

Course Syllabus  
University of Kansas  
School of Public Affairs and Administration  
Urban Planning Program  
Fall 2022



## UBPL 741: Professional Public Service Careers and You

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### **Instructor:**

Ward Lyles, Associate Professor  
OFFICE: Snow 215  
COURSE MEETING: Snow 201 MW 1:00 to 2:15  
EMAIL: wardlyles@ku.edu  
OFFICE HOURS: *set up by email (available by Zoom, phone or in person as is safe)*

### **Course Summary:**

Planners, public administrators, engineers, social workers, and other public service professionals regularly face complicated and messy problems as they help their communities become more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable and compassionate.

Vexing public challenges like pandemics and climate change range in scale from global to local. Professionals, particularly those serving the public, aim to address these problems in the context of broad systemic issues like inequality, colonialism, environmental degradation, racism, and sexism, all in the context of relationships between people, the natural world, and the built environment.

If we have any chance of addressing these “wicked problems,” we must grapple with our differences in the context of power and tribalism (mainly group-level phenomena), as well as biases and emotions (mainly individual-level phenomena). Each of us has different identities, experiences, knowledge, feelings and values.

A first challenge in graduate education is to explore the interaction of ourselves, our profession and our society. This course – always a work in progress as I evolve in my own personal and professional development – is designed to foster your own exploration and evolution. You will learn new things, some theories, some methods, and some ‘facts,’ but if we do it right what you will learn most about is yourself and your personal and professional trajectory.

### **Fall 2022 Note – Learning During COVID**

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I could write so much here. And if I focused on specific facts or plans, in all likelihood what I write would be out of date tomorrow. So, here’s a few broad comments:

- Although we hope to be in person consistently this semester, in reality the \*next\* variant may make it turn out differently! Pretending otherwise does us all a disservice. Adaptation will be constant.
- I disagree with many of the choices being made by leaders at all levels, including at KU. We will do our best within the situation we find ourselves in.
- I will do everything in my power to have this course be a refreshing and welcome part of your life, not an additional stressor or burden.
- I am genuinely open to any thoughts or suggestion or feedback you have along the way on how we can make this course work for you.
- Learning is the main goal for this course. Caring for ourselves and others is a close second.
- Communication will be key. Be in touch early and often.

## Learning Beyond COVID

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I study societal failures to develop policies and plans to reduce risks from disasters and climate change. My partner is a school social worker who tries to reduce children's suffering, most of which results from bad decisions by adults in their lives. We are tons of fun when we debrief about our days!

If one thing is true above all else, it's that whoever is most vulnerable/oppressed in society will suffer first, most, and recover slowest and least. Disaster impacts mostly are a product of choices made in society, not bad luck. That has true the last few years with COVID. It is true now and moving forward with climate change.

Part of our field's mission is to break this systemic problem. I believe a key part of our work is bring equity and compassion more and more to the center of the field's education and practice.

## A Brief Note on My Teaching Philosophy

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All my teaching and mentoring extends from a desire to engage you in your professional and personal development. I structure my courses to engage you with academic content, with your peers, with the world beyond campus, with me as instructor, and with your own personality, values, and approach to learning and action.

I firmly believe – and have experienced in the classroom and online – students learn more deeply through active learning in a respectful environment that challenges everyone to engage socially and emotionally, as well as intellectually. I also firmly believe each student enters a course as a complex, unique person with different experiences, skills, and personalities – each student is so much more than a receptacle to be filled with planning knowledge. As such, I aim to function more as a learning guide and companion and less as a source of information.

I am in the process of continually learning about issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). I have participated in a year-long Diversity Scholars Faculty workgroup through the Center of Teaching Excellence (CTE), have completed KU's Safe Zone training around gender and sexual diversity, and regularly participate in continuing education activities related to teaching and mentoring through CTE. I aim to bring what I learn to my work with you.

