

**SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING DEPARTMENT**  
**URBP 298B: SPECIAL STUDY – PLANNING REPORT COMPLETION**  
**SPRING 2025**

**Instructors:** Dr. Charles Rivasplata

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**Zoom Link:** <https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/87104908779?pwd=4IfmmDmpCtjIKQCXFe7PKH28ca4Dpb.1>

**Class days/time:** This is an ‘asynchronous’ course with no scheduled class meetings. Students will work with an assigned advisor, completing course assignments and meeting deadlines, as listed on Canvas and in this syllabus.

**Office Hour:** Fridays: 2:00-3:00 p.m., by appointment (please e-mail instructor by Wed. evening)

**Prerequisite:** Passage of URBP 298A and approval of the Graduate Student Adviser.

**Units:** 3

## Course Catalog Description

Advanced individual research and report writing. Students work with a faculty advisor to complete a professional planning report that demonstrates their capacity to do independent research, analysis, and writing about a complex planning problem. Prerequisites: (1) passage of URBP 298A; (2) Graduate Student Advisor approval.

## Course Description and Course Learning Objectives

The two-course sequence of URBP 298A and URBP 298B gives planning students an opportunity to prepare a Planning Report based upon independent research, analysis, and possibly design work about a complex urban or regional problem. Preparing this Planning Report is the capstone experience for students in the MUP program. Students draw upon the material they have learned from coursework, internships, and professional experience to demonstrate their ability to:

1. **Conceptualize problems from complex, real world situations so the problems are meaningful to clients and research-worthy.** In particular, students will be able to:
  - a. Define and clearly state a research question and/or goals
  - b. Demonstrate in-depth familiarity with relevant literature on the research subject
  - c. Design a methodology appropriate to answer a research question
2. **Collect, analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources.** In particular, students will be able to:
  - a. Collect data of sufficient quality and depth to answer a research question
  - b. Perform direct, competent, and appropriate analysis to answer a research question

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- c. Draw sophisticated conclusions based on the results of the analysis, which are a logical extension of the findings
  - d. Show how the analysis and findings fit into the larger context of the literature and current professional practice
3. **Communicate effectively in writing and in visual terms.** In particular, students will be able to:
- a. Organize material logically, so that a reader can easily follow the writer’s train of thought
  - b. Write text that is grammatically correct and free of typos
  - c. Create and integrate into the report relevant tables and figures that add useful and important information for readers
  - d. Design reports that are attractive and professional in appearance
  - e. Include citations where appropriate, and format footnotes and bibliographies properly

In addition to these three requirements for the Planning Report, students are encouraged to demonstrate originality and creativity in the choice of research question, methodology, and analysis techniques.

## Planning Accreditation Board (PAB) Knowledge Components

This course partially covers the following PAB Knowledge Components: 2a, 2b, and 2c.

A complete list of the PAB Knowledge Components can be found at <http://www.sjsu.edu/urbanplanning/courses/pabknowledge.html>.

## Required Course Texts

Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. (ISBN-13: 978-0-226-81638-8. Cost: approximately \$15 on Amazon.) Note that there is now a 9<sup>th</sup> edition of this book.

Other readings may be e-mailed to students and/or posted to the Canvas course site and/or determined in consultation with the student’s adviser.

## Course Requirements and Assignments

In URBP 298B, students complete the Planning Report that they began in URBP 298A. Students must complete, at a minimum, three drafts of the Planning Report as well as its final version. Each draft provides students an opportunity to practice and demonstrate the skills outlined in the three course learning objectives.

In addition, students must submit a “Statement of Understanding” to their adviser at the beginning of the semester, confer regularly with their writing partners, obtain feedback on Draft #2 from an external planning professional, and respond to an exit survey at the end of the semester.

