SYLLABUS

RPAD 699 Urban Innovation and Creative Problem Solving

SPRING 2018

Wednesdays 4:15 pm-7:55 pm

Held at Albany Law School, Room L211

Professors

- Meghan Cook 518-442-4443 (Rockefeller College, UAlbany) mcook@ctg.albany.edu, CTG 187 Wolf Road, Suite 301, Albany NY Office Hours: By Appointment

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This joint Albany Law School and Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy shared instructional course is focused on developing interdisciplinary approach to addressing urban and community challenges. With the Capital Region Land Bank, the Albany County Land Bank, and the NYS Land Bank Association serving as a “living lab,” students will work in cross-institutional teams to create a long-term, sustainable model for Land Banks in New York State. Students will have the opportunity to identify the public value proposition for multiple stakeholders served by a range of land banks as well as review and assess local laws and statutes that currently govern land bank operations in New York State. Students will make their final presentation at the NYS Land Bank Association Conference in Albany in April. This course, developed in partnership between Albany Law School and The Center for Technology in Government and the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, at the University at Albany, will provide practical and interdisciplinary experiences for students from both institutions.

Students will explore the role of problem solver in the context of addressing blighted and vacant properties in the Capital Region. In it, students will have the opportunity to assess the strategies and tools, advocates, policy, information technologists, and data analysts use to promote social innovation and solve some of the world’s most pressing problems. Students will put the skills they have developed to use in contexts where those skills are most desperately needed. They will also hone additional skills: e.g., the ability to work effectively in groups, run a productive meeting, collaborate on document drafting and production, think creatively to construct elegant solutions to complex problems, “pitch” ideas, and conduct a group presentation.

This semester, this array of skills will be put to use to address a range of problems facing municipalities as a result of abandoned properties and blight. This work will ultimately culminate in a joint oral presentation as well as a written report. It is important to note that teamwork is essential to the success of the semester project. A successful project depends on each member of the team being responsible to their teammates and available for team activities and on each member of the team assuming their “fair share” of the work and responsibility.
Required Texts:

Additional Class Materials:
- All students will be given access to the course website on the Canvas platform. Indications below that an item is on “Canvas” indicates that it will be available on the class site through that platform.

Team Meetings:
- Students will be divided up into interdisciplinary teams and will be required to meet outside of class for one hour.
- Attendance will be taken by the team and submitted through the Canvas site.

Team Projects:
- Teams will come together to prepare an overall report and slideshow on the findings of their group work done in collaboration with the land bank partners.
- Each team will make an oral presentation through which they will present their findings at the NYS Land Bank Conference in Albany, NY in May.

Grading Rubric:
- Forty percent of each student’s final grade will be awarded for his or her contribution to the final report that will be prepared by the students as a team.
- Forty percent of each student’s final grade will be awarded for his or her contribution to the final presentation that will be prepared by the students as a team.
- Twenty percent of each student’s final grade will be awarded for his or her contribution to class discussion and for attendance at the students’ weekly team meetings.

Course Location and Parking:
- All classes will take place at Albany Law School, 80 New Scotland Ave, Albany, NY.
- All students can park in the Senior Lot (right next to the Building). No parking pass needed.
Weekly Assignments: 
January 24, 2017. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND URBAN ENVIRONMENTS AS LIVING LABS

This introductory class will outline the goals of the course and explore problem solving and social innovation as concepts. It will also begin to discuss how to work effectively in teams, pursue stretch goals, and finding motivation.

- Duhigg, Chapters One through Four.
- Joseph William Singer, How to Be a Good Team Member, HARVARD PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHOP TECHNICAL NOTE (2010)(Canvas).

January 31, 2018. HOUSING, URBAN PLANNING, AND BLIGHT

This class will explore the background in housing policy and urban planning, and how blight is affecting our communities.

February 7, 2018. INTRODUCTION TO LAND BANK LEADERS AND PROJECTS

This class will give the class an opportunity to meet with representatives of the government of the City of Albany and City of Schenectady to discussion review the projects we will undertake this semester.


February 14, 2018. SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR INNOVATION AND CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT.

This class explore how to unpack the complexity and work in teams when working to solve the “wicked” problems of government, topics covered will be defining the problem, identifying stakeholders, business process analysis, conducting effective meetings and sessions and work collaboratively as a team.


February 21, 2018.  
**DESIGN THINKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

This class will explore the ways that “design thinking” can inform effective legal advocacy. Students will spend time discussing how they are using design thinking, they will discuss their preliminary project plans and have time for asking questions.

- Duhigg, Chapters Six through Eight.

**ADVOCACY IN THE CONCEPTUAL AGE**

This class will review Dan Pink’s “A Whole New Mind” and discuss ways that what Pink calls the “high touch/high concept” aptitudes can be incorporated into our work.


March 7, 2018.  
**PROJECT CHECK IN AND DISCUSSION. ALSO REVISIT SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR INNOVATION AND CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING**

This class will allow students to present that they are learning so far and revisit some of the techniques they are using to get information for their projects.

March 14, 2018: *SPRING BREAK NO CLASSES*
March 21, 2018. DISCUSSION WITH REGIONAL LEADERS

This class will provide a venue for students to learn about different strategies for addressing vacant properties in the capital region. We will also reserve time at the end of class to discuss the report outline.

March 28, 2018. ORAL ADVOCACY AND DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

In this class, we will begin to prepare for the students to make their research presentations to the city and community leaders.

- Jeff Radel, Preparing an Oral Presentation: Suggestions and Strategies for Scientific and Academic Settings (online tutorial), available at: http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/iradel/Preparing_talks/TalkStrt.html


April 4, 2018. SMALL GROUP WORK ON THE THREE AREAS OF WORKING INCLUDING VALUE PROPOSITION, INNOVATIVE FINANCING, LEGAL REVIEW OF STATUTE

In this class, students show their work in each of the three areas of focus and foster a discussion among the class.

April 11, 2018. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, PAPER, AND PRESENTATIONS

In this class we will review the student report. Students are expected to have read each section of the research project and come to class prepared with constructive comments and suggestions for revisions to all sections. Also draft of the slides are practiced and discussed.
April 18, 2018.  
**DISCUSSION OF PAPER AND PRESENTATIONS**

In this class, students will continue to present parts of the final presentation, share findings and begin to hone their message. We will also discuss any lingering questions about the report.

April, 25 2018.  
**PRACTICE PRESENTATION**

In this class, students will conduct a dry run of their presentation to course instructors and review final edits to the report.

May 2, 2018.  
**PRACTICE PRESENTATION**

In this class, students will continue to present parts of the final presentation, share findings and finalize main messages.

May 9, 2018  
**FINAL PRESENTATION TO LAND BANK LEADERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS**