

LAA 4357 Fifth Year Independent Project Seminar

Fall Semester 2014

Course Instructor
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Class meeting times: TBD

Credits: 2

Studio #316

General

This fall seminar assists students in the development and presentation of a proposal and preliminary schedule/organization for the LAA 4358 Fifth Year Independent Project/Senior Capstone (which occurs the following spring semester). To design a viable proposal with reasonable schedule/organization, it is imperative to also identify and partially complete the initial research and most critical analysis work. The seminar also helps the student craft the forthcoming spring semester Capstone to best provide individual learning experiences and successful completion of LAA 4358.

Unlike most studio projects to date, the Senior Capstone is an independent project in which the student is responsible for not only the implementation of the project, but as importantly, the definition of the project and its organization.

To put it another way, the purpose of this seminar is to help you define and organize a reasonable project for your Capstone semester, thus helping to ensure you graduate on time. Plus, this is your chance to do the things you always wanted to do, but maybe never had the chance to within the required curriculum.

Expectations upon Entering the Course

1. Completion of all required coursework up through the 4th year
2. Potential project(s) in hand, along with basic information such as preliminary description/goal of project and the most important inventory information (such as base information, preliminary program, etc) as appropriate for the project type and focus. This was discussed several times with your class in the prior spring semester.

If you do not have these two issues under control, please see the instructor after the first class.

Course Goals and Objectives

The first educational goal is to design an individual project that meets personal and professional goals. Within this are important objectives for the fall:

- a) identify and describe an educational challenge and opportunity for yourself.
- b) learn to analyze situations and strategize solutions to challenging situations independently.

The second educational goal of the seminar is to organize and communicate your goals and process. This is through a clear, well-organized stand-alone proposal that presents reasonable and appropriate **scope of work, schedule/critical path, methodologies, and anticipated products** for the vehicle you have chosen.

You define the project; therefore, you will produce a *critical path* that will guide that project to successful completion. This includes process, products, schedule, etc. While there are certain requirements to the spring Capstone course, (such as a range of planning and design phases and scales), the seminar helps the individual student to explore the vehicle as it can meet his or her personal interests. For example, a housing project could emphasize social aspects of design, fire or wildlife management, creative stormwater management, etc.

A critical part of this course is the identification and collection of pertinent data. *Any proposal that does not have vital data by the end of fall semester is not viable and will result in a U grade.* The third goal is to verify the appropriateness of the project and complete key early process phases.

Relationship to student outcomes

This course reinforces the following student learning outcomes for the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture:

- 1- Integrate concepts from the general body of knowledge of the profession of Landscape Architecture in design decision-making.
- 2 - Apply core professional landscape architecture skills in design decision-making
- 3 - Apply ethical understanding to design decision-making
- 4- Combine and analyze information from multiple sources to support design decision-making.
- 5- Produce professional visual, oral and written communications.

Performance

The grading for this course is S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory). To receive an S, students must

- a. complete a final proposal that is accepted by the faculty
 - b. revise proposal as necessary based on faculty feedback and subsequent independent research
 - c. complete satisfactorily the Fall semester work products (typically the majority of research and analysis)
 - d. develop a working critical path for the spring semester that supports the proposal
- As each project is unique, it is not feasible to list Fall semester work products here, but most students need to have all research and inventory materials complete, and be into synthesis or at least well along in the analysis phase.

The fall Senior Seminar will be an independent and individual effort, but course faculty will offer advice and direction through lectures, suggested readings, and discussions. The primary goal of this semester is to present a plan for the spring semester that includes:

- a. acceptance by the larger faculty as an appropriate **vehicle** for a senior project
- b. further development of the desired **project** with reasonable focus, organization, and list of products for the needs and interests of the student and the general expectations of the Capstone semester.

- c. completion of **fall semester products**, which generally include base maps, significant research, inventory, and analysis

Once the **vehicle** has been accepted, the student is expected to **refine the project** as needed and continue work on research, case studies, site inventory and analysis, and other preliminary phases as outlined in their individual proposals in preparation for LAA 4358 in the spring.

How to focus and refine? As each project is different, there has to be a balance of site/project issues, student desires, and often, client needs. The student may chose to focus upon identified problem areas or wishes of the client, such as stormwater, detail design emphasizing sense of place, or creative management. The student may have a particular interest(s), such as design for a particular endangered specie, sustainability + accessibility, interpretation, management, significant research-based design, or exploration of cutting edge issues.