Assignments	Due Date	Learning Objectives
<p><b>1. Statement of Understanding.</b> Students prepare a detailed report outline, schedule of tasks, and acknowledge that they have read the URBP 298B syllabus. The assignment guidelines can be downloaded from Canvas.</p>	Jan. 30 <sup>th</sup>	
<p><b>2. Writing Group Participation.</b> Students check in monthly about their progress with partners in a self-selected writing group. These check-ins will be via Zoom or in person. A one paragraph summary of discussions should be e-mailed to the 298 instructors by a group representative on three due dates.</p>	Feb. 13 <sup>th</sup> Mar. 13 <sup>th</sup> Apr. 17 <sup>th</sup>	
<p><b>3. First Full Draft of Planning Report.</b> This draft should be a good quality draft of the entire Planning Report, ideally from title page through to the bibliography and any appendices, though a small number of individual components may be in progress. To count as “good quality,” the draft must be written so that the meaning is clear to a reader at the sentence, paragraph, and macro-structural level, and the content must be complete enough that the student and adviser do not expect any major further additions or structural changes. The draft should include all planned figures or tables and be formatted following the style intended for the final report (fonts, heading styles, etc.).</p>	Mar. 13 <sup>th</sup>	1, 2, 3
<p><b>4. Second Full Draft of Planning Report.</b> Students should turn in an MS Word file of what they believe to be the finished report. Text should be proofread, the document should have its final formatting, etc. However, students should also anticipate that their adviser will request additional modifications.</p>	Apr. 10 <sup>th</sup>	1, 2, 3
<p><b>5. Feedback from an External Reader.</b> Students obtain feedback on the second draft from a planning professional, work colleague, family member, or other trusted reader and share it with their adviser.</p>	May 1 <sup>st</sup>	1, 2, 3
<p><b>6. Final Report for Instructor Review.</b> The report should be entirely complete, including all formatting and proofreading. Advisers will review the report to let students know if any revisions are needed. Submit the file as a PDF.</p>	May 8 <sup>th</sup>	1, 2, 3
<p><b>7. Finished Report.</b> Update your report as directed by your adviser and submit a copy of the final PDF.</p>	May 15 <sup>th</sup>	1, 2, 3
<p><b>8. MUP Exit Survey.</b> Details will be sent via email.</p>	May 16 <sup>th</sup>	N/A

## Format for the Final Report

Students must submit to their adviser a digital copy of the report saved as a single PDF file.

On Canvas you will see a link to a document titled “Report Formatting Guidelines” that provides detail about how to format the final report.

## Grading Information

URBP 298B is graded on a Credit/No Credit (CR/NC) basis.

To receive a grade of Credit for URBP 298B, students must (1) respond to the MUP exit survey, and (2) complete a Planning Report that meets the department’s minimum standards for professional-quality analysis.

Advisers evaluate completed Planning Reports using the following list of criteria:

1. Are the research questions and/or goals well defined and clearly stated?
2. Does the author demonstrate in-depth familiarity with relevant literature on the subject?
3. Is the methodology appropriate to answer the research question(s)?
4. Is the collected data sufficient in quality and depth to answer the research question?
5. Is the analysis direct, competent, and appropriate?
6. Are the conclusions sophisticated and based on the results of the analysis, as a logical extension of the findings?
7. Does the author show how his/her analysis and findings fit into the larger context of the literature and current professional practice?
8. Is the material logically organized, so that a reader can easily follow the writer’s train of thought?
9. Is the writing grammatically correct and free of typos?
10. Do tables and figures add useful/important information for the reader?
11. Is the report attractive and professional in appearance?
12. Are citations included where appropriate, and are footnotes and bibliography properly formatted?

Receiving an NC in URBP 298B has the following implications:

- An NC is the equivalent of failing the course. The NC will remain permanently on the student’s record, though it is not included when the SJSU Office of Graduate Records calculates the student’s GPA.
- Students who receive an NC in URBP 298B can only enroll again in URBP 298B if there is space in the class after all other students who want to enroll receive add codes.
- Students who receive an NC in URBP 298B will be placed on Administrative-Academic Probation. To be removed from Administrative-Academic Probation, a student must re-enroll in URBP 298B and receive a grade of CR.
- Students who received a second NC in URBP 298B will be disqualified from the

MUP program.

## Course Workload

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

## Honors

At the end of each semester, faculty advisers will determine whether a completed Planning Report deserves special recognition as an “honors” report. Honors reports must demonstrate a high level of originality in the research question, methodology utilized, and/or the manner of analysis. All URBP 298 faculty advisers will then jointly review reports proposed for honors, and any students selected will be notified. Honors reports are posted on the department’s website and acknowledged at the MUP awards ceremony each May.

## MUP Program Exit Survey

Students must respond to an online exit survey no later than Friday, May 16, 2025. The survey is designed to gather input from graduating students on how effectively the MUP program serves students and how to improve the program. While completing the survey is voluntary and you can refuse to answer all or any part of the survey, the department will not process your “Verification of Culminating Experience” memo required to complete graduation requirements until you respond to the invitation to complete the survey by the due date (those who prefer not to respond can opt out). The survey takes at most 15 minutes to complete, and all responses are confidential.

## SJSU ScholarWorks

If you are interested in archiving and preserving your work, while making it accessible to the rest of the world, consider depositing your master’s project into SJSU ScholarWorks (<http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/>), the campus institutional repository. Your work will be indexed by both Google and Google Scholar, ensuring maximum visibility, and you will receive download counts. You will receive a durable link to your project, which you can add to your resume.

