

LAA 6971 Research for Master's Thesis
LAA 6979 Terminal Project
UF Department of Landscape Architecture
Spring 2025

SYLLABUS

I. General Information

SPRING CLASS MTGS: Time arranged in consultation with Chair at start of the semester

LOCATION: Varies, Committee Chair's option

CREDITS: 3 Credits, S/U grading scheme

INSTRUCTOR: Varies, students select their committee Chair

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This series of two courses taught in fall and spring of the final year provides structure as students begin their **thesis** or **graduate terminal project (GTP)** required for MLA degree completion. All graduate students are expected to work autonomously and effectively to complete their independent project while striving to contribute new knowledge to the profession that addresses current and future challenges through thoughtful and critical engagement in the thesis or GTP.

During the fall semester, students engage in proposal writing and information-gathering in support of their independent project. At the beginning of the fall semester, students will select project through various means.

Students may:

- A. Select a topic and research question for pursuit of a thesis while working with a research professor; or
- B. Select a project from an internship, professional interest, or MLA professional partner who presents potential projects early in the semester for pursuit of the graduate terminal project.

Master's students have the option of producing either a **thesis** or a **terminal project**.

Thesis: Students with a research focus are encouraged to produce a thesis. The thesis establishes a hypothesis that is tested through established research methods appropriate to the field of design. The thesis is writing-intensive and must adhere to the University of Florida's Graduate School formatting and timeline.

Graduate Terminal project (GTP): Students who are research and professional practice focus are encouraged to engage in a GTP. The GTP includes design and research and employs critical applications of skillsets and reflective analysis. The GTP also allows for greater flexibility in formatting and does not require adherence to the Graduate School format or timeline requirements.

Once students select a project, they conduct site and user analysis, research relevant theories to apply to the project, and create preliminary design concepts. The fall instructor facilitates connections with professional mentors and guides students through the process of project selection, project management, precedent case study research, site inventory and site analysis, preliminary design, and committee chair selection. This course provides a solid foundation for the subsequent development of the project, which will take place during the spring semester.

Students will:

- Gain exposure to a diverse range of real-world projects and research ideas.
- Choose a project either from the options provided by invited professionals or propose their own unique project for consideration.
- Network with industry experts and researchers to establish valuable professional connections.
- Conduct research on precedent projects, and complete a comprehensive site analysis in preparation for the spring independent study course.
- Explore project management principles and organize a year-long project schedule.

Prior to the end of the fall semester, students are required to complete required forms (THESIS - LAA 6971- Registration Form OR TERMINAL PROJECT - LAA 6979) available in the departmental office. Students submit their forms to the Departmental Academic Coordinator. Forms include the name of the committee chair and the Title of the Thesis or Project and a brief description of what will be accomplished in the spring semester. Students must also select one additional committee member from the Graduate Faculty within the Department. An Optional third member may be outside of the Landscape Architecture Department but must also hold graduate faculty status.

During the spring semester, students continue their project exploration under the guidance of their committee Chair and are required to complete a mid- and final review of their work.

Students will:

- Articulate a clear research theory for the selected thesis/project.
- Select and apply appropriate research methods.
- Demonstrate the ability to position knowledge within the existing landscape architectural body of information to articulate the broader significance relative to advancing the field.
- Iterate design ideas and respond to feedback and critique.
- Produce a logical and professional final project.
- Continue to explore project management principles and organize a year-long project schedule.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Students entering their final year are expected to have developed advanced design skills and have the ability to gather and analyzing data (quantitative and qualitative) to inform design decision-making.

REQUIRED READINGS AND WORKS

Suggested readings are individually assigned to each student based on their project selection. Additional course readings may be provided on the CANVAS learning platform.

Materials and Supplies:

Students are required to have trace paper, sharpie markers and a variety of black ink pens in addition to a computer with the following required software:

- MS Office (Word, Excel and PowerPoint)
- Adobe Suite Products (Photoshop, Illustrator, and In-Design)
- Adobe Acrobat Reader or other PDF reading software

II. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Each student in the LA program is expected to understand and apply the design process and continuously develop:

- a range of approaches (creative, cultural, and/or historic) to create spatial and temporal landscape compositions,
- multiple design alternatives before synthesizing ideas into a defensible plan and
- the ability to thoughtfully provide, receive, and respond to feedback and critique as part of iterative design decision making.

All Graduate students are expected to work autonomously and effectively to complete independent projects and also to contribute new knowledge to the profession that addresses current and future challenges through thoughtful and critical engagement in the thesis or GTP.

At the end of the **FALL** course, students will be expected to have achieved competency in 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 - Implement key concepts relative to project management.
SLO 3 – Apply ethical understanding to design decision-making.
CLO 2- Practice the ethical and professional obligations landscape architecture has to clients, communities, the public, and landscape environment.
CRITICAL THINKING
SLO 4 – Combine and analyze information from multiple sources to support design decision-making.
CLO 3 - Examine ideas that are grounded in the natural, physical, and social sciences to make informed design decisions that address and balance aesthetic, environmental, and social issues and goals.
CLO 4 - Assess the physical, biotic, climatic and cultural context of projects and integrate findings to validate design decision making.
CLO 5 - Synthesize objective and subjective information from multiple sources to support design decision making.
CLO 6 – Critique the suitability of program elements for a particular site.
CLO 7 - Evaluate spatial and other relevant data as part of the design decision making process.
CLO 8 - Analyze theories of landscape architecture and use the findings to inform and support decision making processes.
COMMUNICATION
SLO 5 – Produce professional visual, oral, and written communications.

CLO 9 – Defend the criteria and methodology used in an evaluation of a site or program.
CLO 10 – Express and defend ideas through oral, visual, and written communication.

