Course Number	ARC6911-RMSD (21357)
Course Title	**Research Design in Sustainability (Research Method-1)**
Term	Spring 2026
Instructor	Albertus S. Wang, Associate Instructional Professor
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Instructor	Djundi Tjindra, Ph.D.
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	Office Hours: by appointment
Credits	2 Credit Hours
Class Time	Friday, 3:30pm to 5:30pm EST/EDT
Room Number	Zoom Links; Refer to Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research Design in Sustainability (ARC6911) and Research Project Proposal Development or Thesis/MRP Prep (ARC6913) are two courses designed to equip students in the Master of Science in Architectural Studies, focus in Sustainable Design (MSAS|SD) Program with the necessary foundations to establish their research topics for either a thesis or master's research project (MRP). "Research Topics in Sustainability," also known as "Research Method/Methodology," provides a structured environment that encourages students to explore research topics aligned with their interests in sustainability, ensuring the work can be satisfactorily completed within the assigned timeframe. The course places a strong emphasis on grasping research thinking and processes, enabling students to craft compelling research topics, questions, objectives, methods, and methodologies. It guides them in drawing persuasive conclusions. In the realm of MRP, students are encouraged to let their research findings inform their projects. The course focuses on differentiating between a thesis and a project, defining planning problems and appropriate research questions, understanding various study designs and data collection methodologies employed by others, as well as overall strategies for designing and conducting research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

(ARC6911) 1st Semester Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
- Understand the similarities and differences between a thesis and a master's research project.
- Understand the proposals or thesis structure.
- Understand the research process.
- Develop competence in discipline-specific conventions and formatting styles.
- Identify and formulate research questions or research problems.
- Understand the distinction between research methodology (the philosophical underpinning of the conducted research) and research methods (concrete techniques and procedures used to gather and analyze data).
  - On methodology: determine the appropriate method, i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods research designs — to address formulated research questions.
  - On Research Methods: understand two basic research methods commonly used: literature review and case study analysis.
- Use academic databases and libraries effectively to locate peer-reviewed sources for conducting a literature review.
- Conduct a basic and relevant literature review.

- Integrate scholarly literature and distinguish between crucial and non-essential sources for incorporation into a literature review.
- Cite sources appropriately and avoid plagiarism through paraphrasing, summarizing, and clear attribution.

(ARC6913) 2nd Semester Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students should be ready to continue and complete their thesis or MRP. Upon completion of this course (ARC6913), students should be able to:

- Critically analyze and evaluate research studies within a specific topic area, assessing methods, limitations, and contributions, to aid students in selecting their research topics.
- Formulate and identify their research topic, question(s), objective(s), research methodology (the philosophical underpinning of the conducted research) and research methods (the techniques employed for data collection).
- Develop a comprehensive research methodology and proposal for a viable study within a particular inquiry framework.
- Justify and align chosen research methodologies/methods and designs with research questions and purposes.
- Compile a comprehensive working bibliography comprising books, articles, and other essential data sources.
- Thoroughly analyze each case study to extract valuable data that can be employed to bolster their research and strengthen their argument, ultimately leading to a persuasive conclusion.
- Develop a video presentation about their research topics, intended for presentation to the DCP faculty, to facilitate the timely formation of students' committees.
- Employ AI tools effectively to support research activities, from literature review and data analysis to presentation and communication.

It is important that students who completed ARC6911 and ARC6913 possess an academic research foundation, encompassing a convincing design featuring important research components such as the research topic, research questions and objectives, research methodology and method/approach, a comprehensive working bibliography, and an 80% completed literature review and analysis of case studies. This preparation equips them to make the most of the final 2 months of their thesis/MRP semester, enabling them to craft substantial research documents in the form of a thesis or MRP.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Students learn methods best by doing them. Therefore, the course will be taught in the context of developing your ideas for your master's research project or thesis. The course will involve a series of assignment where students begin to understand what a thesis or a project is, how to design research, what research process is, what research components are, how to frame a constructive research question, how to do literature review or how to draw a compelling conclusion. In the second part of the course during the spring semester, they will prepare a working bibliography and the first four chapters of the thesis or project; a working abstract, an introduction (draft; complete with research question, objectives, and methodologies), a significant amount of literature review and case study analysis. Instruction will use a combination of taped lectures, in-person discussions and written assignments.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