## Learning Goals and Objectives

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### Learning Goals:

The primary goal of this course is to help all participants dedicate time, thought, and feeling to exploring the interplay between:

- a) your own identities, thoughts, feelings, and body and being a public service professional;
- b) professional ethics and norms, with particular attention to equity and compassion;
- c) applied research thinking and methods; and
- d) serving the public in difficult contexts;

### Learning Objectives:

Upon completing UBPL 741 I will be able to:

1. Articulate (even if only to myself) how my own identities, thoughts, feeling, and body shape and are shaped by public service career;
2. Reflect on and engage with the challenges associated with fostering and facilitating relationships in diverse communities;
3. Articulate and critically consider the purposes and ethics around applied research in public service;
4. Apply research methods concepts and techniques to solve applied planning problems;
5. Analyze planning data, decisions, and processes using research methods concepts and techniques; and
6. Communicate applied research analysis to professional and public audiences

## Course Modules

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The course is structured around six main modules, each of which corresponds to the six learning objectives. The modules, each of which will take about 2 weeks of the semester, are:

1. Reflection and professional practice (Weeks 2-3)
2. Approaching relationships with compassion (Weeks 4-5)
3. Logic and ethics in asking applied research questions (Weeks 6-7)
4. Critiquing and designing applied research projects (Weeks 8-9)
5. Getting and analyzing data responsibly (Weeks 10-11)
6. Communicating applied research and applied research critiques (Weeks 12-13)

For each module there is a folder in Blackboard under Course Documents, including:

- A reading guide to help you focus on the key concepts in each reading;
- PDFs of the readings
- Materials for exercises we'll do for the module
- Extra materials to deepen your learning as you want.

## Logistical Information

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### Readings

There is no required textbook. All readings are available through the course blackboard page.

### Location and Timing

I am so eager to be back in person and interacting with students other than over Zoom! However, I have designed the course so that we can complete the course all in person, back and forth between in person and online, or (hopefully not) all online if something spins out of control in our community.

I can envision five reasons we might have to move to online instead of in person:

1. I become infected with COVID and/or have to quarantine. In this situation, I will teach from home unless I am too sick to do so and will return to in-person teaching as soon as is safe.
2. One of my family members becomes sick or has to quarantine. In this situation, I will teach from home unless I have to take care of a sick child or partner and will return to in-person teaching as soon as is safe.
3. Enough of you students are having to quarantine at the same time (or one after another) that the only fair thing to do is to shift online. We will return to in-person teaching as soon as is safe and practical.
4. Enough of you students share with me that you feel unsafe coming to class and/or campus. We will return to in-person teaching as soon as is safe and practical.
5. University or public health officials indicate that we cannot safely meet in person, as occurred in the spring 2020 semester.

My plan is for us to be in person and masked, but if we have to shift to online formats, I will:

- Host online Zoom or Teams meetings each week if students are interested. Access information to be provided on Blackboard;
- As safety allows, be available for socially-distanced ‘front yard’ office hours at my house or on campus. These can be set up by email.

### Daily and Weekly Schedule

In the days and weeks ahead, I will post the course schedule on Blackboard in a document I keep as up-to-date and current as possible.

***Here’s what will NOT change barring something really unforeseen:***

- Use of Canvas as the main platform. You should have access already.
- Use of email as the main form of communication. Again, wardlyles@ku.edu
- All assignments including the final project; this includes the main instructions and the due dates. See assignments tab on Canvas for instructions and due dates.

***Here’s what may change:***

- Some of the weekly readings and weekly ungraded assignments
- My availability
- Anything else really ...

## Course Climate and Pedagogy

### Climate

Course climate refers to the shared experience of students and instructors in the classroom and online. A positive course climate can greatly enhance learning; a negative course climate can constrain, impede, or even undermine learning. My goals for the climate in this course are shown in the figure below. Creating this type of climate during a pandemic will be a challenge, especially if we have to go back and forth between in person and online. But we'll figure it out together.



### Pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the teaching techniques used to support learning. The most common pedagogy historically is lecturing, typically the one-way transfer of knowledge from instructor to student. I rarely lecture (in person or online) because it is too passive for the students. With each year more evidence accumulates that active learning – you, the student doing the work of learning – is more effective. There are lots of active learning pedagogies; some are obvious like science labs or art studios. In planning, we can draw on lots of active learning pedagogies.

For my in-person classes the pedagogy I draw from most heavily is based on the principles of Team-Based Learning (TBL), which is an approach to collaborative learning that motivates students to hold themselves and each other accountable. TBL shifts the focus of course time from the instructor conveying course concepts (lectures transmitting information one-way) to the **application of course concepts by individuals and student learning teams** (active learning exercises and projects).

#### To foster active learning this semester, I plan to:

- Focus your time on readings, exercises, and assignments that connect to the ‘real-world.’
- Use tried-and-true TBL activities in-class and adapt them for online as needed (fortunately last year I was able to get some practice making these adaptations).
- Provide as much engaging content as possible – links to podcasts, videos, news articles, etc. – to bring the course material to life.

