

PLANNING RESEARCH DESIGN

URP 6203 (704E) ~ 3 CREDITS ~ SUMMER 2025

“Research is formalized curiosity.” – Zora Neale Hurston

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OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 5:00p to 7:00p (ET) or by appointment
By phone or Zoom (information will be posted on Canvas HomePage)

CLASS MEETING TIMES AND LOCATION: Online Delivery

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Emphasizes research design and literature research; student presentations at appropriate stages.

PURPOSE OF COURSE: Asking and answering questions about the world around us is at the core of planning as an applied social science. Research is a tool that planners use, and the goal of this course is to equip students with the tools necessary to conduct and analyze research as part of their academic and professional practice. The course focuses on defining planning problems and suitable research questions, the development of simple conceptual models, understanding the types of study designs and data collection methodologies available to understand problems, and the overall strategies for the design and conduct of research.

REQUIRED TEXTS: The required text for the course is:

- Zina O’Leary. (2021). *The essential guide doing your research project, 4th Edition*. SAGE Publications, Inc. ISBN: 978-1529713466 (The text is available for sale through Amazon, the UF Bookstore, and other vendors.) The e-book version of the book is acceptable. (A 5th Edition was released in February 2025. It is not required to have the 5th Edition.)

In addition to readings from the course textbook, **supplemental readings** will be assigned. Supplemental readings are posted to the course’s Canvas webpage.

HOW THIS COURSE RELATES TO THE STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE URBAN PLANNING PROGRAM

As required course in the graduate program, Planning Research Design relates to three important department student learning outcomes:

- To learn critical skills for preparing for and conducting research (*PAB Standard B2.b*).
- To prepare clear, accurate, and compelling text, graphics, and maps for use in documents and presentations (*PAB Standard B2.c*).
- To develop research design proposals that uphold the ethical and normative principles used to guide planning research in a democratic society (including the provisions of the AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, and APA's Ethical Principles in Planning). (*PAB Standard A.3*)

COURSE GOALS: By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Frame research questions.
- Identify steps in the research process.
- Select research designs appropriate to the questions, information availability, and researcher strengths.
- Select suitable methods of information gathering and analysis, and uphold the ethics regarding human subjects.
- Write research proposals, including for your master's thesis.

COURSE COMMUNICATIONS: It is your responsibility to check Canvas regularly for announcements related to the course. Readings and changes to the syllabus will be posted on Canvas with appropriate notice.

If you are new to Canvas or have any problems using Canvas, please contact the Help Desk at 392-HELP.

I will answer your email as quickly as possible but please allow up to 24 hours for a reply during the week, and 48 hours for a reply on weekends. Proper email etiquette is expected.

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE POLICY: This class is virtual and asynchronous. I will host regular check-in meetings and student hours via Zoom. Attendance at these sessions is not required but is appreciated.

ASSIGNMENT POLICY: Assignments will be posted on Canvas well in advance of their due dates. **ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE BY THE POSTED DUE DATES IN CANVAS.** Assignments must be submitted by posting on Canvas. ***A points reduction of 10% per day will be assessed for late work.*** It is your responsibility to ensure that your assignments have been successfully uploaded to Canvas. See the Note on Canvas Problems below.

MAKE-UP/ASSIGNMENT EXTENSION POLICY: Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in the course are consistent with university policies. See [UF Graduate Academic Regulations \(Attendance\)](#) for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.

COURSE TECHNOLOGY: Students are required to have access to a computer and consistently reliable internet access for the duration of the course. The types of software used for the course include, but are not limited to, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, VPN access, and bibliographic management software, such as Zotero (available for free from the UF Libraries). Many software applications are available to UF students at UF Apps: <https://appsufl.edu/>. For assistance with UF Apps, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu> or (352) 392-HELP - select option 2.

CANVAS PROBLEMS POLICY: If you have Canvas problems that prevent you from submitting an assignment, you may receive an extension if you follow these steps:

- Immediately contact the Help Desk (392-HELP (4357) or helpdesk@ufl.edu) to report the problem and receive a ticket to document the problem. I can only extend the submittal deadline if you have contacted the Help Desk ahead of the assignment deadline and received a ticket. The Help Desk is available by phone and email 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- After contacting the HelpDesk and receiving a ticket, contact me, prior to the assignment due time, and let me know there is a problem.
- If Canvas or the UF Network is experiencing an outage that prevents you from submitting an assignment on time, I will receive a notice from UF IT about the outage. The assignment deadline will be revised accordingly. Students will not be penalized for system or network outages.

UF POLICIES:

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACCOMMODATING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the “Get Started With

the DRC” webpage on the Disability Resource Center site. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Students submitting an accommodation letter must also schedule a meeting with me to discuss and develop a plan to ensure that access needs are met.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the [UF Conduct Code](#) website for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with me.

NETIQUETTE: COMMUNICATION COURTESY: All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. Please read the UF Netiquette Guide for Online Course posted to Canvas.

COURSE EVALUATIONS:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals,
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/> . Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/> .