The following book is required for all students.
Kumar, Ranjit (2014). **Research Methodology**: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners. **Fourth Edition**. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

The following books are recommended for all students. I highly recommend the Hart book, which describes how to do a literature review, and is useful in organizing and expressing ideas, and mapping and analyzing ideas. The Booth book had been used as a primary text in the past. However, some of the best parts of it have been incorporated into the Turabian book. It remains among the best sources on making an argument and supporting it. The Creswell texts are an alternative to the Kumar text and explain the research concepts differently, so may be useful if you are having difficulty with the Kumar text. I have also placed a list of references to books and other research-related resources under the Resources tab on Canvas.

- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (Fourth Edition). Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (Fifth Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Sommer, Robert and Barbara Sommer. (2002). *A Practical Guide to Behavioral Research Tools and Techniques, Fifth Edition.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Turabian, Kate L. (2013). *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (Eighth Edition). Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Available in e-book format)
- Hart, Chris. 1998. Doing a Literature Review: Releasing the Social Science Imagination. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Booth, Wayne, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams (2008). The Craft of Research: Third Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Available in e-book format).
- Given the timeframe for our course, we will use the guidance provided by S. Joseph Levine at: http://www.learnerassociates.net/dissthes/#8.

COURSE CONTENT*

All other reading materials will be posted on Canvas.

No	Date	Description
I	01/16	1. Introduction to ARC6911; Research - What Why How (Who When) • Course overview • What is research and research questions? • Assignment 1* – Exploring Research Avenues: Topic Brainstorming
		Reading Assignment → Overview of the Research Process and Understanding Your Interests Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapters 1 and 2.
II	01/23	2. Overview of the Research Process & Finding Resources • Research Processes and Components • How to formulate good research questions • Research Objectives • Research Methodology vs Methods • Finding Resources • Assignment 2* – Research Topic Selection & Formulating Preliminary Research Questions
		Reading Assignment → Methodologies, Philosophies, and Hypothesis

		Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapters 4, 5 and 6: Formulating research problem, identifying variables, constructing hypotheses.
III	01/30	3. Methodologies, Philosophies, and Hypothesis • Research philosophy: Ontology and Epistemology • Thesis Structure, Thesis vs. MRP • Research Design: Qualitative or Quantitative • Variables & Hypothesis • Research Question (RQ) and Objectives (RO) • How to narrow down your research questions • Assignment 3* – Defining Your Research Philosophy: Ontological and Epistemological Perspective
IV	02/06	• Discussion on Research Topics and Problems
		Reading Assignment → Method of Data Collection and Considering Ethical Issues in Data Collection 1. Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapters 9 and 14: Selecting a method of data collection and considering ethical issues in data collection 2. The Craft of Research (Booth, Colomb, and Williams, 2008): Chapter 5: From Problems to Sources.
V	02/13	4. Method of Data Collection and Considering Ethical Issues in Data Collection • Research Framework • Data Collection: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary sources • Method of Data Collection • Quantitative, Qualitative, or Mixed Methods? • Finding Sources • Ethical Considerations in Human Research • Assignment 4* – Developing Research Question • Discussion on Research Question
VI	02/20	5. Citing Sources and Managing References • Citations (Cite sources appropriately and avoid plagiarism through paraphrasing, summarizing, and clear attribution); APA-Style • Citation Management Software
		Reading Assignment → by this time, you should have read Ranjit Kumar's chapter 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 and 14. • The Craft of Research (Booth, Colomb, and Williams, 2008), Chapter 5: From Problems to Sources.
VII	02/27	6. Research Design: Concepts and Hypotheses in Qualitative & Quantitative Research • What is Research Design • Identifying Variables • Variables & Hypothesis • Assignment 5* – Research Problem Framework and Operationalizing Concepts
		Reading Assignment → Literature Review 1. Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapters 3: Reviewing the Literature 2. Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches (Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D., 2018): Chapter 2 - Literature Review.
VIII	03/06	7. Literature Review

