

LAA 6236: Landscape Architecture Research Methods

Department of Landscape Architecture
University of Florida
Spring 2026

SYLLABUS

I. General Information

CLASS MEETINGS: MWF Period 2, 8:30 – 9:20 am

CLASS LOCATION: RNK0215

CREDITS: 3 Credits

INSTRUCTOR: Yi Luo

OFFICE: 432 Antevy Hall

Office HOURS: TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a multi-faceted exploration of various types and practices of research in landscape architecture, emphasizing methods in scholarship, practice, criticism, and decision-making. It highlights research methods unique to the discipline and their connection to the broader issues in the social and environmental sciences.

This course places emphasis on the understanding and use of research methods as a vital component of the design process and traditional scholarship. Evidence-based design (EBD) has become an increasingly vital component of professional practice, and the course addresses the growing need to generate and apply “evidence” in planning and design. This course thus emphasizes defensibility and reasoning in making planning and design decisions—as well as how to ask the questions to find that “evidence.”

Through readings, lectures, and discussions, students will engage with major research approaches and methods relevant to professional study and practice. Assignments include weekly readings, participation in class discussions, literature reviews, and the develop a preliminary research proposal that integrates methodological approaches and analytical goals the student seeks to master over the course of their studies.

This course is intended to satisfy the LAAB Standard for Research (3.B.2.i) by addressing:

- Research theory articulation.
- Selection and application of appropriate methods.
- Integration with existing knowledge and significance to the field.
- Ethical research practices and independent project completion.
- Understanding the placement of their ideas within the existing body of knowledge and articulating the relevance of their work to the field.

PREREQUISITE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

LAA 6231: Theories of Landscape Architecture or permission of instructor.

REQUIRED READINGS AND WORKS

All required readings are either available electronically through the University of Florida Libraries or will be provided on CANVAS.

Deming, M. E., & Swaffield, S. (2011). *Landscape architectural research: Inquiry, strategy, design*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2016). *Practical research: Planning and design* (11th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

II. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) & Course Learning Objectives (CLOs)

The **course learning objectives** (CLOs) below align with the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) standards and UF's MLA Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are used to guide the assessment of student learning throughout their engagement in the program.

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved an appropriate developmental level of the following CLOs numbered in the chart below (each with an individual name):

KNOWLEDGE
SLO 1 – Integrate concepts from the general body of knowledge of the profession of landscape architecture in design decision-making.
1. Research Methods: Describe various research methods used, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, to inform evidence-based practice in the context of design and the built environment.
SLO 2 – Apply core professional landscape architecture skills in design decision-making
2. Performance: Establish environmental, social, and economic objectives and desired outcomes for a project and identify data types and methods to measure design impact.
SLO 3 – Apply ethical understanding to design decision-making
3. Research Ethics: Identify and explain the ethical considerations involved in conducting research

CRITICAL THINKING
SLO 4 – Combine and analyze information from multiple sources to support design decision-making.
4. Design Impact: Define and measure the impact of a design in response to specific challenges, needs, and aspirations based on measurable outcomes.

RESEARCH
SLO 6 – Devise research methodologies and conclusions appropriate to individual area of interest.
5. Research Design: Articulate a clear research theory, question, and method for a project or proposal.

6. Knowledge Integration: Demonstrate the ability to position research within the broader landscape architecture field and articulate its significance in advancing the discipline.
7. Innovation: Contribute to the advancement of the profession by creating new insights, re-contextualizing existing ideas, or applying innovative approaches.
8. Autonomy: Demonstrate the ability to work autonomously and effectively to complete independent projects.

III. Graded Work

Grading policies in the course are consistent with the [the university's graduate school grades and grading policies](#). Deadlines for assignments are listed in the Annotated Weekly Schedule and on Canvas. Students should submit work on the dates indicated except where university policy provides an exemption.

DESCRIPTION OF GRADED WORK

Discussion Participation (30% of total grade)

Students are expected to regularly complete assigned readings before class and actively contribute to class discussions. One student will be responsible for a presentation (25 min) each week focusing on the reading materials and topic, providing effective questions that encourage in-depth discussion of the topic (25 min), and moderating discussion. Participation will be graded at the mid-point and end of the semester.

Article Reviews (30% of total grade)

From week 2 to week 11, every student will review one article per week in his/her interested research area and summarize it briefly. This assignment is expected to help you develop a literature review for the individual research project that will occur in the last month of the semester. The review must address the background and objectives (1 paragraph), main methods (1 paragraph), key results (1-2 paragraphs), and your overall opinion of the paper (1-2 paragraphs). See assignment prompt for more guidelines.

Research Projects (40% of total grade)

Students will work individually on a single research project to gain hands-on experience with research methods. The project can be of the students' own choice, with the instructor's approval. All research plans need to be finalized by week 11 and presented in class.

All Rubrics for assignments, projects, and engagement are found on CANVAS

The graded work assesses the course learning objectives as follows:

Assessment	LAA 6xxx – Course Learning Objectives (CLOs)							
	SLO 1	SLO 2	SLO 3	SLO 4	SLO 6			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Discussion Participation	X	X	X	X		X	X	
Article Reviews	X				X		X	
Research Project	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

GRADING SCALE

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/graduate/regulations/> under *GRADES*.

