

# GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

## SURP 807 – Special Topic (Topic: Public Participation Techniques)



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<b>Contact Time</b>	Any time	
<b>Format</b>	The format is case-based learning which provides students with a relevant opportunity to see theory in practice. The format supports the development of communicative and collaborative skills along with content knowledge of public engagement. Classes are designed to be interactive with lectures and in-class participation activities. This module has been taught in four three-hour time blocks.	
<b>Class Assessment</b>	<u>Part One:</u> Assignment: Preparation of a Public Engagement Plan for a selected planning scenario using three different techniques. This is a two-part assignment including a written report (maximum 10 pages) and in class presentation. The assignment is undertaken as a group project of 4 to 6 students. – 70% <u>Part Two:</u> Class Participation will be evaluated on contribution to in-class learning through discussion and participation in skill building. – 30%	

### COURSE OVERVIEW

A planner may be said to have an overarching responsibility to serve the public interest. As professional planners, this question has critical importance in our practice and is embedded in the concept of the planning profession. This module will explore public participation techniques and the role of the “planner” in delivering meaningful public engagement by examining different methods and how these are used in the context of land use planning, infrastructure and environmental planning and social planning. Knowing why and when to engage and ensuring that the methods and approaches used are effective for different audiences is especially important in the context of the planner’s role in furthering the public interest.

Public Participation will be explored with an emphasis on skill development through the interactive discussion of tools and techniques and hands-on in class learning. The course will provide students with an understanding of how to use tools and techniques to inform and engage with different audiences including public meetings, visioning workshops, pop-up sessions, design charrettes and stakeholder focus groups and meetings. New this year will be a segment on virtual engagement including approaches, formats and success factors for virtual engagement including online public meetings, stakeholder collaborations and input from citizen groups. Class material will draw from best practices being employed in different jurisdictions.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. To develop an understanding of what constitutes effective engagement and meaningful public participation.
2. To develop an understanding of considerations for selecting participation methods and what it means to be responsive to public input.
3. To become familiar with approaches and how to evaluate the use of different techniques in various settings.
4. To become familiar with all steps of developing an engagement plan including goal setting, communication methods, stakeholder sensitivity analysis, pre-planning, conducting engagement and feedback mechanisms.
5. To practice skills for participating in public engagement processes.

## COURSE TOPICS

### **Use of Public Participation Techniques including face to face and virtual engagement**

Review of the continuum of public participation, what constitutes a consultation plan, who are the key audiences, what are the different tools and techniques and considerations for selecting approaches. This will include tools for running effective public meetings and sessions, ways to create a climate for effective participation and pitfalls to avoid. New this year will be a review of virtual engagement techniques for conducting online public meetings and virtual stakeholder engagement.

### **Participation Techniques in Community and Land Use Plan-Making**

Review of approaches for plan-making including public meetings and community visioning used in planning policy, redevelopment, and strategic initiatives. Methods explored will include ways to plan and deliver effective public meetings, workshops, planning a design charrette and group dynamic techniques.

### **Participation Techniques in Environmental Planning**

Review of public participation techniques in the context of controversial environmental processes and infrastructure planning and sustainability through broad stakeholder involvement. Methods will include in person and digital engagement for garnering input from the public and stakeholders through public meetings, the use of public opinion surveys, advisory committees and working groups.

### **Participation Techniques in Housing and Human Services**

Building on the course topics in the first few classes, students will review public participation techniques that foster partnerships and capacity for change with an emphasis on how to hold constructive conversations including dispute resolutions techniques and dealing with NIMBYism.

## COURSE READINGS

David Gordon and Gerald Hodge, The Texture of Participation in Community Planning, Chapter 12 in *Planning Canadian Communities*

IAP2's Public Participation Toolbox and IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum ([www.IAP2.ca](http://www.IAP2.ca))

James Creighton, Public Meeting Tools in *The Public Participation Handbook* (available in PDF download)

Additional material will be referenced with best practice example of different techniques.