

# ENVS 6885: Fundamentals of Climate Action Planning for Cities

## Lolita K. Jackson

### Fall 2025

Course Instructor: Lolita K. Jackson [lolitaj@upenn.edu](mailto:lolitaj@upenn.edu)

#### Classroom and Meeting Times:

**Classroom TBD**

Mondays 5:15PM - 8:00PM

You may also join via Zoom using links on Canvas Navigation bar

#### Course Site

We will use Canvas as the central place to find assignments, readings, recordings, etc. You will upload all assignments to Canvas. Plan to spend some time looking over the site so you understand how it is organized and where to find important class information.

#### To communicate with your instructor, you can:

- Ask a question during class
- Post on the FAQ board
- E-mail directly at the address above - please include ENVS 6885 in the subject line
- **Office Hours:** Mondays 2:30-4:00 [please e-mail to sign up for an appointment as walk-ins are not accepted]

#### Course Objectives

At the end of the course you should expect to be able to:

- Conduct and facilitate writing a city's climate action plan, both its content and structure.

- Understand how cities engage with various internal and external stakeholders and peer cities
- Identify the various levels of climate diplomacy and link the importance to the climate action planning process for a city
- Be qualified to apply to work with a city on their climate planning process!

## Text

There are no required texts for this course, however, the book [Climate Action Planning: A Guide to Creating Low Carbon, Resilient Communities](#) will be referred to throughout the semester, and I suggest picking up a copy as a personal reference manual after the course is finished. We will primarily be reading articles and chapters of climate and resilience plans provided on Canvas each week.

## Schedule of Topics & Assignments

### Week 1: September 8 Course Introduction - The Politics of Climate

This week we will discuss the structure of the course and introduce ourselves to one another. We will have a framing discussion and provide an overview of various rationales for city climate action.

#### Objectives

- Understand the differences between city leadership structures [city manager, city council with weak mayor, strong mayor] and the impacts on city to city engagement
- Understand global factors cities consider when thinking about their climate challenges and actions they should address
- Learn the roles of the UN, federal government, organized labor, state government and the private sector
- Learn the local political drivers of climate planning - legislative mandates versus city executive

#### Assignments

- Read articles and watch videos assigned on canvas
- Group work
- Class Discussion

## Week 2: September 15 Types of Plans

Guest speaker Grant Ervin, the former Chief Resilience Officer for the city of Pittsburgh, will walk us through the planning process for the Pittsburgh resilience strategy, OnePGH, and discuss how the various sectors of the city - business, higher education, philanthropy, medical - came together in its formation. Pittsburgh is world renown for punching above it's weight globally, and he will discuss how the plan enhanced Pittsburgh's role in global discussions. We will also be joined by Anne Papageorge, Penn SVP for Facilities & Real Estate, to discuss Penn's sustainability and renewable energy projects and plans.

### Objectives

- Learn about the assignment of plan processes from climate networks such as C40 and 100 Resilient Cities/Resilient Cities Network
- Understand the differences between a sustainability plan, resilience plan, and an overall city plan.
- Explain how incorporation of environmental justice and economic growth elements change plan structure

### Assignment

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## Week 3: September 22 Plan Architecture

Guest lecturer Marc Ricks, former Chief Operating Officer of the NYC Special Initiative for Rebuilding & Resiliency, will discuss the framework and resources necessary to produce a successful climate plan. Marc has held senior roles in the development of a number of NYC sustainability and resilience strategies and will discuss the process. **Note: this class will be virtual due to NY Climate Week.**

### Objectives

- Understand the resources necessary to construct a city climate plan:
  - Personnel
  - Financial
  - Seconding vs. hiring staff
  - Obtaining senior level cooperation/buy in
  - Timeline
  - Mayoral engagement
- Learn how plans incorporate existing single topic plans [housing, transportation, jobs/workforce]

## **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 4: September 29 Blinding You With Science**

This class will go through a case study of how NYC climate plans are based on science and data.

## **Objectives**

- Learn about the NYC Panel on Climate Change and understand its role in climate planning
- Understand the role of FEMA maps in city climate adaptation planning
- Synthesize how to incorporate scientists into the mix of stakeholders necessary for successful marketing of the plan after it is published

## **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 5: October 6 Public Engagement**

Guest lecturer Christine Knapp, former Director of the Philadelphia Office of Sustainability and current Program Manager at the US Department of Energy, will discuss ways other sectors – private, philanthropy, community advocates, higher education, etc. - are brought into climate planning and implementation, as well as Philadelphia's approach to climate action planning in general.

