

URP 537: Climate Adaptation Planning

Fall 2025

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The need for climate adaptation represents a compelling contemporary planning imperative. Climate adaptation planning follows much the same methods and frameworks as does conventional planning, but it addresses a host of new issues with growing urgency. The topics we will focus on for this course include flooding and coastal hazards; heat and drought; wildfire (especially at the urban-wildland interface); and food systems. We will address both ecosystem and human dimensions for each topic, including public health, social vulnerability, and environmental justice concerns.

Learning Goals:

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

- Scope and execute a complex policy and planning evaluation study for a client;
- Explain and work analytically with basic knowledge of planning for adaptation to climate change, focusing on threats related to inland flooding and coastal shoreland risks, heat and drought, catastrophic fire, and food systems;
- Explain and work analytically with climate adaptation approaches and methods, and with the design and application of remedies commonly proposed to address climate threats;
- Apply planning knowledge and methods to a real-world project; and
- Collaborate meaningfully with colleagues on the project team and with the client (instructor) to complete a complex planning and policy-making evaluation study and report.

Course Requirements:

This course will be conducted primarily as an applied studio workshop. The course will first canvas basic concepts regarding climate adaptation planning, and topic-focused teams of students will prepare presentation materials for the class. Depending on student enrollment and the availability of potential clients, students will then either work in teams for a client or clients identified by the instructor, or students will identify cities in the U.S as hypothetical clients (with instructor approval). Student project teams will conduct climate adaptation planning 'audits' of their client communities. Each report will explain the problem, present results from the audit, and make recommendations to the client community on steps it might take to better plan for and adapt to impending impacts from climate change.