HOWEVER, the student's work cannot be just one facet of the design process. The Capstone

must cover a range of the design process. For example, you cannot spend most of the semester on graphics or planting plans, or take the design only to conceptual diagrams. You must include a range of components of that show you have the competence to understand and complete the vehicle (if given enough time, etc.) So for a golf course, you cannot just route the holes. You should include some demonstration of grading and stormwater management (conceptual SWM plan, example grading of one hole,..), as those issues are key to the success of the design.

Refinement and organizing of the project cannot be accomplished without significant ground work in data collection and research. **One of the most important tasks in the fall is verifying critical information is available—and if not, dealing with the problem prior to spring.**

Unfortunately, students who have been remiss in this often find their project to be far more difficult than anticipated, resulting in stress, having to change the vehicle completely, or in lack of graduation.

If the project is not feasible, finding out in the fall allows the student to find an appropriate project prior to spring semester.

Many students find that they need to have meetings with professionals, visit the site, etc over the break. Thus the products produced at the end of the fall semester should not be expected to be final, complete, and immutable. Updates can and will be made in the early weeks of spring semester.

Proposal Evaluation

Students submit a draft proposal to the seminar instructor approximately 1\3 of the way through the semester. **Tentative due date is the week of October 5th.** Please work with your instructor to best manage this due date with *major* assignments and presentations in other LA classes.

At any time, the instructor can advise the student to find another project.

The proposal will be presented to the departmental faculty. Their evaluation will focus upon:

- feasibility as a *vehicle*
- feasibility of the specific *project* the individual student designs for that vehicle

Quality of the proposal itself is inherently a part of the evaluation, as proposals that are so poorly crafted as to be unintelligible or confusing can be interpreted as an inability to understand the issues and organize a strategy for solutions—both very definitive reasons for not accepting the proposal.

If the consensus is to accept the proposal, that means that the vehicle is *satisfactory based on the information provided*. It does not mean that the vehicle is going to result in a satisfactory performance in the spring course, and it does not mean that the student's work for the fall semester is done. The rest of the semester is to be spent

making sure there are no unforeseen problems and that all information is available and supports the project; this occurs as the student works on research and analysis. In the faculty evaluations, the *vehicle* may be acceptable, but the *project* as presented may or may not be the most appropriate route for the student. Feedback and suggestions will help the student hone the project focus and products. This is a major component of the latter portion of the semester, and tweaking of the project may be part of the early spring semester as well.

If the proposal is not accepted, then the student is advised to find another, more viable vehicle. If the student insists upon continuing with a risky or inappropriate vehicle, he is in jeopardy of not successfully completing the spring semester. The rest of the semester should be spent finding a viable vehicle and going as far as possible towards completing inventory and basic research. That will result in a better spring and an S for the fall.

The following is a synopsis of decades of senior proposal reviews

Reasons for Rejection:

- A. Too small in scale or scope.
- B. Too complex to be completed successfully within the semester.
- C. Emphasis/potential products are too limited with little or no opportunities to explore in a meaningful manner. (Solution is almost pre-determined, nothing to do but planting plans, etc.)
- D. Lacks "design" phases as a major component (too much emphasis on planning, construction documents, etc.)
- E. The project has been done before with little or no change in program, site or user.
- F. Vital information is unavailable and unlikely to appear
- G. The site is too complex and difficult to develop. (undevelopable ecological constraints, too restrictive legal or technical constraints, etc.)
- H. The proposal is unclear and disorganized and it is impossible to determine the intent of the student's project nor the appropriateness of the vehicle.

Completion Requirements

The seminar meets once a week. Attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to be in class the entire time period unless other arrangements are made. Students are requested to contact the faculty member if they are unable to attend class. Excessive unexcused absences (over 2) will result in a U grade.

This of course does not mean come to school sick. And unexpected things do happen that are not your fault. Please e-mail and let the instructor know before you miss class-- or as soon as feasible after your car blew up on the way back from a site visit and you spent the entire class time trying to reach AAA but your phone was eaten by a goat and and and...

Timely completion of all assignments is expected. Late work will be considered in the final grade. A letter grade of S is required to pass the course and will be awarded based on the quality and completeness of work as specified in the proposal and specified work products. If a student cannot produce the final products because of computer problems AND THE STUDENT DID NOT BACK ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING UP, then the resultant grade will be a U. Students are expected to back up work, and failure to do so is not acceptable.

Your faculty, like your eventual clients and employers, have the deepest and most heartfelt sympathy for the bizarre things that can go wrong with digital data, but very little for sloppy self-organization.

Resources

There is no required text but a literature search and bibliography *pertinent to the individual topic* are mandatory parts of the individual proposal.

