LAA 4358: Senior Independent Project

UF Department of Landscape Architecture
Spring 2025

SYLLABUS

I. General Information

CLASS MEETINGS: Tues/Thurs, 12:50-4:55 pm

LOCATION: 316 Antevy Hall

CREDITS: 6 Credits

INSTRUCTORS: Yi Luo, PhD, PLA, MLA, ASLA
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This final semester-long project allows students to expand their personal interests and talents, hone their decision-making abilities, and sharpen their professional skills through the well-rounded, comprehensive completion of individually directed landscape architecture capstone projects. All work on the project must be reviewed and approved by an assigned faculty advisor.

The emphasis is on independent decision-making processes and organization. This is in addition to the usual expectations of technical competence, graphic and verbal communication, analytical and design skills, and ethics. The vehicle is an independent project (the Undergraduate Capstone Project or Graduate Terminal Project), chosen and developed by the student but approved by the faculty. Faculty serve as advisors to students and review, approve, or make suggestions or state requirements of all work submitted.

The Capstone Project is the most challenging, rewarding, and exciting semester of a student's undergraduate career!

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Completion of all previous design and construction studios.

REQUIRED READINGS AND WORKS

There is no required text, but a literature search and final bibliography based on client information, libraries, texts from previous courses, etc., are expected. Depending on each student's individual project requirements, various software (e.g., Adobe CC, Autodesk products, Rhino, etc.) will be necessary.

MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES FEES

Material and supply fees are assessed for certain courses to offset the cost of materials or supply items consumed in the course of instruction. A list of approved courses and fees is published in the Schedule of Courses each semester. (UF-3.0374 Regulations of the University of Florida). Material and supply and equipment use fee information is available from the academic departments or from the schedule of courses (Florida Statutes 1009.24).

This course requires a materials and supply fee that averages $20 each semester to cover expendable studio supplies (such as plotter toner and paper), IN ADDITION to the equipment fee assessed with your tuition. The required expendable items for the course will vary each semester based upon assigned projects for the term.

- Note that your Landscape Architecture material and supply fees do not cover the printing of materials for other courses, even those which are related.
- Please notify the instructor or department staff member if there are problems with any technology in the studio.

II. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Each student in the LA program is expected to understand and apply the design process to studio projects in increasing levels of sophistication over the arc of the curriculum. In this final independent project, students should demonstrate higher levels of design thinking through:

- A range of approaches (creative, environmental, cultural, and/or historic, etc.) to create spatial and temporal landscape composition.
- Development of multiple design alternatives before synthesizing ideas into a defensible plan.
- The ability to thoughtfully provide, receive, and respond to feedback and critique as part of iterative design decision-making.
- Independent decision-making as evidenced by time management and project management.
- Entry-level, professional-quality visual, written, and oral communication skills.

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the course learning objectives (CLOs) under the program SLO headings as follows:

CONTENT
SLO 1 – Integrate concepts from the general body of knowledge of the profession of landscape architecture in design decision-making.
CLO 1 - Critique design fundamentals including spatial and organizing principles.
CLO 2 - Employ the various stages of the design process.
CLO 3 - Implement complex site design and planning principles.
CLO 4 - Integrate the history and theories of landscape architecture into planning and design decisions in the built and natural environment with consideration for urban, community, and/or ecological contexts.
CLO5 - Synthesize knowledge of natural, physical, and social sciences.
SLO 2 - Apply core professional landscape architecture skills in design decision-making.

CLO 6 - Analyze site characteristics, including topography climate, vegetation, and existing structures to apply the appropriate organization of space and forms within the landscape.
CLO 7 - Generate, evaluate, and critique alternative design concepts

CRITICAL THINKING
SLO 4 – Combine and analyze information from multiple sources to support design decision-making.
CLO 8 - Assess social, human, economic, and environmental principles of sustainability and resilience as it relates to design decision-making.

COMMUNICATION
SLO 5 – Produce professional visual, oral, and written communications.
CLO 9 – Present ideas convincingly through oral, visual and written communication.

III. Final Project Description

OVERVIEW

The final project should encompass analysis, synthesis, concept development, planning and design, design development, and project management. The emphasis and products will vary with individual projects and the student's personal and professional priorities. Capstone project considerations include, but are not limited to, the following points of evaluation:
- Scale and scope of project
- Project complexity
- Project focus or emphasis
- Design iteration and development
- Project originality
- Completeness of information informing synthesis at the site analysis and all subsequent design stages
- Clarity, organization and presentation of project ideas, approach, and outcomes

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FINAL PROJECT

The final project involves both an oral presentation and a graphically rich, well-written, and expertly illustrated project report. The oral presentation is made at the end of the Spring semester to a jury of faculty and external reviewers.

