

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**UAP 5424**  
**WRITING STRATEGIES AND CAPSTONE DEVELOPMENT**

**Course Information**

Time: Wednesdays, 7:00-9:30 PM  
Place: Room 305 (large conference room)

**Contact Information**

Professor: Dr. Elizabeth Morton  
Office: Room 219, 1021 Prince  
Email: ElizabethMorton@vt.edu  
Phone: (703) 706-8129

**Course Objective**

This course is designed to give students an overview of research topics and writing strategies in the planning field. A particular aim of the course is to help students get started on their Capstone projects and provide a convivial and supportive framework for getting them through the process.

Throughout the term, a variety of UAP faculty members will draw from their respective fields in addressing issues like: how to come up with an interesting and researchable question; how to write to suit particular professional formats; how to analyze and write about the policymaking process; and how to interpret and write about planning documents. We will also discuss the characteristics and requirements of the Capstone options (with review of examples of previous work); the promise and pitfalls of working with clients on your project; and the UAP Style Manual.

Students will have the opportunity to present and get input on their own projects during the course of the semester; one or two informal progress reports will be required during the course of the term on a rotating basis. Final assignments (5-7 pp.) will be individually tailored to each student's needs.

The course will meet six times during the semester, including a special session on using the library and online sources for research conducted by Kelly Jeon. Please bear in mind that specific dates may change due to the scheduling of the Metropolitan Seminar, which will meet during the same time period on different days. Students may register for both courses without fear of overlap.

**Course Requirements and Grading**

Course requirements include class preparation and participation (50% of your grade) and a final project of at least 5-7 pp. (50% of your grade).

Preparation and participation are important aspects of the course. Please come to class prepared and on time. Your preparation and participation grade will be based on: regular class attendance; demonstrated understanding of the readings through active participation in class discussion and application to your research problems. Please contact me ahead of time if you think you may miss a class. If you miss more than one class, the preparation and participation component of your grade will be reduced by one letter grade. If you miss more than two classes, your entire course grade will also be reduced by one grade for each class missed.

I am quite flexible about the final assignment, which ideally should assist you in defining, developing or completing your Capstone project. Possibilities could include: a literature review of possible topics in your area of specialization; an exploration of one or more of the cutting edge topics discussed by one of the faculty presenters; an elaboration of your proposed methodology; a draft paper proposal for submittal to your advisor; or a portion of a chapter of a major paper. Please bring your final project idea to class on September 19 and feel free to contact Professor Morton in the meantime if you want to discuss it.

The final assignment and presentation is due at the beginning of class on December 5. One letter grade per day will be deducted for late assignments.

### **Course Materials**

Instructors for each session will submit materials at least a week ahead of time. In addition, we will place samples of major papers and practicum projects in each discipline on Blackboard for discussion during that session. Finally, Dr. Morton has assembled an assortment of books and articles on writing and research strategies for planners. The articles will be placed on Blackboard and the books will be on reserve in the library. Some books may circulate through the permission of the professor. You should expect that the foundation of your research assignments will be books and journals and possibly primary source material, as opposed to material from the internet.

### **Graduate Honor Code**

The tenets of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced in this course, and all assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the Graduate Honor Code as outlined in the 2006-2007 Graduate Catalog. For more information on the Graduate Honor Code, please refer to the GHS Constitution, located online at <http://fbox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor>. Please contact the instructor immediately if you have questions.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students with special needs or circumstances are encouraged to meet with the instructor after the first class or a.s.a.p. Please do not wait until later in the semester. In all cases, please feel free to contact the instructor, should you have any questions.

### **1. Introduction (August 22)**

Professors; Heike Mayer and Elizabeth Morton

- Overview of course and student interests
- UAP requirements and expectations for Practicum and Major Paper; differences between the two
- Pros and cons of a client-based Capstone project
- Cutting edge issues in economic development

### **2. Public Policy and Environmental Planning Issues (Sept. 19)**

Professors: Kris Wernstedt, Joe Schilling

- Analyzing and writing about the policy-making process in general
- Cutting edge issues in environmental/land use policy and planning
- Writing strategies in environmental/land use policy and planning

#### Assignment:

Bring a proposal for your final project

Also, please remember to bring your general research interests and I will forward them to our librarian, Kelly Jeon.

### **3. Using the Virginia Tech Library and Online Resources (October 3)**

Kelly Jeon has agreed to offer a session specifically geared toward the interests of students enrolled in the course. Students will submit a brief statement of their interests to Kelly ahead of time, due September 19.

### **4. Real Estate Development and Demography (October 10)**

Professor: Rob Lang

- Analyzing and writing about development, growth and demography
- Cutting edge issues in development and demography
- Various forms of professional writing (policy memos, articles, etc.)

### **5. Urban Design and Landscapes (November 7)**

Professors: Shelley Mastran, Elizabeth Morton

- Cutting edge issues in urban design and landscapes
- Analyzing and writing about the built environment, design and landscapes
- Interpreting and writing about planning documents
- Basic writing standards and the UAP style manual

### **6. Wrap Up and Student Presentations (December 5)**