A recommended text for planning, conducting research, and reporting upon a project is *The Craft of Research* by Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb and Joseph Williams.

Past senior projects are available in the AFA Library, and some are available online at the departmental website.

Mark Francis has several books and articles on case study methodology, including:

<http://lda.ucdavis.edu/people/websites/francis/Francis%20LJ%20Methods.pdf>

<http://www.calpoly.edu/~sede/pdf/LAFcasestudy.pdf>

Some of his books are at the AFA Library.

(Caveat: place more credence on his examples of case studies and do not accept as recipe the laundry list of “things you might want to include”. The components he lists are often useful, but if critically examined as to “what information is important for me here and now”, too broad and too shallow to be of much use.)

The Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF) has some publications and on-line resources for case studies:

http://www.lafoundation.org/casestudyseries/case_studies_list.aspx

“Landscapes: a typology of approaches to landscape architecture”, Katherine Crewe and Ann Forsyth. *Landscape Journal* 22:1-03 provides an excellent overview of how different project types need different methodologies. It is strongly suggested that you read the article, and determine which approach(es) are best for your project. You may find that one approach is best for the beginning stages, and another may be best for other phases. You may also decide that one could take several approaches for your specific vehicle, and you may decide to choose which one is better for your interests.

Submission of Student Work

All student work may be retained and used by the Department of Landscape Architecture. Digital Copies of student work for this course must be turned in at the completion of each assignment. No grades will be computed into the final course grade until digital submissions have been turned in as requested. Please follow the directions given by the instructor as to how they will be submitted (Sakai, CD, PDF, word file, etc.). However, all files must be named as follows:
course# name project student name. dwg/pdf/jpg/

Example: 3352PlantDesAssig10Smith

4ch 8ch 8ch 6ch

Use caps for separation

No spaces, hyphens, or underscoring

In cases of models and other 3-D work, digital JPG photographs should be submitted

NO DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION = “U” GRADE

Reasonable accommodation

If a student has any conditions that might affect meeting the requirements of this course, please notify the instructor. Reasonable accommodation will be provided upon receipt of a letter from the Office of Student Services detailing those accommodations.

Academic Honesty

The University requires all members of its community to be honest in all endeavors. When students enroll at UF they commit themselves to honesty and integrity. Your instructor fully expects you to adhere to the academic honesty guidelines you signed when you were admitted to UF. In completing the registration form at the University of Florida, every student has signed the following statement:

“I understand the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University.”

Furthermore, on work submitted for credit by all UF students, the following pledge is either required or implied:

“On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

The University Honor Code and the Department of Landscape Architecture Academic Honesty Policy are to be followed to the letter. Any students found to have cheated, plagiarized, or

otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment will be punished according to the severity of the act and may be referred to the Honor Court. It is each student's responsibility to report any infraction, and it is expected that each faculty will report all infractions as well.

This and all LA courses are aware of the problems of plagiarism in general. HOWEVER, it is the nature of design to not reinvent the wheel unnecessarily, to creatively build upon successful precedents, and to collaborate. To work in a vacuum and demand strictly original ideas from oneself is highly unlikely to occur in any design field. So what is appropriate "building" and what is plagiarism? From the LA policy:

1. Plagiarism/misrepresentation

There shall be no question of what is your work and what is someone else's. This applies to all aspects of student performance, including but not limited to:

- _CAD drawings and construction details
- _design guidelines (written and graphic)
- _design, planning, and management projects or portions of projects
- _class reports and papers (again, both written and graphic information)
- _any assignment where sole authorship is indicated, such as take-home tests, individual projects, etc.

Examples of inappropriate activities include:

- _copying graphics for a report without crediting the original source
- _representing someone else's work as your own (using existing CAD construction details, tracing drawings, etc.)
- _allowing someone else to represent your work as his own

2. Multiple submissions of the same or similar work without prior approval

If the instructors understand that you are doing a paper associated with your thesis or senior project topic, then doing similar work for two different classes is acceptable - if the instructors agree to it. If a single paper is submitted for one class, then later is submitted for another, and the instructors expect original work, then the multiple submission is inappropriate.

3. Falsifying information

Examples include:

- _misrepresenting reasons why work cannot be done as requested
- _changing or leaving out data, such as manipulating statistics for a research project, or ignoring/hiding inconvenient but vital site information. (However, for educational purposes only, certain aspects of the "real world" may be jointly agreed upon as not being pertinent to the academic goals of the course, such as not dealing with specific project parameters or budget, changing the program, etc.)
- _altering work after it has been submitted
- _hiding, destroying, or otherwise making materials unavailable (hiding reference materials, not sharing materials with other students, etc.)