You are not required to participate in this opportunity, but if you are interested, please contact April Gilbert at the SJSU Library. Her phone number is 408-808-2461 and her email is [april.gilbert@sjsu.edu](mailto:april.gilbert@sjsu.edu).

## Important SJSU Graduation Procedures and Deadlines

There are some important procedures that students must complete by specific deadlines in order to graduate. You must complete the following form(s) to graduate in May 2025:

- Students must submit the **Online Graduation Application by the very end of January 2025—check with GAPE for the exact deadline date**. Completing this form ensures that you will receive an official SJSU diploma after graduating. The form and instructions are at: <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/graduate-student-guide/graduation/index.php>
- Students who have previously applied for graduation, but did not complete the requirements on time, need to submit the **Graduate Date Change Request for Award**

of **Master's Degree** form (and a \$10.00 processing fee) by the deadline. The form is at: [https://www.sjsu.edu/ae/docs/20160317\\_graduation\\_date\\_change\\_request\\_for\\_award\\_of\\_masters\\_degree.pdf](https://www.sjsu.edu/ae/docs/20160317_graduation_date_change_request_for_award_of_masters_degree.pdf)

- Students must complete the **Request for Course Substitution for the Graduate Degree** form as soon as possible if they decide to count towards the MUP degree a different set of classes from those listed on the Request for Candidacy and Graduate Degree Program form (recall that you completed this form in URBP-298A). More on this process is available under "Course Substitution" on the following page: <https://www.sjsu.edu/gape/graduate-student-guide/advancement-to-candidacy/index.php>

## University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

## Plagiarism and Citing Sources Properly

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 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. However, here are some common examples of plagiarism that you should be careful to avoid:

- Using a sentence (or even a part of a sentence) that someone else wrote without identifying the language as a quote by putting the text in quote marks and referencing the source.
- Paraphrasing somebody else's theory or idea without referencing the source.
- Using a picture or table from a webpage or book without reference the source.
- Using data some other person or organization has collected without referencing the source.

The SJSU MLK Library provides a short (15 minutes) and informative plagiarism tutorial. The MUP faculty highly encourage all students to complete it. Details are here:

<https://libguides.sjsu.edu/c.php?g=853661&p=6111789>

The University of Indiana has developed a very helpful website with concrete examples about proper paraphrasing and quotation:

- [How to Recognize Plagiarism: Tutorial and Tests, School of Education, Indiana University Bloomington \(iu.edu\)](https://libguides.sjsu.edu/c.php?g=853661&p=6111789) at <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/c.php?g=853661&p=6111789>

If you still have questions, feel free to talk to the instructor personally. There is nothing wrong with asking for help, whereas even unintentional plagiarism is a serious offense.

Finally, you can use TurnItIn.com as a tool to help you identify any text that may be plagiarized, so that you can fix the problem before submitting the assignment. When you submit assignments to Canvas, the system will generate a “report” that highlights all text that TurnItIn.com identifies as possibly plagiarized. The report will give you a “score” that shows how much text has been flagged. Please note that the TurnItIn.com reports are helpful but not perfect – they tend to highlight lots of material that is not actually plagiarized, and the reports can also potentially miss problematic text. Therefore, it is recommended that you ignore the numeric score and instead carefully review all text that is highlighted in the report, to see if anything needs revision.

**You are encouraged to submit draft papers to Canvas well before the assignment due date,** so that you can check the TurnItIn.com report and make any needed revisions before the assignment is due. If you submit a draft for this purpose, add a note to the instructor that says, “draft only – not for review.” (The instructors promise you that they will not look at these reports.) For instructions on how to find your TurnItIn.com reports in Canvas, see <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-3120>.

If you still have questions after using all these online resources, feel free to talk to your instructor personally. There is nothing wrong with asking for help, whereas even unintentional plagiarism is a serious offense.

## Citation style

It is important to properly cite any references you use in your assignments. The Department of Urban and Regional Planning uses Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition (University of Chicago Press, 2013, ISBN-13: 978-0-81638-8). Copies are available in the SJSU King Library. Additionally, the book is relatively inexpensive, and you may wish to purchase a copy. Please 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. Check with your adviser as to their preferred citation style

## Library Liaison

The SJSU Library Liaison for the Urban and Regional Planning Department is Ms. Lauren DeCelle. If you have questions, you can contact her at: [lauren.decelle@sjsu.edu](mailto:lauren.decelle@sjsu.edu) or 408-808-2621.

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