## **Objectives**

- Understand how the public, private, non-profit and philanthropic sectors are engaged in plan formation and execution
- Learn public engagement techniques
- Identify how city demographics affect public engagement
- Explain how to put together an engagement strategy for a climate plan

## **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas

- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 6: October 13 Data & Tracking**

Guest lecturer Dan Steinberg, Director of the NYC Mayor's Office of Operations, will discuss the case study of how NYC collects data that is used for climate planning, and how initiatives and goals are tracked over time

### **Objectives**

- Learn preparatory data collection that is needed before a plan commences
- Understand how to design metrics for a plan
- Describe various methods that can be employed for tracking data

### **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 7: October 20 The Role of Climate Networks**

Guest lecturers Laura Jay, Deputy Director of Climate Mayors, and Kale Roberts, Director of City Engagement of ICLEI, will discuss the important role of city climate networks in climate action planning for cities.

### **Objectives**

- Learn what the major climate and city networks are and their histories [C40, ICLEI, 100 Resilient Cities, Resilient Cities Network, UCLG, US Conference of Mayors, Climate Mayors]
- Understand the role of climate networks in information sharing, goal setting and technical assistance for cities with more limited capacity and means
- Explain why these networks are important to city leaders in their climate work

### **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## Week 8: October 27 Implementation Structure

Guest lecturer Dan Zarrilli, former NYC Chief Climate Officer, will discuss how city climate plans get implemented. Elizabeth Yee C'98, Executive Vice President of the Rockefeller Foundation and former Vice President of 100 Resilient Cities will also speak about her roles in climate action.

### Objectives

- Identify how milestones and updates are tracked and recorded from a personnel standpoint
- Describe the process for annual plan updates and the timelines necessary

### Assignments

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## Week 9: November 3 Killing With Kindness

Guest lecturer Ariella Maron, Executive Director of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission [metro Philadelphia region], will discuss the importance of involving regional entities and neighboring cities and towns in the climate planning process for a city. **Note: final project groups will be assigned this week for the December 8th presentations.**

### Objectives

- Understand the importance of engaging with metro level stakeholders [regional authorities, transit, other cities in the conurbation]
- Learn the convening mechanism that takes place during city climate planning processes
- Describe the framework necessary for effective engagement with external governmental entities you do not control

### Assignments

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 10: November 10 Group Meetings**

Guest lecturer Lia Cairone, the NYC Mayor's Office of Management and Budget Director of Sustainability & Resiliency, will discuss how NYC climate policies are funded through the NYC budget and other sources. Class will be led by a guest lecturer as instructor will be at COP30.

### **Objectives**

- Understand the process of budgeting for specific projects from local, state and federal dollars
- Learn the history of climate budgeting globally and how other cities such as San Francisco and Oslo embarked on doing so.

### **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 11: November 17 Funding Climate Plans**

There will be no lecture this week, and instead you will have time to gather with your final project groups to work on the project.

## **Week 12: November 24 City to City - Sharing Best Practices**

Guest lecturer Michael Nutter W'79, former Mayor of Philadelphia and former President of the US Conference of Mayors, will speak about how and why cities share information and best practices, and the mechanisms through which they do so.

### **Objectives**

- Learn methods through which city leaders share information with one another
- Identify ways that mayors position climate policy among other city priorities
- Describe the affinities that bring cities together - programs such as Sister Cities, climate and other networks, size, common geography or climate situation, etc.

### **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 13: December 1 International Climate Diplomacy**

Guest lecturer Dr. Michael Weisberg, advisor to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Nairobi Work Programme and climate advisor to the Republic of Maldives, will discuss COP negotiations, and the role of subnational actors such as cities in the COP process. Both the instructor and the guest lecturer will have just returned from COP30 and will share their experiences.

