

# URP 6979 Master Research Project

## Instructor and Contact Information

Christopher Silver, PhD, FAICP  
Professor of Urban and Regional Planning  
email: silver2@ufl.edu

## Course Description

The Master Research Project (MRP) is intended to serve as a capstone experience for the MURP program and to demonstrate a broad and deep understanding of planning processes, impacts and interventions. It is undertaken on a topic related either to a specific need for an outside client or that could be used by some outside client to address an issue in urban or regional development. Outside clients can include local, regional or state governments, private firms that do planning and development or non-profit organizations. The MRP generally focuses more on study design and interpreting findings rather than meeting needs defined by a client. The specific research methodology and report format is developed in consultation with the course instructor and assisted by a second faculty member (secured by the student or by the instructor) who is able to offer additional guidance to the student in development of project topic. For those students who desire to complete a more formal master thesis (perhaps as a prelude to doctoral research), this course can assist in preparation of key element of the thesis although all requirements for a thesis, including submission processes and deadlines set forth by the Graduate School must be adhered to.

The MRP will demonstrate the student's understanding of planning knowledge, professional skills, ethics, critical thinking skills, effective communication and professionalism, and research methods. A literature review, including application of relevant precedent and theory, is required and should inform the final product. The methodology and recommendations are reflective of and incorporate planning ethics. The results of research, analysis, synthesis are defensible and logical, and significantly inform the final product. Professional skills are demonstrated in the areas of visual, oral and written communications. The methodologies, results of the research findings, and conclusions are appropriate to the research focus.

## Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of human settlement, historical and contemporary practice, and policy and processes relevant to urban and regional planning concepts and theories.
2. Demonstrate oral, written, and critical thinking skills required of master's students within their area of specialization.
3. Display ethical behaviors, cultural sensitivity, teamwork, professional conduct and communication.

4. Demonstrate ability to conduct a planning analysis through independent research and analysis that has potential utilization in a real world context

## Course Credit

This is a 16-week (full semester) course which can be taken for variable credits depending on your Plan of Study determined by the URP Administration Team. For those students who have taken previously the 1-credit, Part I, Master Research Project course, it is sufficient to take this course for 5 credits. Otherwise, students needing to complete the capstone requirement for MURP (and choosing not to do a thesis) will register for 6 credit hours and be responsible for all course requirements.

## Course Outline

This course will not follow standard “modular” course layout but will be organized around a series of scheduled deliverables. The course schedule is listed below. You will be responsible for submitting all work into the Canvas by the set due dates listed below. You will have access to the course content from URP6203: Planning Research Design to help design and complete the MRP. This content can be found in the "Files" section on the left-hand navigation menu.

- MODULE 1** Presentation on Master Research Project requirements; select case studies of professional research reports drawn from different clients as examples of style and substance; it will also touch upon the components of the forthcoming requirements including the project abstract, bibliography, project outline, and presentation expectations. Interaction with enrolled students through a synchronist chat to discuss interests, topics, and approaches will be arranged; some required posting in response to the readings provided.
- MODULE 2-3** Students prepare an abstract (1 typed page – 300 words maximum) including a project statement, with supporting bibliographical sources in a separate document likely to be useful for the MRP; these will be submitted by the end of Module 3.
- MODULE 4** Instructor will provide feedback to students on abstract and bibliography, including potential topic revisions or the go ahead to further develop the current topic; a synchronist live chat will arranged to guide student work.
- MODULE 5-6** Preparation of report outline, annotated expanded bibliography of materials to support project report, including possible data sources and research methods to be employed. Outline and full project discussion due by the end of Module 6.
- MODULE 7** Instructor (with support from a second reader) will provide feedback to students by the close of Module 7, and either green light to proceed to report writing or with potential for additional revisions to the project outline to be completed by a date determined by the Course Instructor.
- MODULE 8** Develop draft of report. This can include regular emails/chats with instructor to assist in the drafting of the report, including the possibility to review some preliminary drafts

writing. **This Module will span multiple weeks and a completed draft report will be submitted by the date listed in Canvas.**

- MODULE 9** Instructor and second reader will provide comments on the draft by no later than the end of Module 9.
- MODULE 10** Students will prepare a power point presentation to support the report and present their final reports (dates to be determined by the Course Instructor).
- MODULE 11** Students will draft an Executive Summary of the final report. In the age of information overload, this creates a portable document that can be sent along to stakeholders and clients that effectively communicates project highlights. Executive Summaries should be drafted based on the feedback received from the draft report.
- MODULE 12** Students will finalize the draft report and will also review their peers' submitted reports online, and post commentaries on these reports.
- MODULE 13** Students will turn in "final" submissions of their report, PowerPoint and Executive Summary.

## Missed Deadlines

Notify your instructor if you are struggling to meet the set deadlines.

## Course Technology

In the event that you have technical difficulties with e-Learning, please contact the UF Help Desk. If technical difficulties will cause you to miss a due date, you MUST report the problem to Help Desk. Include the ticket number and an explanation of the issue based on consult with Help Desk in an e-mail to the instructor to explain the late assignment/quiz/test. The course faculty reserves the right to accept or decline tickets from the UF Help Desk based on individual circumstances. For any technical issues you encounter with your course please contact the UF computing Help Desk at 342-392-HELP (4357), select option 2. For Help Desk hours visit: Information Technology–UF Computing Help Desk.