For this course, it is important to indicate source(s) for graphics and other information, acknowledge direct quotes and use of information even if it is paraphrased, and indicate if an image or drawing is your work or someone else's.

This does not mean that you must create all inventory data, market analyses, etc by yourself. It does mean that you must indicate clearly where information was obtained. For example, you may wish to incorporate a small box in each inventory/analysis segment that indicates where the information came from, or explain in the text/graphics.

Example of program identified as inventory derived from client:

If you look at prior capstone books' analysis chapters, you will see that they rarely follow strict citation models a la the typical term paper or scholarly article. A good model for you is to indicate at the end of each analysis section or somewhere on each map (hydrology, history, land use, etc) the sources for the text and images you produced. This serves several purposes, including letting reviewers and your eventual readers know that you used the best available sources and that any erroneous information on your sheet is what you got from a source you trusted.

Student Accommodations

Support services for students with disabilities are coordinated by the Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office. To obtain individual support services, each student must meet with a support coordinator in the Disability Resources Program who will work with the individual student and the instructor to determine appropriate support strategies. There is no requirement for a student to self-identify his/her disability; however, students requesting classroom accommodations must register with the Dean of Students Office. Appropriate documentation regarding the student's disability is necessary to obtain any reasonable accommodation or support service.

Counseling Resources

Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university's counseling resources. Both the Counseling Center and Student Mental Health provide confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. The Counseling Center is located at 301 Peabody Hall (next to Criser Hall). Student Mental Health is located on the second floor of the Student Health Services in the Infirmary. For further information on services and how to make an appointment, call the Counseling Center at 392-1575 or Student Mental Health at 392-1171. See the following web sites for additional resources: Counseling Center: www.counsel.ufl.edu and Student Mental Health: <http://www.hsc.ufl.edu/shcc/smhs.htm>

Religious Holidays

The university calendar does not include observance of any religious holidays. The Florida Board of Governors and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays. Students shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith with prior notification to the instructor. Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

Class Organization

Class meetings will consist of group and individual discussions. Unless otherwise instructed, you are expected to be in class the whole time.

Depending upon the projects individuals pursue, discussion groups may be organized. These will take the form of "clusters" in which similar projects are grouped together for discussion and sharing of ideas and information. "Similarity" can be based upon project type, scale, scope, or other factors.

Typical projects types have historically included: park design, environmental restoration / preservation / management / planning, streetscape, urban design, golf course design, resort design, community design, historic preservation, and special user projects (elderly, children, disabled, etc.).

The scale and scope will also influence schedule, scope of work and anticipated projects. Within this framework of project types, potential cluster groups and end of semester products could be:

Small to medium scale site with traditional landscape architecture products

Students take projects through design development (almost construction documents)

Products due at the end of the fall semester include:

goals and objectives
analysis (fairly detailed and complete)
preliminary synthesis
case studies
scope of work and critical path

Large scale projects

Students develop a master plan and subsequent detail design development of key areas or components as appropriate to the project.
Products due at the end of the fall semester:
goals and objectives

inventory collection and analytical work in key areas
case studies
scope of work and critical path

Research oriented projects

Design documents and decisions are significantly tied to focused research (such as special users, historic preservation, user preferences, participatory design, etc.)
Products due at the end of the fall semester:
completion of background research, including case studies, fairly complete literature review, etc.
inventory and analysis
scope of work and critical path

Cluster groups may also be organized by more specific topics: waterfront, urban design, housing, etc.

Fall Semester Schedule (Preliminary!)

WEEK 1 Introductory meeting. Present and briefly discuss potential projects.

WEEK 2 Students discuss projects. Clustering by project type if appropriate

Lecture: effective proposal writing

WEEK 3 Discussions specific to projects

WEEK 4 Discussions specific to projects

Proposal draft due

WEEK 5 Draft proposals discussed

WEEK 6 Refined draft proposals discussed

WEEK 7 Graphic and text finalized

WEEK 8 PROPOSAL DUE

WEEK 9 Students revise proposals as necessary

WEEK 10 Students prepare work products – update faculty and fellow students

WEEK 11 Students prepare work products – update faculty and fellow students

WEEK 12 Students prepare work products – update faculty and fellow students

WEEK 13 Students prepare “contract” for Spring – update faculty and fellow students

WEEK 14 Present final work products for Fall Semester

WEEK 15 Set “contract” for Spring

Please note: this schedule will likely change, as field trips and other major events affecting students and faculty were not set as of the beginning of the fall semester.