

PLAN 590: Master's Project Proposal Development

Spring 2021, Fridays 10:00 - 11:30am

Co-instructors: Jordan Branham, jbranham@live.unc.edu

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Zoom room link: <https://go.unc.edu/MPPProposalDev>

Zoom room password: 040922 (date MPs are due)

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 both sections will meet in the same Zoom room (link above) to begin the class. Some weeks we will remain together as a group for lectures or presentations. Other weeks each section will break out into independent discussion groups. Regardless of the teaching format each week, we will always begin class in the Zoom room listed above.

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:

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

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 - *all assignments are due by 5:00 PM*

Attendance & Participation..... 15%

CITI Certification10%

MP draft proposal..... 50%

- Three abstracts (5%)
- Project summary (10%)
- Peer review of project summaries (5%)
- Initial proposal draft (15%)
- Final draft (15%)

MP presentations: 25%

- Present research idea (10%)
- Present proposal (15%)

Attendance & Participation, 15%

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 and virtual learning, 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. Each unexcused absence will detract 2.5 percentage points from your total participation grade -- e.g., with 1 unexcused absence, the total possible attendance and participation a student can receive is 13.5% out of 15%.

CITI Certification, 10%

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*. Students can use the link provided below to complete their training. You will be expected to submit, via Sakai, the Completion Report and Completion Certificate. Link to CITI course:

MP Draft Proposal, 50%

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 three potential abstracts; (ii) developing a project summary for your proposal; (iii) an initial proposal draft; and (iv) a final proposal draft. We will also complete a review activity

where you give other students feedback on their proposal. More detail will be provided in a separate document on Sakai about each of these assignments.

MP Presentations, 25%

You will be expected to complete two presentations to the class during the semester. The first is a presentation of your research idea at the midpoint of the semester, which will be used to workshop your current topic and receive feedback from the instructor and your fellow students. The second is a final presentation of your MP proposal, which will take place on the last day of class. More detail will be provided in a separate document on Sakai about these assignments.

Class Schedule

Week 1 (1/22): Introduction

Week 2 (1/29): 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 3 (2/5): Writing a proposal -- **Three Abstracts 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 4 (2/12): 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 5 (2/19): 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 6 (2/26): Guest Speaker: Cassandra Myers -- Project Summary Due

- Cassandra Myers is the Director of the Office for Human Research Ethics at UNC. She 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 7 (3/5): Presentation Day -- Research Idea Presentation & Review Assignment Due

Week 8 (3/12): Campus Wellness Day -- NO CLASS

Week 9 (3/19): 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.'
- *Be prepared to discuss and workshop your executive summaries.*
- 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 10 (3/26): TBD

Week 11 (4/2): Holiday -- NO CLASS – CITI certification Due

Week 12 (4/9): Guest Speaker: Phil McDaniel, Odum Institute -- Initial Draft Proposal Due

- Readings Due:

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

Week 13 (4/16): Independent consultations with instructor

Week 14 (4/23): TBD

Week 15 (4/30): Presentation Day -- Final Research Proposal Presentation

Final MP Draft Proposal Due on Sunday May 9th at 5:00pm.