At the end of the **SPRING** course, students will be expected to have achieved competency in 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 or equivalent research application.
CLO 4 Integrate the history and theories of landscape architecture to planning and design decisions in the built and natural environment with consideration for urban, community, and ecological contexts.
CLO 5 Synthesize knowledge of natural, physical, and social sciences in the development of design solutions.
SLO 2 – Apply core professional landscape architecture skills in design decision-making.
CLO 6 Critique alternative design concepts for a single project.
SLO 3 – Apply ethical understanding to design decision-making.
CLO 7- Analyze site characteristics, including topography, climate, vegetation, and existing structures, to apply the appropriate organization of space and forms within the landscape.
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, written and visual communications.

III. Graded Work

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED WORK

FALL: All assignments require time outside of class to complete.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN (15% of total grade)

Students will develop a project management plan and a graphic project schedule to organize their yearlong project.

PROGRESSIVE ASSIGNMENTS (20% of total grade)

Students will work through the beginning phases of the design process from site selection to various forms of analysis and preliminary design. These assignments guide progress throughout the semester and reinforce concepts learned in this class and prior classes. Assignments are modified based on a student’s pursuit of a thesis or graduate terminal project.

PROJECT REPORT (50% of total grade)

Students will complete a summary report that details the semester's progress on the project. This curation of course assignments will be in the format discussed in class and distributed to your mentors for review.

PROJECT PRESENTATIONS (15% of total grade)

Students will share their progress during brief mid-review and final presentations. This assignment requires students curate design ideas, concepts and materials developed and explored throughout the semester.

The graded work assesses the course learning objectives as follows:

Assessment	LAA 6971 & 6989 - Course Learning Objectives (CLOs)									
	SLO 1	SLO 3	SLO 4						SLO 5	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
01 Project Management Plan	X									X
02 Inventory and Analysis			X	X	X	X	X			X
03 Engagement		X			X					X
04 Analysis of Theory		X			X			X		X
05 Reflection			X		X	X		X	X	X
06 Project Report		X			X	X	X	X	X	X
07 Project Presentations		X								X

SPRING: For the spring semester, the reviews encompass all course learning outcomes. Student's grade is based on final presentation (40%); final report (50%); time management, engagement and participation (10%).

GRADING SCALE

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/> This course is graded as S (satisfactory) or U (unsatisfactory). A grade of S is equal to a C (2.0) or better. Grades earned under the S/U option do not carry grade point values and are not computed in the University of Florida grade point average. Courses with a grade of S will count as credits earned in a degree program. Such grades are included in the student's permanent academic record and are reflected on the transcript.

The Department of Landscape Architecture may retain and use all student work. Digital copies of assignments should be submitted upon completion, following the instructor's specified submission method (e.g., Canvas, CD, PDF, Word file, etc.). Please submit scans of your analog work and high-quality photos of your models. For multipage PDFs, submit as one file rather than multiple files. Failure to comply with submission instructions or file formats may result in point deductions.

Please submit your assignment by the specified due date and time. Without prior arrangement for late submission, a 2% reduction in maximum points per day (24 hours) applies. Projects over ten days late are graded out of 80% total points; however, late projects are accepted until the last day of class.

Consult the assignment rubric for clarity of assessment.

IV. Annotated Weekly Schedule Annotated Weekly Schedule – Spring

Follow the guidelines given to you by the department each semester to ensure accuracy of submission deadlines.

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1 1/13	Cohort Meeting – Course Intro and Deadlines reviewed
Week 2 1/20	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 3 1/27	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 4 2/3	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 5 2/10	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 6 2/17	Final Defense scheduled for Thesis.
Week 7 2/24	Final Edits to Thesis and submit to Department for Review. Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 8 3/3	Fully defended Thesis due to Graduate Office by March 7, First Submission 5 pm
Week 9 3/10	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 10 3/17	Spring Break
Week 11 3/24	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 12 3/31	Meeting with Committee Chair
Week 13 4/7	Final Presentations GTP
Week 14 4/14	GTP Due – Check with Vanessa Niblett for final dates

Week 15 4/21	
*Schedule and dates subject to change	

VI. Required Policies

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to arrive on time. Acceptable reasons for excused absences are as follows:

- o Illness
- o Serious family emergency
- o Special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences)
- o Military obligation
- o Severe weather conditions
- o Religious holidays
- o Participation in official university activities such as music performances, athletic competition or debate.
- o Court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena)

If necessary, students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up material or activities covered in their excused absence; however, absences do not affect project deadline dates unless prior arrangements have been made.

Studio work time and desk critiques are essential to the learning experience; therefore, attendance is expected for the entire class time. During the studio (critique) portion of the course, it is expected that all students will be in attendance for the entire class and working on assignments for this course. Arriving late to class, leaving during class for extended durations, or leaving early from class may be considered being absent from class.

The instructor will not provide the student notifications regarding absences and tardiness. You may email the instructor should you have any questions regarding your attendance. Please schedule an office meeting for any discussions regarding attendance, tardiness, and late assignments. Do not discuss these issues with the instructor during studio time.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

STUDENTS REQUIRING ACCOMMODATION

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

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/>.

UNIVERSITY HONESTY POLICY

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor 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.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

COUNSELING AND WELLNESS CENTER

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

COURSE MATERIALS AND IN-CLASS RECORDINGS

The digital course materials provided on Canvas (e.g., lectures, assignments, quizzes, et cetera) are provided for personal study and are not intended for distribution by electronic or other means. Further distribution or posting on other websites is not permitted.

Our class sessions may be audio visually recorded. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded.

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.