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES FEE: None

OTHER RESOURCES:

Resources available for online students include the following:

- [Counseling and Wellness Center](#)
- [Disability Resource Center](#)
- [Dean of Students Office](#)
- [Online Library Help Desk](#)

Please find more information about Getting Help at <https://distance.ufl.edu/getting-help/>

GRADING POLICIES:

Grades will be based on evidence that students have completed assigned reading, watched recorded lectures, completed all assignments, and completed class activities throughout the semester. All completed tasks will be evaluated based on content, critical thinking, and communication. Details of each assignment, including rubrics, are posted on the Canvas site.

An **“A” grade** requires following the instructions completely, demonstrating a solid understanding of the course topics, effort for research and analysis, organized and sufficient writing and presentation, proper source attribution, and a timely submittal.

A **“B” grade** is basically sound, but the submission has a deficiency in one of the above areas.

A **“C” grade** or lower has significant deficiencies in one or more of the above areas. Letter grades of C- or below are not considered passing at the graduate level.

A reminder that *a points reduction of 10% per day will be assessed for late work*. The first 10% is assessed starting at 12:00am the day after an assignment is due.

Information on current UF Graduate grading policies may be found at: [UF Graduate Academic Regulations \(Grades\)](#).

The following table outlines the course assignments. The total points earned will be summed and divided by the total points in the course: 1,000

Assignments	Points	Approx. % of Total Grade
Introduce Yourself	25	2.5%
Academic Integrity Module	25	2.5%
Research Journal (5 assignments: 100%)	500	50%
IRB-02 Training and Certification	25	2.5%
Midterm Reflection	25	2.5%
Recorded Presentation of Draft Research Pre-Proposal	100	10%
Peer Feedback and Response	50	5%
Final Research Pre-Proposal	200	20%
MRP Committee Email & Survey	50	5%
Total	1,000	100%

URP 6203 GRADING SCALE: All grades will be posted directly into the Canvas gradebook. Any discrepancies with points displayed in the gradebook should be pointed out to me. There is no curve for this course and grades will not be rounded up.

Points	Grade
940 – 1000	A
900 – 939	A-
870 – 899	B+
840 – 869	B
800 – 839	B-
770 – 799	C+
740 – 769	C
700 – 739	C-
670 – 699	D+
640 – 669	D
600 - 639	D-
Below 600	E

STUDY AND SUCCESS TIPS:

- Read the material and listen to lectures. Take notes. Interact with your notes and materials early and often.
- Engage your classmates and study as actively as possible.
- Do not fall behind or procrastinate your studies. You cannot cram the night before and expect to do well.
- Check Canvas announcements/emails daily. I will post important and helpful information as announcements or emails.
- Have a positive attitude! Planning is an exciting and dynamic profession! You are learning knowledge and skills that will help you be a more engaged member of your community.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Week of	Module	Readings & Assignments
May 12	Course Introduction	Readings: The Syllabus Assignment: Academic Integrity Module & Introduce Yourself
May 12	Module 1 Overview of Research Process & Resources	Readings: O’Leary Chapters 1 and 2 and preview 5 Lecture: Overview of Research Assignment: Journal #1 – Watch an MRP Defense
May 18	Module 2: Ethical Issues In Research	Readings: O’Leary Chapter 4 Lecture: Ethical Research Assignment: IRB-02 Training Certification
May 26	Module 3: Identifying a Topic	Readings: O’Leary Chapter 3 (p. 40-45) Lecture: Assignment: Journal #2 – Narrow Your Research Topic
June 2	Module 4: Reviewing the Literature	Readings: O’Leary Chapter 6 Lectures: Struggling with a Literature Review - O’Leary Conceptual Frameworks
June 8	Module 5: Formulating a Research Problem	Readings: O’Leary Chapter 3 (p.45-55) Lectures: Reviewing the Literature and Formulating a Research Problem

Week of	Module	Readings & Assignments
June 16	Module 6: Constructing a Research Question	Readings: TBD Lecture: Coming Up with a Research Question – O’Leary Assignment: Journal #3 – Identify a Research Problem
June 23	Summer Break	Summer Break
June 30	Module 7: Selecting a Research Design	Reading: O’Leary, Chapter 7 Lectures: Research Design; Overview of Study Designs
July 7	Module 8: Understanding Methodologies	Readings: O’Leary Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11 A Special Note on Case Studies Lectures: Qualitative v. Quantitative; Experimental Designs; Qualitative Study Designs.
July 14	Module 9: Data Collection	Readings: O’Leary 12, 13, 14 Lectures: Evaluation Research; Observing the Built Environment; Big Fuzzies; Case Studies and Planning Research Assignment: Journal #4 – Selecting a Research Design
July 21	Module 10: Analyzing Data	Readings: O’Leary Chapter 14, 15 Lecture: Assignment: Pre-proposal Presentation
July 28	Module 11: Writing a Research Proposal	Readings: O’Leary Chapter 5 Assignment: Peer Feedback and Response Assignment: Journal #5 – MRP Committee
August 4	Moving to MRP	Assignment: Final Pre-Proposal Assignment: MRP Committee Survey Assignment: MRP Email

Summer C Holidays:

- Memorial Day – May 26
- Summer Break – June 23 through 27
- Juneteenth – June 19th

- Independence Day – July 4

Disclaimer: This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.