte, Intro to PVPC and Client Expectations
- 9/14: David Elvine, Intro to EJ
- 9/21: Chris Curtis in to talk about Climate Planning
- 9/28: Dr. Pader in for guest crit
- 10/11: Tuesday follows Monday schedule
- 10/12: DRAFT REPORTS DUE
- 10/13-14: Dr. Hamin at conference
- 10/17: Presentations run-through
- 10/18: Tentative mid-term presentation date
- 10/20: FINAL FIRST HALF REPORTS DUE
- 10/20-21: SNEAPA in Providence: Attendance encouraged!

10/24: Presentation at PVPC, deliver 1st half report, meet with PVPC leads to plan for second half.

Second Half (SIX WEEKS TO PRESENTATION, SEVEN TO FINAL REPORT):

- 10/22: Announce 2<sup>nd</sup> half teams
- 10/26: Second half workplans due to Instructor; mid-term assessments of students due from instructor to students
- 12/2: Present at PVPC
- 12/5: Tentative date for presentation at Hills
- 12/9: DRAFT REPORTS DUE
- 12/12: Students receive report feedback
- 12/15: FINAL REPORTS DUE

Expectations for work

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Grading will be first based on the following criteria:

1. Overall quality of the work including data collection, analysis, design and communication of findings. We will judge the quality of the work by examining the following criteria:
  - a. Does the final product reflect a good knowledge of contemporary planning processes?
  - b. Are all recommendations and findings clearly linked to evidence and research?
  - c. Is the product organized in a clear, sensible, and professional manner?
  - d. Can an educated lay reader understand the entire report or presentation, and does it consistently employ good grammar and high quality graphics?
  - e. Does the product demonstrate creativity?
2. Team participation and leadership.
3. Timelines, i.e. meeting deadlines.

Students should, over the course of the semester, demonstrate both leadership and team-play and a general spirit of collaboration. Most groups receive a common grade. This is not guaranteed however. Those who do not carry out the tasks assigned by the group or the instructors will receive a lower grade. **To make this perfectly clear: students will be held accountable for the quality of their individual work, as well as his/her contributions to the overall team product, including team morale.** Peer reviews by team members will be requested at the mid-term and before a final grade is determined.

Trouble within a team should first be worked on within the group, and second, advice and/or arbitration should be sought from the instructors. As a last resort, students who consistently under-perform or are disruptive to the group according to their peers may be 'fired' from the group and put onto an individual project.

## **Class Supporting Tasks (each person does one)**

### First Half:

- Develop report template & presentation template, compile report
- Edit text first half report
- Fact check numbers, first half report
- Fact check maps and graphics, first half report
- Finalize layout, maps, graphics on first half report, print reports
- Synthesize first half findings, prepare Executive Summary
- Organize mid-semester presentation (food, seating, guests, etc)
- Compile presentations and give class overview and/or summary presentation

### Second Half

- Compile and edit second half report
- Fact check maps & graphics, second half report
- Finalize layout, maps, graphics on second half report; print reports
- Synthesize second half findings, prepare Executive Summary
- Organize end-of-semester presentation(s) (food, seating, guests, etc)
- Fact check numbers, second half report
- Prepare final package for PVPC – check that maps and data are live, reports are final; deliver to PVPC
- Compile presentations and give class overview and/or summary presentation