

COURSE ANNOUNCEMENT
WINTER 2025

URP 502 – U.S. PLANNING INSTITUTIONS AND LAW

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m., 2108 A&AB

Instructor: Professor Richard Norton (rknorton@umich.edu)

Urban and Regional Planning Program / Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning

Please contact the Taubman College Registrar, Stacey Shimones (mesvcs@umich.edu),
if you have difficulty enrolling.

Description:

This course provides a general overview of the legal aspects of urban and regional planning in the U.S., including institutional structures, sources of and limits on legal authority, and traditional and evolving approaches to land use and development control. The course focuses on: (1) the relationships between planning as a public policy-making process and the laws that authorize, implement, and constrain state and local planning initiatives; and (2) public management of the development and use of privately owned land for social and environmental purposes. It does not address in detail public authorities to own and manage public land.

Learning Goals:

By the end of the term, students should be able to:

- Explain the institutional structures that shape planning and land use regulation in the American system, including institutional organization, key constitutional doctrines, key philosophical underpinnings, and key legal doctrines underlying modern land use regulation (e.g., nuisance);
- Explain the relationships between planning and land use regulation in the American system;
- Explain and use analytically basic ‘black-letter’ rules and principles of zoning, subdivision, and related laws;
- Explain and use analytically basic principles of the constitutional protections that temper state and local regulation, including especially due process, equal protection, takings, regulatory takings, and first amendment protections; and
- Explain and discuss historical and philosophical debates surrounding selected issues at the intersection of planning and law in the U.S., including especially issues related to private property, race, exclusionary zoning, sustainable development, and professional responsibility.

Course Requirements:

Course assignments will consist of short written projects (e.g., short answer assignments, case briefs, legal-policy memos) and a final exam.