The project report must stand on its own and is submitted for inclusion in the Department's archives, the University's digital repository, and, where appropriate, the Honors College. The report's narrative should be of the highest academic quality and organized in a clear, concise, and cogent manner and appropriately illustrated with graphics that demonstrate the student's most advanced graphic abilities.

The report and presentation should emphasize a clear statement of a design problem, the identification of appropriate site selection criteria, thorough analysis and synthesis of an identified testing ground site, a creative design concept ideation, clear design development, and a fully detailed project outcome. Design work presented must be original. All other work included in the report and presentation that was not produced by the student must be appropriately cited.

The final project development is to be completed under the focus and direction of the assigned faculty advisor. We recommend a format for the project be presented in two parts (see below).

TIME COMMITMENT

This is a six (6) credit, independent project. Every student's project is unique, and so specific work product and deliverables may vary depending on the scope and scale of the project. However, the amount of time expected to be dedicated to the project should remain consistent. One credit hour is the equivalent to approximately three-hours of coursework per week. Therefore, students should expect to spend the equivalent of approximately 18 hours a week throughout the semester (inclusive of meetings and presentations) working on their capstone project.

PART 1 (Weeks 1-2)

Part 1 is the refined work from the Fall Capstone Seminar and provides a clearly written description of the project with graphics that illustrate the background research, project goal, site inventory, and any preliminary conceptual design development.

During the first two weeks of the semester, students are expected to meet with their faculty advisor to review and discuss a project timeline. This timeline should identify all project benchmarks (including scheduled presentation dates). Students will need to make appropriate accommodation for submissions to be reviewed by their faculty mentors (1-2 business weeks may be appropriate for review of submitted materials).

All materials the student has produced should be well-organized for review during this consultation. It should be appropriately cited, professionally formatted, and organized in a clear and logical manner. Students should not refer to material that they do not have in-hand with them during these initial meetings.

The critical elements of Part 1 are below (and repeated from the Fall seminar's final deliverables). If any elements are missing, incomplete, or in need of refinement, the student will complete these during the first 2 weeks of the semester.

1. Project Statement

    Review current design philosophy and project statements with studio instructors and ensure that all projects, including the real-world projects contributed by industry, are grounded in a theoretical framework. Revise as needed to ensure an appropriate application of a relevant well-defined theory/theories guides the project development. Students should review appropriate literature and include citations.

2. Precedent & Case Studies
    Review and incorporate the precedent and case studies completed last semester into the project booklet. Locate and develop additional studies as needed to ensure a strong focus on learning from exemplary real-world examples. Students should focus on a brief project description and lessons learned.

Case studies should align with the objectives and context of the student's project. For example, appropriate case studies would be similar to the current project in type, scale, regional context, user groups, program, etc.

3. Site Inventory

Review comments from the fall final review and develop additional site investigations as needed to gather all relevant data. Revisit all prior site investigations and ensure they are clear, comprehensive, graphically compelling, detailed, legible, and useful for analysis and decision-making. Additional criteria include accuracy, relevance, scale appropriateness, annotations, and analytical value. Evaluate if each map is necessary and eliminate all that are overly generic or do not add insights for further design. Compile all mappings and curate into the final booklet.

4. Site Analysis & Synthesis

Review prior analysis maps and insights to ensure that all included work is insightful, clear, and relevant to the project's goals. Use the analysis to determine the opportunities, constraints, patterns, relationships, anomalies, etc. That you present in this section. Be sure to show the relationship between site elements (e.g., interaction of slope, drainage, and vegetation) and connections to surrounding areas. Provide a synthesis map that clearly identifies areas for development, preservation, mitigation, etc. (aligning with project objectives). Provide a written summary of actionable insights as opportunities and challenges. Present professional quality work that demonstrates high quality mapping, graphic design, and communications.

PART 2 (Weeks 3-15)

Building on the first step, Part 2 (the focus of the semester) starts with concept ideation and then expansion and refinement of the project's design. An iterative process is required and close consultation with faculty is essential in developing the concept towards a final workable solution.

1. Concept Design (ideation)

Conceptual design exploration and iteration are emphasized over graphic presentation quality. The ideation phase can involve numerous synthetic and diagrammatic drawings and concludes with a preliminary (sketch) concept and 1-sentence project statement that articulates the student's concept direction. Students will answer- What is the project design intent, and why is this important?

2. Design Development

Once the design concept has been determined, the student's effort is directed towards further detailing and developing the design approach. This process of development will likely include all conventional graphic representational forms (plans, sections/elevations, perspectives, details, etc.) and 3d modeling (digital and/or analog). The design development process should be well-documented along the way. What is not included in the final design for the project report and/or presentation can be included as material in the appendix of the report.

