

# **URBP 213 Communications Skills for Planners**

## **Fall 2008**

Class Meetings: Mondays, 4:00-6:45pm in Hugh Gillis Hall, Room 221  
Curriculum and syllabus largely developed by Professor Asha Weinstein-Agrawal  
Instructor- Reena Mathew

### **Course overview and objectives**

URBP 213 will help you write more clearly, as well as, deliver presentations which are organized, persuasive and geared towards the given audience.

Communication skills are essential to work within the profession of urban planning. It is necessary for Planners to be able to effectively communicate to a wide range of audiences. Planners are required to talk to decision makers, governmental agencies, stake holders, community members, and the general public. This class is intended to refine skills you already have through constant practice and feedback. Each assignment will include peer and/or instructor feedback.

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

1. Articulate the qualities that make for excellent, effective communication in a professional U.S. planning context
2. Create documents and presentations that:
  - Communicate a clear message to readers and listeners
  - Are strategically designed to persuade resistant audiences
  - Are professional in appearance and style
3. Identify and prioritize aspects of their writing and public speaking skills that they want to improve over time, and plan strategies for doing so
4. Elicit useful feedback from colleagues and friends on their writing and public speaking
5. Give useful, tactful feedback to help colleagues improve their writing and public speaking

# **How to contact Instructor Reena Mathew**

## **Contact info**

Email: [reenaruby@hotmail.com](mailto:reenaruby@hotmail.com)

Phone: (510) 219-4772

Please note that it is usually faster to reach me by email than by leaving a phone message.

Office Hours: Mondays 6:45pm-7:45pm

If you wish to speak to me but are not available during my office hours, ask to arrange an alternate time to meet in person or speak on the phone.

## **Course readings and materials**

### **Required readings**

#### 1. Weekly readings

Most readings for the course will be available in a reader which you can purchase. The readings have been bound by Maple Press and will be available for purchase on the second class, September 8<sup>th</sup> for a fee (\$10-17).

I may also hand out a small number of additional articles in class.

#### 2. Style book

Turabian, Kate. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007.

This book is available for purchase at the campus bookstore, as well as at many bookstores around the Bay Area and on-line. Be sure to buy the correct edition.

### **Other required materials**

You must bring a digital cassette to class when you give presentations (sometimes called a DVC). You can re-use the same cassette for both presentations.

## Course assignments and expectations

Your participation in the class will consist of attending all class meetings, completing readings and short homework assignments, critiquing drafts of other students' work, and preparing four graded assignments. You should plan to spend an average of seven hours a week on the course in addition to the weekly class meetings.

I will calculate your grade for the course as follows:

<b>Task/Assignment</b>	<b>% of course grade</b>
1. Job application letter	15%
2. Presentation 1	15%
3. Presentation 2	25%
4. Persuasive report	25%
5. Class participation	20%

### Class participation

The class participation grade is based on the quality of your participation in discussion, the memos that I assign to prepare for you for some class sessions, and the written and verbal comments you provide your classmates in the peer feedback sessions. All students begin the semester with an assumed "A" for class participation, and I then deduct points for mission or low quality work as follows:

Discussions: Students are expected to attend all class sessions and participate actively in discussions. Multiple absences and/or repeated tardiness will result in a lower class participation grade, since you cannot participate if you are not present.

Homework: I assign a number of short homework assignments designed to help students learn the course material and prepare for class discussion.

These assignments are due at the beginning of the class period for which they are assigned. If you must miss a class, you may email me the homework before the start of the class to receive full credit for completing it. If you miss a class when a homework assignment has been handed out, you must contact another student or myself for a copy. You are still responsible to turn the assignment in on the class date that it is due. Late homework turned in within a week of the due date will receive partial credit. I do not assign a letter grade on the homework, but record the assignments as either a V+, V, or V-. If you miss a class discussion, it is your responsibility to arrange to give and receive the written and verbal feedback from your peer review partners outside of class. This should be done within a day of the missed class. If you do give your feedback late, email me a copy of your written comments and tell me the date and time when you talked with your partners to receive partial credit for the assignment. (Otherwise you will receive no credit for that peer review.)