		• Summary of the Literature vs Literature Review • Annotated Bibliography • Literature Review: Techniques and Strategies • Assignment 6* – Source Identification and Relevance Assessment
IX	03/13	• Mind Mapping & Synthesis Matrix • Synthesizing Literature Review using Synthesis Matrix • Assignment 7* – Literature Review - Synthesis Matrix Approach
	03/20	SPRING BREAK
		Reading Assignment → Hart, C. (1998). Doing a literature review: Releasing the social science research imagination. Chapter 1: The literature review in research.
X	03/27	8. Academic Writing • Strategies for Narrowing Down your Research Topic • Structure of Literature Review • Literature mapping technique using Synthesis Matrix • How to paraphrase • Plagiarism: UF Policy and Code of Penalties • Assignment 8* – Crafting your Literature Review
XI	04/03	8. Academic Writing (cont.) & Fallacies • Writing Literature Review • Writing tools/elements: Paragraph and Paragraphing, Signal Phrases, Transition Words, Style, and Tenses • ~~Logical fallacies and how to avoid them~~ • Assignment 9* – Complete the UF integrity module
XII	04/10	• Review of Assignment 8: Crafting your Literature Review • How to Write an Introduction • How to Write a Conclusion • What kind of questions the review of literature can answer? • Types of degrees and characteristics of the Literature Review
XIII	04/17	9. Fallacies & Effective Presentations • Logical fallacies and how to avoid them • PowerPoint Presentation Strategies • Assignment 10* – Reflective insights on Literature Review (a PowerPoint presentation)

Note: * Assignment due date, please refer to Canvas Assignments

COURSE ADMINISTRATION

This course will be conducted online, utilizing the platforms listed below, among others:
- CANVAS: Primary portal for course materials and communication.
- ZOOM (https://zoom.us/privacy; https://zoom.us/accessibility): Used for live sessions; links will be available on Canvas.
- ONE-DRIVE: Repository for shared files and collaborative work.
- UF Apps: Provides access to required applications without local installation.

The UF Canvas e-learning portal will serve as the primary platform for sharing electronic course materials and common references. It is accessible at http://elearning.ufl.edu. If you experience access issues, notify your faculty immediately. Zoom will be used for live online sessions. Zoom will be used for live online sessions, and links to Zoom meetings, along with other course platform access, will be available on Canvas.

Online Communication & Netiquette[1]

Although this course is conducted online, it remains a formal learning environment, and appropriate behavior is expected when interacting with peers and instructors. Follow established netiquette guidelines to ensure respectful and professional communication.

Security

Remember that your password is the only thing protecting you from pranks or more serious harm.
- Don't share your password with anyone.
- Change your password if you think someone else might know it.
- Always logout when you are finished using the system.

CLASS PREPARATION

This is a demanding and analytical course, and your preparation should reflect that. For interactive classes, it is strongly recommended to review the assigned readings and pre-recorded lectures in advance. Many students find group discussions beneficial for reinforcing key concepts, though this is optional. However, a significant part of the learning experience in this course comes from active participation in group discussions.

ATTENDANCE and MAKE-UP POLICY

Our attendance policy is strict: All students are expected to attend every scheduled class. Any absence must be explained via email to the professor.
- Three unexcused absences will result in a full letter grade deduction.
- Four or more unexcused absences will result in a failing grade and/or an automatic drop from the course.
- Late arrivals (within 30 minutes of class start) will count as half an absence. Arriving more than 30 minutes late will be counted as a full absence.

If you are facing serious circumstances that may affect your attendance, please reach out. Accommodations may be made for severe illness, family emergencies, or personal crises.
For more details on UF's absence policy, visit: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies

All seminar sessions are recorded for review; however, recordings cannot fully replicate the interactive learning experience of live group discussions. While discussing the material with a fellow student or arranging a one-on-one session with the professor may provide some guidance, neither can substitute for the collective engagement that takes place during class. In accordance with UF Attendance Policies, students with UF-approved excused absences will be provided reasonable opportunities to make up missed work, assessments, and participation. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to arrange accommodations consistent with UF policy.