3. Design Narrative

In addition to the graphic representation of design, a 1,500 word (3 pages) Design Narrative will be carefully written and edited. This design narrative should present an executive summary of the project. Students should anticipate considerable time investments in crafting this statement with multiple submissions to their faculty advisor followed by detailed revisions leading to a final draft. Initial narrative drafts should be submitted for review early in the semester. Students should include at least a draft and a final submission for the narrative on their project timeline.

IV. Graded Work

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED WORK

Finalization of Fall Seminar Work [Part 1] (10% of total grade)
Students will finalize and refine the work initiated in the Fall Seminar. This includes revisiting and improving the project statement, site analysis, and synthesis. Deliverables will include an updated project description and a clear project schedule for the semester. This phase ensures students have a solid foundation for developing their capstone projects.

Mid-Term Presentation (20% of total grade)
The mid-term presentation is an informal yet critical checkpoint in the capstone project. Students will present their progress, including project concept and site design strategies, to faculty and peers for feedback. Emphasis is placed on clarity of ideas, depth of analysis, and design progress.

Final Presentation (25% of total grade)
The final presentation is a formal culmination of the capstone project, where students showcase their work to a jury of faculty and external professionals. Presentations will include fully developed designs, technical drawings, and a cohesive narrative that ties together all previous research and design outcomes. Evaluation focuses on presentation quality, originality, and the ability to defend design decisions.

Final Report (25% of total grade)
The final report is a comprehensive document detailing the entire final project, from initial research to final design outcomes. It should include site analysis, design concepts, development processes, and supporting visuals. The report must demonstrate professional-level communication skills and serve as an archival record of the student's work.

Participation (20% of total grade)
Participation encompasses active engagement in all aspects of the studio, including faculty mentor meetings, group critique sessions, and other studio discussions and activities. It also includes responsiveness to feedback, independent thinking, work ethic, and engagement in project process. Students are expected to demonstrate professionalism and consistent effort throughout the semester.

GRADING

Final grades are based on:

- Finalization of Fall work: assessed by the student's advisor
- Interim review: the student's performance and the input of jurors
- Final review: the student's performance and quality of the work presented
- Final report: the quality of the complete project package (graphics and text)
- Participation: demonstrated progress monitored by the student's advisor throughout the semester
- Compliance to requirements (meeting deadlines, submitting work in proper formats, etc.)

Student performance is evaluated after each presentation. If any of the prescribed submittals is late or incomplete, a lower grade will likely be issued. Part of the student's responsibility is to stay on their designated project schedule and determine ways to complete the necessary design tasks so that they can meet the important deadlines. If any required products are not turned in, the student will receive a failing grade for the semester until that product is turned in.

The graded work assesses the course learning objectives as follows:

LAA4358 – Course Learning Objectives									
	SLO 1					SLO 2		SLO 4	SLO 5
Assessment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Finalization of Fall Seminar	×			×	×	×			
Mid-Term Presentation	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
Final Presentation	×	×	×	×	×	×		×	×
Final Report	×	×	×	×	×	×		×	×

As per department policy, Landscape Architecture Majors must receive a C or better to move forward. Any grade lower than a **C** will require that the course be taken over again.

Letter Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
Numeric Grade	100-94	93-90	89-87	86-84	83-80	79-77	76-74	73-70	69-67	66-64	63-61	60-0
Quality Points	4.0	3.67	3.33	3.0	2.67	2.33	2.0	1.67	1.33	1.0	0.67	0.0

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

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. Please follow the directions given by the instructor as to how they will be submitted (e.g., Canvas, CD, PDF, word file, etc.).

REVIEW PROCESS

Students will be advancing their work at slightly different rates depending on project types. Some will explore a planning and design process at multiple scales of concern, while others will focus their energies on site planning and design development. However, all students will all complete two important presentations: an interim review and the final (formal) presentation. All students are required to attend all interim and final presentations.

Interim Review

The interim review will be an important milestone in which the student is expected to present their work to date according to their approved timeline. The setting is informal.

The objective of this presentation is for the student to receive constructive feedback from faculty regarding their project. It is scheduled so that the student will have adequate time to make substantial refinements prior to submitting their finished project. Serious deficiencies should not exist if a student has actively sought critiques from their faculty advisor at critical times throughout the semester.

Final Presentation

This is a formal presentation of the student's final project to a jury comprised of visiting professionals for review and comment, and to the faculty for acceptance as a completed capstone project. All text and graphics should be presented in their final and finished format. There should be no grammatical nor spelling errors. Any significant changes needing to be made at this point suggest that a student's project has not been developed to an acceptable level and may delay completion of the course.

FINAL SUBMISSION OF STUDENT WORK

All capstone projects will be submitted digitally to the University of Florida Institutional Repository (IR@UF). Students are required to submit a final, format-compliant digital copy for archiving (see below).