### **Policies on turning in graded assignments (#1-#4)**

- Late assignments will be penalized one-third of a grade for each week late.
- If life begins to overtake you such that you expect you will not be able to complete an assignment on time and you let me know well before the due date, we can discuss alternate arrangements that might reduce the grade penalty for lateness.
- Any student who fails to complete all graded assignments will automatically fail the course.

### **Policies on resubmitting assignments #1 and #3**

I encourage you to consider revising and resubmitting assignments #1 and #3, both to improve your understanding of the course material and as a way to improve your grade.

If you wish to revise and resubmit the job application letter (#1), I encourage you to meet me to discuss your work before you prepare the revised letter. In addition, here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- I expect a genuine rewrite-you must do more than just fix the specific issues I have pointed out in my comments to you.
- Rewritten papers will not automatically receive a higher grade; I will lower your grade or leave it unchanged, should that be the assessment of the revised work.
- You must turn in the rewrite no later than two weeks after the day I return the graded letters to the class. If you turn in your original letter late and so receive my comments late, your rewrite is still due two weeks from the date I return papers to the rest of the class, even though this may reduce the amount of time you have to rewrite your paper.

You also have the option to revise and re-present the second presentation (assignment #3). If you chose to revise and re-resent it, I encourage you to discuss the assignment with me before completing your revision. Also, keep in mid the following guidelines:

I expect a thorough revision of the presentation that goes beyond merely fixing specific issues that I have pointed out in my written comments. For example, you will want to consider refining your core idea, re-organizing the talk, choosing better examples or evidence, and revising the Power Point slides. You do not have to write a new reflective memo.

Revised presentations will not automatically receive a higher grade; I will lower your grade or leave it unchanged, should that be the assessment of your revised work.

All revisions will be presented during the exam period.

### **SJSU policy on academic integrity**

SJSU's Policy on Academic Integrity states: “Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University’s Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs. The policy on academic integrity can be found at [http://sa.sjsu.edu/student\\_conduct](http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct).”

### **Citing sources and avoiding plagiarism**

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's language, images, data, or ideas without proper attribution. It is a very serious offense both in the university and in your professional work. In essence, plagiarism is both theft and lying: you have stolen someone else's ideas, and then lied by implying that they are your own.

**Plagiarism will lead to grade penalties and a record filed with the SJSU Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. In severe cases, students may also fail the course or even be expelled from the university.**

**If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, it is your responsibility to make sure you clarify the issues before you hand in draft or final work.**

Learning when to cite a source and when not to is an art, not a science, and it is impossible to list every possible type of plagiarism. However, here are some typical examples of plagiarism that you should pay particular attention to avoid:

- If you use a sentence (or even a part of a sentence) that someone else wrote and don't identify the language as a quote by putting the text in quote marks and referencing the source, you have plagiarized.
- If you paraphrase somebody else's theory or idea and don't reference the source, you have plagiarized.
- If you use a picture or table from a web page or book and don't reference the source, you have plagiarized.
- If your paper incorporates data someone else has collected and you don't reference the source, you have plagiarized.

The University of Indiana has developed a very helpful website with concrete examples about proper paraphrasing and quotation. See in particular the following pages:

- <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/overview.html>
- <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/examples.html>
- <http://education.indiana.edu/~frick/plagiarism/item1.html>

On the last page listed, you will find a quiz to test how well you understand proper paraphrasing.

If you still have questions after reading these pages, feel free to talk to me. There is nothing wrong with asking for help, whereas even unintentional plagiarism is a serious offense.

### **Course citation style**

When you cite another author's work in any assignment for the course, use footnotes and a bibliography formatted following the directions in Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed., University of Chicago Press, 2007.

Note that Turabian's book describes two systems for referencing materials: (1) "notes" (footnotes or endnotes), plus a corresponding bibliography, and (2) in-text parenthetical references, plus a corresponding reference list. Be sure to use the first system, with footnotes and a bibliography, for all work you turn in during the semester.

### **Campus policy in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon possible, or see me during office hours. SJSU Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the SJSU Disability Resource Center to establish a record of their disability.

You can find information about the services SJSU offers to accommodate disabled students at [www.drc.sjsu.edu](http://www.drc.sjsu.edu).