For information on how UF assigns grade points for graduate courses, consult the [UF Graduate Catalog](#).

A	93 – 100%		C	73 – 77%
A-	90 – 92%		C-	70 – 72%
B+	88 – 89%		D+	68 – 69%
B	83 – 87%		D	63 – 67%
B-	80 – 82%		D-	60 – 62%
C+	78 – 79%		E	<60

The Department acknowledges that the student retains ownership of their documents; however, it is a necessity for the Department to retain the right to use the documents for professional accreditation purposes. Furthermore, other course specific work, such as service-learning opportunities, may require the Department to ultimately provide work created by students to an outside organization.

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.).

IV. Tentative Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic: Course Introduction and Faculty Research• Required Readings: TBD• Assignment: Article Reviews Assigned; Student Presentation Assigned
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic: The nature and tools of research• Required Readings: TBD• Assignment: Article Review Due
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic: The problem: the heart of the research process• Required Readings: TBD• Assignment: Article Review Due
Week 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic: Review of the related literature• Required Readings: TBD• Assignment: Article Review Due
Week 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Topic: Planning your research project & writing the research proposal• Required Readings: TBD

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assignment: : Article Review Due
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Quantitative research • Required Readings: TBD • Assignment: : Article Review Due
Week 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Landscape Performance • Required Readings: TBD • Assignment: : Article Review Due
Week 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Big data and AI • Required Readings: TBD • Assignment: : Article Review Due
Week 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Survey • Required Readings: TBD • Assignment: Article Review Due
Week 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spring Break
Week 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Project proposal presentation • Required Readings: TBD • Assignment: Article Review Due
Week 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Working on individual research project
Week 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Working on individual research project
Week 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Working on individual research project
Week 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topic: Project Presentations

VI. Required Policies

Class Attendance & Excused Absences:

Requirements for class attendance and excused absences are consistent with university policies. [See UF Academic Regulations and Policies for more information regarding the University Attendance Policies.](#)

Requirements for exams, reading days, and excused absences relative to exams and other assignments/assessments are consistent with university policies. [See Examination Policies and Reading Days for more information regarding University Exam Policies.](#)

Accommodations for students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. See the ["Get Started With the DRC" webpage on the Disability Resource Center site](#). 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.

Technology

Canvas: In this class, Canvas, UF's online learning management system, will be used for course activities, resources, assignments and communication channels. All assignments will be posted through the Canvas course site unless otherwise directed.

Online Course Evaluation Process:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways:

1. The email they receive from GatorEvals,
2. Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or
3. The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluera.com>

Guidance on how to Provide Constructive Feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>.

Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

UF 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 Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the UF Conduct Code website for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures with the instructor's approval. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal education 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 an 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 presentation 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 guest 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.

Campus Resources:

• Health and Wellness

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).
- University Police Department: Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).
- GatorWell Health Promotion Services: For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

Academic Resources

- E-learning technical support: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- [Career Connections Center](#): Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- [Library Support](#): Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources. Call 866-281-6309 or email ask@ufl.libanswers.com for more information.
- [Teaching Center](#): 1317 Turlington Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- [Writing Studio](#): Daytime (9:30am-3:30pm): 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138 | Evening (5:00pm-7:00pm): 1545 W University Avenue (Library West, Rm. 339). Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- Academic Complaints: Office of the Ombuds; Visit the [Complaint Portal webpage](#) for more information.
- Enrollment Management Complaints (Registrar, Financial Aid, Admissions): View the [Student Complaint Procedure webpage for more information](#).

VI. Resources

Journals

Landscape Architecture Journals

- Landscape Journal
- Journal of Landscape Architecture
- Landscape Research
- Landscape and Urban Planning
- Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes

Planning Journals

- Journal of the American Planning Association
- Planning Perspectives
- Journal of Planning Literature
- Journal of Planning Education and Research
- Journal of Planning History
- Journal of Urban History

- Topos

Geography Journals

- Progress in Human Geography
- Annals of American Association of Geographers
- Cultural Geographies
- Antipode
- Area
- Geoforum
- Geohumanities
- Environment and Planning D

Art Journals

- Art in America
- Art Bulletin
- Art Journal
- Artforum
- Grey Room
- October

Landscape Architecture Institutions

The Main Three

- American Society of Landscape Architecture
- Landscape Architecture Foundation
- The Cultural Landscape Foundation

International Landscape Architecture Institutions

- International Federation of Landscape Architects
- Landscape Institute
- Canadian Society of Landscape Architects
- Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture
- European Council of Landscape Arch. Schools

Architecture Journals

- Journal of Architectural Education (JAE)
- Journal of Architectural and Planning Research
- Technology | Architecture + Design
- Harvard Design Magazine
- Journal of Architectural Historians
- Buildings & Landscapes
- Journal of Urban Design
- Places Journal

Other Important Journals

- Nature
- Science
- BioScience
- New England Journal of Medicine
- Journal of the American Medical Association

Important Allied Organizations

- American Planning Association
- American Institute of Architects
- International Society of Arboriculture
- National Complete Streets Coalition
- US Green Building Council
- National Recreation and Parks Association
- Urban Land Institute
- National Asso. of Landscape Professionals

* The instructor reserves the right to adjust the syllabus as needed.