

**Regional Planning and Development in the 21st
Century:
An Introduction to Regional Councils:
Their Roles, Responsibilities, Structure,
Management, and Governance**

Offered by

**The Regional Futures Institute
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Introduction:

The regional council movement is over half a century old. Over 500 regional councils and Metropolitan Planning Organizations serve the many diverse regions of the country. We still have trouble recruiting staff that know and understand what regional councils do and new policy officials are often left to “learn by osmosis” from their colleagues and staff.

As currently envisioned, we have created a highly flexible, scalable, fully integrated curriculum that can be accessed by any regional council in the country for use in their local situation. Materials are being developed and prepared that contain a core set of learning objectives, a course syllabus, a master reading list, and suggested lecture outlines.

We also are exploring enhancements that could be offered through organizations including the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy that provide focused learning on one aspect of the regional council practice.

We are exploring ways to partner with a number of existing organizations to insure the highest level of participation and relevant content in an easily accessible framework. (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, American Planning Association, International City Management Association, National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, etc.) The goal would be to provide each regional council and affiliated College or University with the opportunity to harvest a rich mixture of resource materials, tailored to their particular needs.

Course Goals

This course is an introduction to the planning and development issues in the metropolitan and rural regions of the United States. Focusing on the roles and responsibilities of regional councils, the public sector organizations that oversee these areas which perform critical plans and programs at a greater than local sub-state geography. The course will also explore the major issues areas, alternative governance systems, and discuss a framework for a new politics in regions. Drawing from the extensive current research and on-line analytical materials, students will be exposed to and conduct sophisticated profiles of one of the regional councils and the area they serve.

1. Familiarize participants with the current realities of regional areas in the U.S.
2. Define 'governance' and the governance challenges presented in the context of regions in the 21st century.
3. Identify and illuminate sets of regional issues including housing, labor markets, transportation, environment and economic development.

4. Examine possible toolkits for addressing these challenges including community strategic planning, tax base sharing, soft and hard governance strategies and restructuring of government systems.

Next Steps

1. Deploying the curriculum at test sites and creating a feedback mechanism;
2. Identifying other interested parties (SERDI, NEARC – New England—Western GOGS, NADO, etc.);
3. Meeting with APA and ASCP and their various committees;
4. Discussion with ICMA the creation of a “green book” in their series on professional management;
5. Securing foundation support for continuing efforts including fellowships, faculty workshops, and measures of effectiveness;
6. Developing additional materials for faculty use;
7. Creating a network of COG/University partnerships that can be nurtured through connection to a national network;
8. Developing a certificate program for regional council staff who successfully complete courses.

Lecture and Reading Schedule

Each lecture is structured to provide a thematic discussion of issues facing regions in the 21st century AND how regional councils, particularly the one serving the local geography, interact with that issue.

Lecture 1 Overview of Regional Dynamics

- Why regions in the first place?
 - Political Fragmentation
 - Failure to Accommodate Externalities
- History of Regionalism
- Development and Extension of Trolley and Interurban Transit Lines
- Discussion of Various planning Theories
 - Garden Cities
 - City Beautiful
- Integration and planning framework for Open Space
 - Frederick Law Olmstead
 - Charles Eliot
- Burnham Plan for Chicago
- Private Sector Initiatives
 - Regional Plan Association – New York Metropolitan Area
- Federal Initiatives
 - Works Progress Administration
 - National Parks and Forests
 - Flood plain management
 - Water and sewer services
- Rural Initiatives
 - Economic Development
 - Mega regional activities
 - Tennessee Valley Authority
 - Appalachian Regional Commission
 - Soil Conservation Service
 - Farmers Home Administration
- Interstate Highway Act
 - Initial concept
 - History and evolution
- Presentation & Neighborhood Instrumentalism Take Charge
 - Model Cities
 - Urban Development

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 2 History and background of Regional Councils

- Relationship with local governments, e.g., cities and counties
- Relationship with state entities including the Governor's office, Senate and House, state agencies
- Relationship with various federal agencies/programs

- Roles for Regional Councils in:
 - Emergency management planning; if appropriate, implementation
 - Transportation planning
 - Economic development planning
 - Tourism
 - Aging services
 - Workforce investment planning/management of programs
 - Water planning
 - Regional planning
 - Geographic Information Systems for both rural communities and regional applications
 - Other roles that RPOs may play in some states whether it be urban, rural, or non-metro

- Regional Program Management, Examples of Regional Councils that manage such things as:
 - Transportation systems
 - Solid waste landfills
 - Law enforcement and public safety training
 - Direct service for elderly, including the management and operation of senior citizen centers, senior transportation, etc.
 - Coordinated rural transportation, not only planning but program operation

- Analysis/Comparison of Regional Councils and Rural Non-Metro and Metro Areas and in some cases Regional Councils that have all those designations within their respective regional boundaries.