## Grading

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**In short: to best of your mental ability, after so many years in an educational system that conditions students to chase points, please FORGET ABOUT GRADES for this class. If you need more context, please read on:**

My philosophy on grades evolves over time. Here are a few thoughts, all of which COVID only served to amplify:

- I reject the widespread assumption that students will do their best work if they are motivated/anxious about getting good/bad grades. For the types of higher order thinking we seek to foster in undergraduate and graduate education, I think fear-based grading systems actually serve to inhibit learning, especially risk taking!
- I work on the principles of respect and trust and expect the same in return. I respect you and your classmates as self-motivated learners and trust that you will do your best and be honest.
- I assume that some students, perhaps most of you, will have other things in life during the semester that complicate learning, such as work or health or family issues. Those eventualities should not result in grade penalties or all grades will serve to do in the long run is reinforce system of privilege and oppression.
- ‘Success’ for me is based on your learning (and my own for that matter), which means we must recognize that not everyone enters (or leaves) the semester at the same point.

My practical grading evolves over time as well. Here’s the nuts and bolts.

- I have a ‘grading’ rubric posted on Blackboard. Instead of the traditional 0% to 100% scale or A-F scale, it instead focuses on the quality of the work from seasoned professional quality to redo. I’ve sought to give clear explanations that you can use in self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and interpreting my feedback.
- If you do the work in the class to the best of your ability, your final grade for GPA purposes will be an A. From past years’ experience this category includes almost everyone.
- If you cannot do the work in the class to the best of your ability – and you keep me informed of your challenges (not the details necessarily, but the need for extra time or accommodations) – then we can figure out whether you need an Incomplete for GPA purposes. From past years’ experience this category includes a student or two from time to time.
- If you do not complete the work, are dishonest (cheat), fail to meet basic expectations in terms of participation, and/or fail to communicate, you run the risk of getting a grade between B and F for GPA purposes. I anticipate this C-D-F range of this category will include no students, but I hold it open in case someone is truly negligent.

## Additional Statements and Resources

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Here you will find a lot of useful information about resources at the University of Kansas that can greatly enhance your learning experience here at KU. These resources range from Counseling and Psychological Services to The Writing Center to the Academic Access and Achievement Center. Brief descriptions of the resources, their services, and their contact information are included. Please look over the list of resources. If you ever have any questions about one of the resources, please do not hesitate to ask me!

### **Religious Holidays**

If any scheduled assignment or exam conflicts with a mandated religious observance, a student should contact me immediately to arrange a make-up assignment or exam on a mutually acceptable date.

### **Incompletes**

The Faculty Handbook (F-6) outlines the Grade of Incomplete in the following way: “The Grade of I should not be used when a definite grade can be assigned for the work done. It shall not be given for the work of a student in any course except to indicate that some part of the work has, for good reason, not been done, while the rest has been satisfactorily completed” (emphasis added).

### **Students with Learning Accommodations**

Any student who has a disability that may prevent the fullest expression of abilities should contact me personally as soon as possible so that we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate the educational opportunity.

**KU Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)** – CAPS can help students with issues related to adjusting to college and other psychological, interpersonal, and family problems. Individual and group sessions are available. You can find more information at <https://caps.ku.edu/> Phone is 785-864-2277 and hours are M, W, F 8-5 and T, H 8-6. CAPS is located in Watkins Memorial Health Center

**KU Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA)** – OMA provides direction and services for current and prospective students from underrepresented populations. In addition, through collaborative partnerships it offers diversity education programs that foster inclusive learning environments *for all students*. OMA’s programs and services enhance the retention of successful matriculation of students, while supporting their academic and personal development. You can find more information at: <https://oma.ku.edu/about> Phone is 785-864-4350 OMA is located in the Sabatini Multicultural Resources Center next to the Union.

**KU Academic Access and Achievement Center (AAAC)** – AAAC offers many services and programs to assist students in their academic success and to enhance their collegiate experience at KU. Choose from learning strategy consultations, group workshops or general or course-specific academic assistance, by appointment or on a walk-in basis. Feel free to talk with AAAC and ask for information or direction about academic and personal issues. You can find more information at: <https://achievement.ku.edu/> Phone is 785-864-4064 The AAAC is located in Rm 22 Strong Hall.

