

University of Washington
Department of Urban Design and Planning
Autumn 2024

URBDP 593 Doctoral Seminar III: Interdisciplinary Urban Research

INSTRUCTOR: Professor Qing Shen
410E Gould Hall, qs@uw.edu
LECTURES: Friday 2:00—4:50 pm
LOCATION: Gould 442
OFFICE HOURS: TBA (or by appointment)

Course Description and Objectives

The overarching goal of this course is to prepare students for doctoral-level research by developing capacities that will be needed for advanced, independent, and interdisciplinary scholarship in urban design and planning. It focuses primarily on helping students conduct critical review and synthesis of literature. The scope of relevant research is broadly defined, drawing on the social and natural sciences and, in particular, urban design and planning theories and methods for examining urban development patterns, processes, and interventions. While the course does not provide a prescribed set of readings, students will be expected to read widely on a research topic they select. By the end of the course, students will be expected to produce a thorough literature review, which is essential for writing a general exam statement.

The specific objectives of the course are for students to:

- ✦ Develop capacity to critically review published research drawn from literature in urban design and planning
- ✦ Develop capacity to write a critical synthesis of literature on a specific research topic
- ✦ Develop capacity to trace the evolution of a stream of research, and identify seminal papers in this literature
- ✦ Develop capacity to link streams of research from social and natural sciences and urban design and planning that are relevant to a research topic
- ✦ Develop capacity to critique and extend existing theories on a research topic
- ✦ Develop capacity to identify emerging interdisciplinary research opportunities
- ✦ Develop familiarity with the range of research methods used to address a research question across disciplines
- ✦ Develop familiarity with the research publication process

Prerequisites

Successful completion of URBDP 591 Doctoral Seminar I, or permission of instructor

Course Structure and Assignments

The course is structured as a discussion seminar, and students will be largely responsible to lead discussions in class. Over the course of the quarter, students will:

- ✦ **Write 2 in-depth critiques of published research papers and lead a discussion on these papers in class.** These should be high-quality papers, preferably published in peer-reviewed journals, and should include one seminal piece that shaped a research literature and one recent paper that exemplifies the current research frontier on this topic.
- ✦ **Compile an annotated bibliography on an interdisciplinary research topic** selected by the student, identifying literature in multiple disciplines and from the earliest contributions to the topic. Annotations are one-paragraph summaries of, and comments on, the scope, approach, and key findings of the paper. Students should **turn in 3 annotations per week**, starting from week 2.
- ✦ **Write a term paper that critically reviews and synthesizes the literature** on the selected research topic, incorporating *at least* 25 publications relevant to the topic, and involving theoretical, methodological and empirical dimensions. It should:
 - explain the scope of the research topic,
 - trace the evolution of research on this topic from relevant fields,
 - identify seminal contributions to the literature and explain their influence on the further development of the topic,
 - develop a conceptual framework to synthesize and present theory within this literature,
 - summarize key research questions within it and explanations of which questions have been resolved and which remain unanswered or contested,
 - assess the limitations of recent research on open questions and key theoretical and methodological issues at the root of the disagreement,
 - speculate on the future evolution of research on the topic, and identify promising directions to make progress in resolving open questions.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on the written critiques of published papers (15%), annotated bibliography (15%), in-class contributions to discussion (10%), class presentations (20%) and the term paper (40%).

Book on Reservation

One general reference book is accessible in the form of e-book from UW Library:

Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. Guilford Publications.

Class Format, Schedule and Expectations

Class sessions will be structured as a seminar, with students leading the discussion of selected papers and building a conceptual framework for their research topic on the basis of a thorough critical review of the literature.

For Phase I, 3 weeks starting from Friday, October 4, each weekly class session will have one or two students turning in a written critique of one paper and leading a discussion of it.

For Phase II, 3 weeks starting from October 25, each student will lead a discussion on the research topic he/she is working on, leading towards the development of a conceptual framework to synthesize the review of the literature on this topic.

We will not have class on November 8, because the instructor and some students will be attending the Annual ACSP conference.

For Phase III, 4 weeks starting from November 15, each student will turn in a written critique of another paper, lead a discussion of it, and explore ways to advance their research topic.

December 11 (Wednesday), each student will turn in the term paper.

Over the quarter, **each student will lead discussions *three times***—one on a critique of a paper, another on their research topic, and the final one combining these two elements.

Each student is expected to also **turn in written annotations on 3 publications every week**, so that the annotated bibliography is compiled throughout the quarter.

For class sessions to provide a productive learning experience, students need to ***come to class prepared***. This means completing the readings and developing your own thoughts on each, regardless of whether it is a paper you are ‘responsible for’. You should circulate the paper you are going to critique by Saturday of the week preceding class discussion of that paper.

We may invite some former students who have successfully passed the general exam to come to class sessions and share their experience. Each student may invite your fellow student(s) or relevant faculty to your presentations.

Questions to Consider for Evaluating Published Research in Urban Design and Planning

(Note: not all of these questions will be relevant to all papers, but should generally cover the range of papers from theoretical, to empirical, to reviews of the literature. Think carefully, *why is each of the questions important?*) **General Questions:**

1. Are the objectives of the paper clear?
2. Is the research question clear?
3. Is the research question grounded in planning?
4. Is the planning context clearly explained?
5. Is the research question positioned within the context of prior work on the topic?
6. Is there a clear description of the relevant theory?
7. Is the paper well organized and clearly written?
8. Are there any other concerns about the analysis or its interpretation and presentation?
9. How appropriate and convincing are the conclusions?
10. Does the analysis adequately support the conclusions drawn?
11. Are the implications of the analysis presented clearly, and do they avoid over-reading or over-generalizing from the data and analysis?
12. Are there any concerns about impartiality, or representation of advocacy as research?

Questions Related to Theoretical Research:

13. Is prior theoretical development appropriately incorporated?
14. Is the theoretical reasoning logically consistent?
15. How significant and original is the theoretical contribution?
16. Does the theory generate testable hypotheses?

Questions Related to Empirical Research:

17. Are testable hypotheses clearly stated and linked to the research question?
18. Are the data used in the analysis appropriate for the analysis, and are they documented sufficiently?
19. Are the research methods used in the analysis appropriate given the question?
20. Is the dependent variable clearly explained, and does it measure the intended concept well?
21. Are the independent variables included in the analysis justified on the basis of theory or expectation?

22. Are there any clear concerns about the validity of the research design or the model specification? For example, are there any obvious omitted variables?
23. Are appropriate descriptive analyses included in the paper?
24. Are the estimation results clearly explained and are reasonable interpretations made of the results? Are results appropriately handled with a minimum of technical detail in the body of the paper, and appropriate use of footnotes and/or appendix?
25. Are there any results that are counter-intuitive or which contradict expectations or theory? If so, are these adequately described or explained?

Questions Related to Reviews of the Literature on a Topic:

26. Is the scope of the literature reviewed sufficiently comprehensive on the topic?
27. Are recent advances sufficiently addressed?
28. Does the review analyze and synthesize or does it merely report prior findings?
29. Does the paper provide directions for future research, and if so, are these adequately justified based on the analysis of the literature?

Miscellaneous

Religious Holiday Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at Religious Accommodations Policy (<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/>).

Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the Religious Accommodations Request form (<https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/>).