### **Objectives**

- Understand the basics of COP - its history, the negotiation process, the role of cities
- Describe the differences between zones and side events, and how cities are engaged in each
- Identify ways that city leadership engages in international diplomacy

### **Assignments**

- Read plan excerpts and articles assigned on Canvas
- Group work
- Class discussion

## **Week 14: December 8 Putting Together A Plan - Group Presentations**

The final week of class the preassigned teams will each make a 15 minute presentation providing an executive summary of a sample climate plan. The presentation must include information on how the data would be collected, resources gathered, stakeholders engaged, funding examples and networks that entity would join to share best practices and gain information. The presentation can incorporate video, slides and other interactive elements. The information will be the basis of a final paper as well.

## **Class Participation**

Participation is a major component of this class, and you can do so in various ways, all of which will count toward your evaluation:

- In class discussions/participation
- Individual 10-15 minute presentation
- Final project group presentation
- Posting on discussion boards
- Conversation with instructor during office hours and written communication

Please have respect for the classroom space -- each student should help create an environment where other students can learn. So don't 'hog the mic'. This will be considered as part of your



evaluation as well, as respect for colleagues is an important skill and trait to have when working with a team.

## Attendance Policy

Read before class, arrive on time, and come prepared to ask questions. Class attendance is required. Excused absences require documentation/discussion/notification. If you need to miss class, please alert me [the instructor]. In cases of emergency or extended absence, you are responsible for notifying me about your circumstance so we can help you determine your ability to complete the course. If you need to leave class early, please let me know at the beginning of class.

In person attendance at lectures is not mandatory - if you are feeling at all sick or displaying any COVID-19 related symptoms, please be considerate of your classmates and stay home. Students who cannot attend the in-person lecture can join the class via Zoom. **Please note the following: September 22rd will be online only, and November 17th there is no class so groups can work on their final projects together.**

## Course Grades

A+ 97-100	C+ 77-79.9
A 93-96.99	C 73-76.99
A- 90-92.99	C- 70-72.99
B+ 87-89.99	D+ 67-69.99
B 83-86.99	D 63-66.99
B- 80-82.99	D- 60-62.99
	F Below 60

## Grade Distribution

Assignment	Points	Due Date[s]
Quiz #1	30	Oct 6
Quiz #2	70	Nov 24

Group Participation	100	Ongoing
Individual Presentation	100	To Be Assigned
Group Final Presentation	100	Dec 8
Written Report	100	Dec 15

## Late Assignment Policy

Makeup quizzes and individual presentations will be given without penalty ONLY in the event of an excused absence when the instructor has been notified beforehand. Acceptable excuses for missing an examination or quiz are death in the family, serious illness, court appearance, or personal crisis. Unexcused absences from quizzes or presentations will result in significant point penalties. A student may take no more than one penalty-free makeup assessment (i.e., quiz or presentation) per semester. The final group presentation will not be made up [the rest of the group will still present], and unexcused absence from that session will result in all individually awarded points forfeited for that assignment.

## Academic Integrity

Since the University is an academic community, its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Essential to the success of this educational mission is a commitment to the principles of academic integrity. Every member of the University community is responsible for upholding the highest standards of honesty at all times. Students, as members of the community, are also responsible for adhering to the principles and spirit of the Penn Code of Academic Integrity. More details about this policy can be found online at <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/>

## University Services

**Penn Libraries:** Students can access all online resources available at the University of Pennsylvania by using the website [www.library.upenn.edu/](http://www.library.upenn.edu/) and logging in with their PennKey and password. Students wishing to visit the Library in person and borrow books will need a PennID card.

**Student Disability Services (SDS):** Although the self-identification process is confidential and completely voluntary, it is required for those requesting accommodation. Student Disability Services (SDS) can be reached by phone at 215.573.9235, by TDD at 215.746.6320 or online at [https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/contact\\_us.php](https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/contact_us.php).

## Add/Drop Period

Students may drop a class before the end of the first two weeks of the semester by using Path at Penn. Please see the LPS Academic Calendar for relevant dates and links (<https://www.lps.upenn.edu/about/academic-calendar>). Failure to attend/participate in a course does not automatically result in being dropped from the course. Courses that are dropped will no longer appear on a student's transcript. <https://www.sas.upenn.edu/lps/lps-online/form/course-withdrawal>

## Withdrawing From a Course

Students may withdraw from a course through the sixth week of the semester with no notation on the transcript and half financial obligation by filling out a late drop form and with the permission of the instructor and program director, and until the end of the twelfth week of the semester with full financial obligation by submitting the withdrawal form and gaining permission from the instructor and program director.