**KU Public Safety** – Public safety is dedicated to providing a safe and secure environment for the thousands of students, faculty, staff and visitors that are on campus each day. Public Safety’s website (<https://publicsafety.ku.edu/>) contains practical information that can protect you from becoming a victim of a crime, help you recognize and report suspicious activity, and guide you in the event of an emergency.

**KU Emily Taylor Center for Women & Gender Equity (ETC)** – The ETC provides leadership and advocacy in promoting gender equity and challenge gender-related barriers that impede full access, inclusion, and success. The ETC provides services, assistance, advocacy and support to campus community members of all genders. We also provide consultation, information and resources to Edwards and KUMC campus members, parents of KU students and the community by request. Appointments are recommended, but not necessary. Services are private. In situations involving discrimination and violations of Title IX, ETC staff report information to campus authorities. Center programs and facilities are also

accessible to individuals with disabilities. For those requesting accommodations, please contact KU [Student Access Services](#) at 785-864-4064 or [achieve@ku.edu](mailto:achieve@ku.edu). The ETC is located in 4024 Wescoe Hall

**KU Writing Center** - The Writing Center offers a variety of ways for students and members of the community to get feedback on their writing. It offers face-to-face consultations, online appointments, and an eTutoring appointments. Information regarding each type of appointment and a tool for scheduling can be found at <http://writing.ku.edu>/ The Writing Center has multiple locations on campus.

**KU Student Involvement & Leadership Center (SILC)** – SILC prepares students to become contributing members of society by providing meaningful co-curricular experiences. **SILC** is responsible for coordinating registered university organizations and providing leadership education experiences for students in addition to providing programs and services to specific target populations including fraternity/sorority members, non-traditional students, and students of all gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations. More information can be found at <https://silc.ku.edu/>. A notable program of SILC is the Safe Zone Training, which aims to reduce homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism on our campus to make KU a safer and freer environment for all members of our community, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. By agreeing to become a Safe Zone ally, the participant agrees to undergo training and to serve as a resource for people seeking clarification on issues of sexuality and gender diversity. SILC is located in the Sabatini Multicultural Resources Center.

**Sexual Assault CARE Coordinator** - Watkins Health Services provides support to victims of sexual and domestic violence. [Merrill Evans](#), LCSW, is our CARE (Campus Assistance, Resource, and Education) Coordinator whose primary role is to coordinate support for individuals (both victim and alleged perpetrators) impacted by sexual violence including incidents of sexual assault, sexual battery, partner violence, dating violence and stalking. The CARE Coordinator is a confidential position and is not required to report incidents to University officials or organizations. If you or someone you know has been affected by any form of sexual violence, please do not hesitate to [contact Merrill](#) or stop by Watkins Health Center Room 2615 during normal business hours. If WHS is closed, the Sexual Trauma & Abuse Care Center is available 24 hours for victim assistance at [785-843-8985](tel:785-843-8985). <https://studenthealth.ku.edu/sexual-assault>

**Sexual Assault Prevention and Education Center (SAPEC)** - SAPEC promotes social change and the elimination of sexual violence through prevention education, inclusive programming, and campus-wide collaboration. SAPEC is located at 116 Carruth O’Leary; Phone 785-864-5879; email: [sapec@ku.edu](mailto:sapec@ku.edu). <http://sapec.ku.edu/>

**Institute of Institutional Opportunity & Access (IOA)** - The Office of Institutional Opportunity and Access (IOA) is responsible for administering the University of Kansas equal opportunity and non-discrimination policies and procedures, as well as, encouraging a campus climate of respect and understanding of all aspects of the human experience. To accomplish these duties, the IOA offers assistance and protective measures to students, faculty, and staff who report acts of harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, sexual violence, and retaliation; provides information about health, safety, advocacy, and support resources for members of the Lawrence and Edwards campuses; performs formal investigations to detect, discontinue, and prevent violations of the Non-Discrimination Policy and Sexual Harassment Policy; and ensures University compliance with state and federal civil rights laws. IOA is located at 153A Carruth-O’Leary; Phone 785-864-6414; email: [ioa@ku.edu](mailto:ioa@ku.edu); <http://ioa.ku.edu/>.

### **Formal KU Policies**

You should be aware of KU’s academic policies, available at the KU policy library: academic. While the policies are numerous, key policies to be aware of include:

Academic Misconduct (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6>),

Final Examination Schedules (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art1sect3>), and

The Grading System (<http://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect2para3>)