

PLAN 590: Master's Project Proposal Development

Spring 2022, Mondays 1:00 - 2:15pm, Gardner Room 309

Co-instructors: Jordan Branham, jordan.branham@unc.edu
Matthew Wilson, mwilson2@live.unc.edu
Zoom room link: <https://go.unc.edu/MPPProposalDev2022>
Zoom room password: 09-26-2022 (date MP proposals are due)
Office hours: by appointment

Course Description:

This seminar-based course will provide guidance to master's students as they begin work on their MP proposals. Students will be exposed to a variety of University resources, learn how to design and write independent research, and receive feedback on their ideas and project proposals. The course will combine visits from guest speakers, lectures, and breakout sessions. Some of the specific topics that will be discussed include: (i) navigating the IRB process; (ii) how to use Odom Institute resources; (iii) writing style for planning research; (iv) project scoping and time management; (v) research methods. Students will have the opportunity to work through potential research ideas as they craft and produce a draft MP proposal.

Co-teaching format:

Each week we will meet in Gardner Room 309 unless otherwise stated by the instructors. We intend to monitor the safety and feasibility of meeting in-person on an ongoing basis and will update the class regularly on the instruction format (online vs. in-person) for upcoming classes. The default format for the class is in-person but we are providing a Zoom room (link above) for students that require remote access because they have tested positive for COVID-19, are awaiting COVID-19 test results, or have had close contact to someone with COVID-19 and have not yet been tested. Please email the instructors for permission to attend a class-session via Zoom.

Students in this course are divided into a section based on their specialization:

- Wilson, SEC 01: Housing, community, and economic development
- Branham, SEC 02: Land use, environmental, and transportation planning

Some weeks we will remain together as a group for lectures or presentations and other weeks each section will break out into independent discussion groups.

Independent discussion group sessions will focus on *specialization-specific* topics. The purpose of these sessions are to give students information that is particularly relevant to their chosen specialization. The co-instructors will specifically cover the following specializations:

You should formally enroll in the section that best fits your interests or specialization. If you need help deciding which section makes most sense for you, reach out to us ASAP so we can help you make this choice.

Learning Objectives & Course Expectations

The learning objectives for this class are to help students prepare to (i) complete their MP proposal and (ii) identify resources and develop the skills needed to carry out that MP as second-year students. Because this is primarily a skills-building class, we expect most of your assignments to be “works-in-progress” rather than polished, final drafts. However, we expect students to arrive to class prepared, be actively engaged in sessions, and consider participation to be a major component of this course.

Assignments (see due dates below)

Attendance & Participation.....	40%
• Includes multiple small group project presentations & peer review	
MP draft proposal.....	55%
• Two research idea maps (5%)	
• Project summary (10%)	
• Initial proposal draft (15%)	
• Final draft (25%)	
CITI Certification	5%

Attendance & Participation, 40%

Attendance and participation are mandatory and, per [UNC's official attendance policy](#), we ask that students to notify us of excused absences as early as possible. Given the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we understand that unforeseen attendance issues may arise. As you encounter these issues, we simply ask that you maintain communication with us. Any absences that you do not discuss with us will be recorded as an unexcused absence and will result in a deduction of 2.5 percentage points from your total participation grade.

Your participation grade includes several informal presentations of your project within small groups, along with peer feedback provided to those within your group. These will take place throughout the semester (see class schedule), with more detail to be provided on Sakai.

MP Draft Proposal, 55%

The main assignment you will complete for this class is a draft of your MP proposal. Over the course of the semester, you will develop this proposal through a series of smaller assignments, including: (i) developing two research idea maps; (ii) developing a project summary for your proposal; (iii) an initial proposal draft; and (iv) a final proposal draft.

CITI Certification, 5%

All Students will need to complete their CITI research, ethics, and compliance training, which is required by the Office of Human Research Ethics (OHRE), *even if your project is IRB-exempt*. You will be expected to submit, via Sakai, the Completion Report and Completion Certificate. Assignment details and the link to the CITI course will be posted to Sakai.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (1/10): Introduction

Week 2 (1/17): NO CLASS (MLK Day)

Week 3 (1/24): Guest Speakers: Master's Students Panel

- Come prepared to ask past master's students any questions you have about the MP process, recommendations, things to avoid, etc.
- Reading(s) due:
 - [Surviving the Dissertation: Tips from Someone Who Mostly Has](#) by Stephanie Hedge, Inside Higher Ed.
 - [This Dissertation from Afar](#) by Terry Brock, Gradhacker

Week 4 (1/31): Research idea mapping and sharing – 1st Research Idea Map due

- Come prepared with research idea map (at least 5 main spokes)

Week 5 (2/7): Writing a proposal – 2nd Research Idea Map due

- Reading(s) due:
 - *How to write a research proposal?* by Sudheesh, Duggappa, and Nethra (Sakai)
 - Dissertation Proposal Guide from the Graduate Writing Center at NC State (Sakai)

Week 6 (2/14): Guest Speaker: Phil McDaniel, Odum Institute

- Readings Due:
 - [History of Odum Institute Video](#)
 - [About Odum](#)
 - [The Importance of Asking for Help](#) by Katie Shives, Inside Higher Ed

Week 7 (2/21): Guest Speaker: Mark Howlett, Academic Coach

- Mark Howlett is an Academic Coach and Data Specialist at the UNC Learning Center, providing one-on-one and group academic coaching and serving as the lead

researcher for UNC's Writing and Learning Center. Mark is also a graduate of DCRP, where he received his PhD.

- Reading(s) due:
 - [The PhD Thesis - A Crash Course in Project Management](#) by Kaitlin Gallagher, Gradhacker.

Week 8 (2/28): Introduction to planning research design and methods

- Reading(s) due:
 - *The Selection of a Research Design* (Sakai)
 - Chapter 1 of *Research Methods in Urban and Regional Planning* by Xinhao Wang & Rainer Hofe (Sakai)
 - Introduction of *Qualitative Analysis for Planning & Policy: Beyond the Numbers* by Jon Gabler (Sakai)
 - Optional reading: Chapter 1 of *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* by Edward Tufte (available online via UNC Library)

Week 9 (3/7): Small group workshop – Project summary due

- Come prepared to present research project and provide peer feedback

Week 10 (3/14): NO CLASS (Spring Break)

Week 11 (3/21): Small group workshop

- Come prepared to present research project and provide peer feedback

Week 12 (3/28): Guest speaker: Mary Jane Nirdlinger

- Mary Jane Nirdlinger is the Assistant Town Manager of Chapel Hill and a licensed planner. She also teaches writing courses on how to write 'planning in plain English.'
- Readings Due:
 - Part I of *Planning in Plain English* by Natalie Macris (available online via UNC libraries)
 - [Plain English: At a Glance](#) by Nancy M. Smith
 - [Mary Dash's Writing Tips](#), plainlanguage.gov

Week 13 (4/4): Small group workshop – CITI certification

- Come prepared to present research project and provide peer feedback

Week 14 (4/11): Guest Speaker: John Roberts – Initial Draft Proposal Due

- John Roberts is the Interim Director of the Office for Human Research Ethics at UNC. He is an expert in the IRB process and the protection of human subjects in research.
- Reading(s) due:
 - [*Getting Started – Review Process Overview*](#), UNC Research, IRB and the Office of Human Research Ethics
 - *Ethnics Beyond the IRB: An Introductory Essay* by Kathleen M. Blee & Ashley Currier (Sakai)

Week 15 (4/18): TBD

Week 16 (4/25): Presentation Day (final workshop)

Final MP Draft Proposal Due on Monday May 2nd at 5:00pm.