Note: Students eligible to graduate with distinctions of honor may be required to submit a hardcopy of their final project report to the department administrative staff for submission and archiving – this procedure and its associated requirements are NOT part of the capstone curriculum. If you are eligible for this honor, you will receive a letter detailing the procedure for project submissions from the Department's Honors Coordinator.

UF Institutional Repository Archival Process

We will convene a final meeting just prior to the final presentations. At that time, students will be required to submit a completed and signed (by the student) LA Capstone Final Submission Form. This form will be made available to the student electronically later in the semester and includes the Department Signature Page; Digital Repository Permissions Form; and Honors Evaluation Form (as applicable).

Students will create digital copies of the final project report & presentation slides as PDF-formatted files. Details about the IR@UF are available here: https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/ufir/self-submit
It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the final project and all associated requirements have been submitted by the final due date. Failure to submit work or meet this deadline could result in the grade of an "incomplete" thus delaying graduation.

Bibliographical References

Unless otherwise requested by your advisor, use the APA citation style. For style guide and examples, refer to:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html

Writing Style

The style of the final written text that accompanies the student's graphics is to be determined in consultation with your advisor. Students should not expect their faculty advisor to serve as a copy editor. Students should double check, edit, and refine their work *prior* to submissions.

HELPFUL HINTS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT AND SCHEDULING

- You should plan to work at least 18 hours/week on your capstone project.
- Everything takes twice as long as you think it will.
- Developing text and graphic materials that involve writing, the use of computers for printing, and having materials copied can be more complex and time-consuming than you anticipate.
- **BACKUP ALL FILES WHILE WORKING AND BACKUP ALL ARCHIVES DAILY.** The loss of digital data is not an acceptable reason for late or incomplete work.

V. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Key Dates* (may be subject to change):

- Mid-term presentations: March 4th and 6th
- Final report due: 11:59 pm, Sunday, April, 20th
- Final presentations: all day, Thursday, April 24th

Week	Date	Activities	Due
1	1/14	Review syllabus Familiarize instructors with your project Share comments received from Fall presentation Set up plan for the semester	
	1/16	Familiarize instructors with your project Share comments received from Fall presentation Set up plan for the semester	
2	1/21	Finalize Part One	
	1/23	Finalize Part One	
3	1/28	Ideation workshop Conceptual design	Part One on Canvas
	1/30		
4	2/04	Conceptual design Report template	
	2/06		
5	2/11	Schematic design	At least two conceptual designs on Canvas
	2/13		
6	2/18	Schematic design	
	2/20		
7	2/25	Prepare for mid-term presentation	Two schematic designs on Canvas (2/23)
	2/27		

8	3/04	Mid-term presentation	Presentation slides on Canvas (8 AM)
	3/06		
9	3/11		
	3/13		
10	3/18	Spring Break!	
	3/20	Spring Break!	
11	3/25	Presentation on IR@UF	
	3/27		
12	4/01		
	4/03		
13	4/08		
	4/10		
14	4/15		
	4/17		Final report on Canvas (4/20) Capstone form on Canvas (4/20)
15	4/22		Upload final report to IR@UF (4/22)
	4/24	Final Presentation	Final presentation slides on Canvas (8 AM)

The instructors reserve the right to adjust the syllabus and schedule as needed.

VI. Required Policies

ATTENDANCE POLICY + MEETING WITH FACULTY ADVISORS

Studio attendance is mandatory. Requirements for class attendance and assignments in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/

CLASS DEMEANOR

Students are expected to behave in a professional, respectful manner towards each other and towards faculty and outside consultants. All students enrolled in the course are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. For a description of what is expected and what will occur as a result of improper behavior see the University's Netiquette Guide for Online Courses.

UNIVERSITY HONESTY POLICY

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."

It is to be assumed that all work will be completed independently unless the assignment is defined as a group project by the professor. This does not mean that students cannot help one another in learning material, but all work that is turned in must be independent work of that individual.

Misrepresentation or plagiarism, such as claiming another's work to be one's own, refers to graphic and design work as well as written work. Submitting work from one course to fulfill the requirements of another (unless expressly allowed by the instructor) is also misrepresentation.

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.

For more information, see http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/ and the Department of Landscape Architecture Academic Honesty Policy.

UF EVALUATIONS PROCESS

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMMODATION

Support services for students with disabilities are coordinated by the Disability Resource Center in the Dean of Students Office (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). 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 with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Dean of Students Office. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Appropriate documentation regarding the student's disability is necessary to obtain any reasonable accommodation or support service. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester. Accommodations will be provided once the accommodation letter is presented to the instructor; accommodations are not retroactive.

COUNSELING AND WELLNESS CENTER

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

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.

COURSE MATERIALS AND IN-CLASS RECORDINGS

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third-party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.