## Student Support Services

As a student in a distance learning course or program, you have access to the same student support services that on campus students have. For course content questions contact your instructor. Other resources are available at the Information Technology Helpdesk (<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>).

## University Policies

University policies on such matters as add/drop, incomplete, academic probation, termination of enrollment, reinstatement, and other expectations or procedures can be found in the graduate student handbook.

## University Policy on Academic Misconduct

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>).

## Netiquette: Communication Courtesy

All students are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all e-mail messages, threaded discussions and chats. Course communication should be civilized and respectful to everyone. The means of communication provided to you through e-Learning (e-mail, discussion posts, course questions, and chats) are at your full disposal to use in a respectful manner. Abuse of this system and its tools through disruptive conduct, harassment, or overall disruption of course activity will not be tolerated. Conduct that is deemed to be in violation with University rules and regulations or the Code of Student Conduct will result in a report to the Dean of Students.

## Student Honor Code

In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code. Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. Student and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon the community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>).

## The Honor Pledge

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

## Special Accommodation

Students requesting disability-related academic accommodations must first register with the Disability Resource Center (<https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>). The Disability Resource Center will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

## Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations (<https://evaluations.ufl.edu>). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students (<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>).

## Course Grade (5 credit students)

### **Discussion and Participation:**

**300 points (30%)**

- Student was prepared for discussions with the advisor (meeting by phone, email, chat, video)
  - Module 1 Discussion (1)
  - Module 1 Discussion (2)
  - Module 2 Discussion
  - Module 3 Discussion
  - Module 4 Discussion
  - Module 5 Discussion
  - Module 6 Discussion
  - Module 8 Discussion
  - Module 10 Discussion
  - Module 12 Discussion
  - Module 2 Synchronous Chat
  - Module 4 Synchronous Chat
- Met deadlines as discussed with instructor; class posts

### **Written Assignments:**

**550 points (55%)**

- |  |           |                       |
|--|-----------|-----------------------|
| • Quality of Project Abstract + List of References | (50 pts)  | Due Module 3          |
| • Report Outline                                   | (50 pts)  | Due Module 6          |
| • Executive Summary                                | (150 pts) | Due Module 10         |
| • Final Submission of Report                       | (300 pts) | Due Module 11 (draft) |
| ○ Quality Rationale for the project                |           | Due Module 13 (final) |
| ○ Quality of Literature review                     |           |                       |
| ○ Quality of data, analytical methods, and writing |           |                       |
| ○ Quality of Findings and conclusion               |           |                       |

### **Participate in Final Presentations**

**150 points (15%)**

Due Module 12

**1000 points (100%)**

## Course Grade (1 credit students)

### **Discussion and Participation:**

**300 points (30%)**

- Student was prepared for discussions with the advisor (meeting by phone, email, chat, video)
  - Module 1 Discussion (1)
  - Module 1 Discussion (2)
  - Module 2 Discussion
  - Module 3 Discussion
  - Module 4 Discussion
  - Module 5 Discussion

- Module 6 Discussion
- Module 8 Discussion
- Module 10 Discussion
- Module 12 Discussion
- Module 2 Synchronous Chat
- Module 4 Synchronous Chat
- Met deadlines as discussed with instructor; class posts

<b>Written Assignments:</b>	<b>100 points (60%)</b>	
● Quality of Project Abstract + List of References	(50 pts)	Due Module 3
● Report Outline	(50 pts)	Due Module 6
<b>Participate in Final Presentations</b>	<b>100 points (10%)</b>	Due Module 12
<b>Total</b>	<b>500 points (100%)</b>	

## Grading Scheme

### Letter Grade Percentage Grade Points

E	Below 55%	0.0
A	93-100%	4.00
A-	90-92%	3.67
B+	88-89%	3.33
B	83-87%	3.00
B-	80-82%	2.67
C+	78-79%	2.33
C	73-77%	2.00
C-	70-72%	1.67
D+	68-69%	1.33
D	58-67%	1.00
D-	55-57%	0.67

For greater detail, see the Grades section of the Graduate Catalog for the University of Florida (<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=1996>). It also contains the policies and procedures, course descriptions, colleges, departments, and program information for UF. You can also review information regarding frequently asked questions about minus grades (<https://student.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>).

<b>MODULE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
1	Discussion	25
1	Discussion	25
2	Discussion	25
2	SynchronistChat	25
3	Discussion	25
3	AbstractReferences	50
4	Discussion	25
4	SynchronistChat	25
5	Discussion	25
6	Discussion	25
6	ReportOutline	50
8	Discussion	25
10	Discussion	25
10	ExecutiveSummary	150
11	FinalReport(Draft)	(draft)
12	Discussion	25
12	FinalPresentation	150
13	FinalReport	300
<b>TotalPoints</b>		<b>1000</b>