- Presentation of the boundaries of the RPOs in various states on a national map – it also would be broken down into a catalog of each state and their Regional Council boundaries

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 3. Regional Politics - City/County/Suburban/Exurban (State Influence)

- Political Theories
 - Growth Machine – Harvey Molotch
 - Metropolitcs – Myron Orfield
 - Regime Theory – Clarence Stone
 - Unitary Interest – Paul Petersen
- Constituency Theory
 - Federalism in the U.S. Constitution deals with Federal and State relationships
 - Whose region is it?
 - Is there a governance mechanism that is built to serve this constituency?
 - Where is the authority derived?
 - How is legitimacy established?
- Conflict Theory
 - What are the conflicts?
 - Central City dominance/decline/resurgence
 - Suburbanization
 - Role (or lack thereof) of existing county structures
 - Urban/Rural Continuum – exurban development
 - Agriculture
 - Land Resources
 - Natural resource development/protection
 - System Failures
 - Equity
 - Efficiency
 - How are they articulated?
 - Is there a conflict resolution mechanism?
- Interest Groups
 - What is the regional interest?
 - How is it articulated
 - Are there groups organized to respond?
- Capacity of Regional Councils to meet these challenges?
 - Authority
 - Legitimacy
- Roles of other players
 - State as the regional broker
 - Special Districts
 - Business and civic organizations

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 4 Regional Infrastructure Systems

- Transportation
 - Highway System Planning
 - Federal participation
 - Roles of States
 - Roles of local jurisdictions
 - Interurban transit systems
 - Private sector role in creation
 - Public intervention
 - Federal participation
 - Structure
 - Finance
 - Rail
 - Intercity Passenger
 - Regional Passenger Service
 - Freight
 - Air
 - Passenger
 - National and International Service
 - Local and Regional Service
 - Freight
 - General Aviation
- Water Supply
 - Sources
 - Ownership
 - Management
 - Protection
 - Public Systems
 - Ownership
 - Finance
 - Supply constraints
 - Quality constraints
 - Expansion capacity
 - Private systems
 - Utilities
 - On-site private wells
 - Residential constraints
 - Commercial/Industrial constraints
- Waste Water Management
 - Public Systems
 - Ownership
 - Finance
 - Oversight
 - Regulatory Framework
 - Residential Treatment Options
 - Public sewer

- Private on-site management
 - Industrial Treatment
 - Oversight
- Energy
 - Supply
 - Public
 - Private
 - Regulation
 - Oversight
 - Availability
 - Capacity
 - Preparedness
 - Price
 - Demand Management
 - Voluntary
 - Mandatory
 - Facility Siting
- Communication Infrastructure
 - Oversight
 - Management
 - Facility Siting
 - Supply and Demand Constraints
 - Landline
 - Broadband
 - Cable
 - Wireless
- Other Systems
 - Solid Waste
 - Hazardous Waste
 - Radioactive waste

Suggested Readings and Websites

Lecture 5. Transportation, MPOs - Federal Presence & State Roles

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 6. Economics of Regions & Regions in the Global Market Place

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 7. Social Equity - Race Class & Poverty

- Environmental Justice
- Work Force Development
- Housing
- Social, Health Care Safety Net

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 8. Green Infrastructure

- Watershed Planning
- Regional Biodiversity
- Trails/Greenways/Recreation

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 9. Using Data & New Technology Tools for Decision Making

- Census
- Forecasting
- GIS
- Web Tools

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 10. New Regional Perspective on Land Use

- Smart Growth
- Sustainable Development
- TOD
- New Urbanism
- LEED-ND

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 11. New Challenges, Partnerships, New Directions

- New Regional Advocates
- Emergency Preparedness
- New Demographics
- Safety
- Mega-Regions

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Lecture 12. Class Project

Miscellaneous Course Suggestions

Proposed Texts

See comprehensive bibliography and assorted articles and websites mentioned in the syllabus.

Major Assignments

- ***Complete a case study on a significant issue area in regions.***

This course explores the complexities of 21st century regional planning and development by focusing on the public sector organizations that have been created to serve these regions around the country. Students would be assigned to teams during the first week of class. Each team will explore one regional issue in-depth. Issues will include transportation, economic development, environmental protection, housing, security and disaster mitigation, and other regional planning and development issues. They will explore this issue with the regional council(s) serving the local area and offer specific policy analysis, program/project proposals, evaluation mechanisms, and other recommendations on actions to be taken to

- ***Write a major paper on a different region of the country.***

Final papers are built on research on a region outside of the local area. Students develop an analysis of critical issues facing that region. Insights from this research will assist both the individual student and the case team in understanding how similar issues are handled in other parts of the state and the country.

Content Enhancements:

- ***Success Stories from all three categories – urban, non-metro, and regional.*** These would be real life and existing working examples of successful regional program operations that have been requested by the local governments which would include some of the program services mentioned above.
- ***Catalog Resources and Research Papers Regarding Regional Councils.*** This information would be an excellent resource for those who want to either write their thesis about regional planning organizations or some aspect of their operations, success, or lack thereof, and other aspects about RPOs that many papers have addressed over the years. The end result of this effort would be the title and name of the article/paper, the author, date of publication, and subject.
- ***Encourage internship by MRCP/MPA students in their second year to work for an Regional Council*** and be required to produce a paper about their experience.

- ***Encourage the universities/colleges that have MRCP/MPA programs to get students to write their thesis about various aspects of Regional Councils*** and when published, have those thesis entered into the inventory of documents about Regional Councils. (Hopefully we could secure some kind of foundation or other funding that could offset the costs of the student's internship which may last a semester – this would be important since many of the rural Regional Councils would most likely not have sufficient funding to underwrite the internship costs, which generally would be approximately \$2,000.)

- ***Development of Regional Council textbook?***