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**Course schedule (subject to change with reasonable notice give in class or via email)**

**Notes:**

- Readings are to be completed by class on the day listed.
- Assignments are due the day listed, unless otherwise noted. Note that the graded assignments have multiple components. For example, you will have to complete drafts before the final assignment is due. Read the assignment sheets carefully for more details and listen for additional instructions given in class.
- Because you need to remember many due dates for this class, I recommended that during the first week of class you note all assignment due dates for the semester in your calendar. This will help you to remember them.

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**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: August 25th**

Topics

- Introductions and course overview
- What is "communication"?
- Writing and speaking to your audience (not to yourself)
- Overview of assignments #1 and #2

No reading

► **Draft #1 job application letter due by 8:00 a.m. on Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup> (email me your application letter)**

**Week 2: \*\*\* NO CLASS SEPTEMBER 1st – Labor Day\*\*\***

**Week 3: September 8, 2008**

Class will consist of student-instructor meetings held in Hugh Gillis Hall, Room 221. Bring a copy of your draft letter to the meeting.

No reading.

► Draft #2 job application letter due to peer feedback partners by  
**Thursday, September 11th, 5:00 p.m.**

#### **Week 4: September 15th**

Peer feedback comments on draft #2 of the job application letters due in class.

#### Topics

- Effective sentences and paragraphs
- The process of revising drafts
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Student critiques of draft job application letters (bring a copy of your own draft letter to class)

#### Reading

- Orwell, George. "The Politics of the English Language." In *The Orwell Reader: Fiction, Essays, and Reportage*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1984 (pp. 355-66).
- Limerick, Patricia Nelson. "Limerick's Rules of Verbal Etiquette." In *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000 (pp. 342-43).
- Fowler, H. Ramsey, Jane E. Aaron, and Kay Limburg, eds. Excerpts from "Chapter 3: Composing Paragraphs." In *The Little, Brown Handbook*, 5th ed. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992 (pp. 70-81).
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Writing Center. "Revising." August 28, 2002. Available at: <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/revision.html>.
- Hairston, Maxine et al. "Chapter 5: How Do You Revise, Edit, and Proofread?" and "Chapter 15: How Do You Manage Transitions?" In *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*, 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2002 (pp. 60-82, 220-228).
- Optional: Remnick, David. "Postscript: Miss Gould." *New Yorker* (February 28, 2005): 34-35.

## Week 5: September 22nd

Final job application letter and reflective memo due

Topics:

- Structuring information presentation
- Planning a talk

Reading

- Makay, John J. "Chapter 8: Organizing and Outlining Your Ideas." In *Public Speaking: Theory into Practice*. 2nd ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1995 (pp. 183-207).
- DeVito, Joseph A. "Unit 9: Elements of Organization." In *The Elements of Public Speaking*. 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1987 (pp. 96-112).
- Zelazny, Gene. Excerpts from *Say It with Presentations: How to Design and Deliver Successful Business Presentations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006 (pp. 1-23).
- Tierney, Elizabeth. "Practicing and Planning." In *How to Make Effective Presentations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1996 (pp. 96-101).

► Draft outline for Presentation 1 due to peer feedback partners by **Friday, September 26, 5:00 p.m.**

## Week 6: September 29th

Peer feedback comments on draft outlines for Presentation 1 due in class  
Freewriting homework due (handed out in September 22<sup>nd</sup> class)

Topics

- Principles of persuasion
- When to cite sources (how to avoid plagiarism)
- Peer critiques of Presentation 1 outlines

Reading

- Elbow, Peter. "Freewriting." In *Visions across the Americas: Short Essays for Composition*, edited by J. Sterling Warner and Judith Hilliard. Fort Worth: Harcourt, 2001 (pp. 13-16).
- Read the excerpts from the book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* by Chip Heath and Dan Heath available at <http://www.madetostick.com/excerpts> **OR** listen to a 40 minute interview with Chip Heath about the book available from the radio program "Tech Nation," at <http://www.itconversations.com/shows/detail1704.html>.
- DeVito, Joseph A. "Unit 15: Elements of Persuasive Speaking." In *The Elements of Public Speaking*. 3rd ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1987 (pp. 203-214).
- Lipson, Charles. "Chapter 3: Plagiarism and Academic Honesty." In *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004 (pp. 32-48).

**Week 7: October 6<sup>th</sup> (\*\*\*) class may be extended by 25 minutes (\*\*\*)**

**Presentation 1 given in class** (videotaped)

No reading

**Week 8: October 13th**

**Memo reflecting on Presentation 1 due**

Topics

- Discussion of Presentation 1
- Incorporating visual aids into a presentation
- Effective speaking style, Part 1

Reading

- Handout on "Sketching Your Storyboard" from Gene Zelazny
- Munter, Mary. "Chapter VI: Speaking: Visual Aids." In *Guide to Managerial Communication: Effective Business Writing and*

*Speaking*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003 (pp. 108-141).

- Fujishin, Randy. "Chapter 7: Delivering Your Speech: Being Yourself." In *The Natural Speaker*, 5th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2006 (pp. 107-128).

## **Week 9: October 20th**

Speaking style homework due in class

Citation style homework due in class

### Topics

- Effective speaking style, Part 2
- Formatting bibliographies and footnotes (including an in-class quiz)

### Reading

- Lipson, Charles. "FAQs About All Reference Styles." In *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004 (pp. 171-181).
- Review Chapters 15, 16, and 17 of Turabian
- Optional: Menand, Louis. "The Nightmare of Citation." *New Yorker* (October 6, 2003): 120-126.

► Draft outline and PowerPoint slides of Presentation 2 due to peer feedback partners by **Friday, October 24th**

## **Week 10: October 27th**

Comments on peer partners' presentation #2 materials due in class

### Topics

- Coping with stage fright
- Overview of assignment #4 (persuasive report)
- Structuring formal reports
- Peer critiques of Presentation 2 materials

## Readings:

- Daly, John, and Isa Engleberg. "Coping with Stage Fright: How to Turn Terror into Dynamic Speaking." In *The Results-Driven Manager: Presentations That Persuade and Motivate*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004 (49-58).
- Urech, Elizabeth. "Control Your Nerves with the 3-B Exercises." In *Speaking Globally: Effective Presentations Across International and Cultural Boundaries*. Dover, NH: Kogen Page, 1998 (pp. 75-77).

## **Week 11: November 3rd**

**Presentation 2 given in class** (videotaped)

No reading.

## **Week 12: November 10th**

**Presentation 2 given in class** (videotaped)

No reading.

## **Week 13: November 17th**

**Memo reflecting on Presentation 2 due**

**Homework on charts due**

## Topics

- Discussion of presentation 2
- Designing charts

## Reading

- Tufte, Edward R. "Chapter 2: Graphical Integrity" & "Chapter 4: Data-Ink and Graphical Redesign." In *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, 2nd ed. Cheshire, CT: Graphics Press, 2001 (pp. 53-77, 91-105).
- Zelazny, Gene. Excerpts. In *Say It With Charts: The Executive's Guide to Visual Communication*, 4th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001 (pp. 9-27).

## **Week 13: November 24th**

## Topics

- Designing tables
- Designing written documents

## Reading:

- Munter, Mary. Excerpts from "Chapter III: Writing: Macro Issues." In *Guide to Managerial Communication: Effective Business Writing and Speaking*, 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003 (pp. 51-63).
- Hairston, Maxine et al. "Chapter 19: What Is Document Design?" In *The Scott, Foresman Handbook for Writers*, 6th ed. New York: Longman, 2002 (pp. 330-345).

## **Week 14: December 1st**

► Draft persuasive report due to Reena and peer feedback partners in class

## Topics

Class time used to review feedback partners draft reports.

No reading

## **Week 15: December 8th**

Comments on peer partners' Persuasive Report drafts due by class time

## Topics

- Peer feedback groups meet with instructor to review draft reports
- Student evaluations of the class (SOTES)

No reading

**Scheduled exam period: Final persuasive report (assignment #4) due to Reena by email by noon on date to be determined. (NO extensions)**

- Option to present revised versions of assignment #3
- Email: Getting what you want (politely)

- Assessment of your goals for improving your speaking and writing skills in future

### Reading

- Iacone, Salvatore J. "Email: To Send or Not to Send?" In *Write to the Point: How to Communicate in Business with Style and Purpose*. Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2003 (pp. 123-136).