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[1] Adapted from information provided by the UF Center for Teaching Excellence Quality Assurance Committee: Netiquette Guide for Online Courses: https://teach.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NetiquetteGuideforOnlineCourses.docx

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USE of AI POLICY

This course prioritizes your development as an independent writer, thinker, and problem solver. Limited, transparent use of AI tools is allowed for early-stage idea support and language-level proofreading, but not for content generation, substantive revision, translating assignments merely to obtain results instead of learning the material, or otherwise circumventing the assignment's learning goals.

Since the course includes explicit instruction on AI, assignments within the relevant modules may permit the use of specific AI/ML tools; the instructor will specify which tools, uses, and documentation (for example, raw outputs, notebooks, or an AI use statement) are required.

You are responsible for the originality and accuracy of all submitted work, the integrity of your sources, and compliance with assignment requirements. If asked, you may be required to share process artifacts (e.g., notes, outlines, drafts) or to discuss your drafting or work process. Undisclosed or prohibited AI use may result in a failing grade on the assignment or in the course and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.

If you are unsure whether a use is permitted, ask the instructor before submitting.

General UF AI policies and UF Policy on Student Conduct Violation can be found here → see footnote[2].

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

Unless otherwise specified, assignments must be submitted through the course Canvas website by the designated due date and time. To avoid potential technical issues, do not wait until the last minute to submit your work.

GRADING

Grading will be structured as follows:
1. 20% – In-class participation and engagement: This includes attendance, effort, progress, and overall attitude. Active participation in class discussions and presentations will significantly impact the final grade.
2. 80% – Assignments:
   - Assignment grades will be based on timely submission and adherence to outlined criteria.
   - Late submissions will incur point deductions as specified in the assignment details.
   - Make-up assignments for extra credit are at the instructor's discretion and are optional. Grading criteria for any make-up assignments will be provided within the assignment itself.
   - Unless otherwise instructed, all assignments must be completed individually. Students must be mindful of plagiarism and ensure their work is original. Submitting another student's work, copying from external sources without proper citation, or any form of academic dishonesty will be subject to academic integrity policies and may result in penalties.
   - The Capstone Project at the end of the semester will carry a greater weight within the assignment grade. However, the specific weight will be determined at the instructor's discretion and announced later in the course.

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[2] AI Governance: https://privacy.ufl.edu/laws-and-regulations/ai-governance | UF Policy: Student Conduct Violation: https://flexible.dce.ufl.edu/media/flexibledceufledu/documents/uf_policy_student_conduct.pdf | Academic Integrity in the Age of AI: https://teach.ufl.edu/resource-libraryold/academic-integrity-in-the-age-of-ai

The following listing of project grades should help to understand their breakdown and grading criteria.

Graduate School Grading Scale + Qualitative Descriptions

	Letter Grade	Numeric Grade	Quality Points	Qualitative Description
PASSING GRADES	A	100-93	4.0	Outstanding work only
	A-	92-90	3.67	Close to outstanding
	B+	89-87	3.33	Very good work
	B	86-83	3.0	Good work
	B-	82-80	2.67	Good work with some problems
	C+	79-77	2.33	Slightly above average work
	C	76-73	2.0	Average work
FAILING GRADES	C-	72-70	1.67	Average work with some problems
	D+	69-67	1.33	Poor work with some effort
	D	66-63	1.0	Poor work
	D-	62-60	0.67	Poor work with some problems
	E	59-0	0.0	Inadequate work

(Note adjacent to Quality Points 3.0: Minimum Cumulative GPA = 3.0)

The current UF grading policies can be found at: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies

Please note that the University of Florida Graduate School requires that a graduate student maintain a 3.0 (B) average to remain in good academic standing. Every possible effort is made to counsel students in academic difficulty to determine the cause and possible solution so that the student can continue and complete their studies in the University. The Graduate School considers grades of C-minus or lower to be failing grades. Note that you cannot graduate with any failing grades (C-minus or lower) or incomplete ("I") grades on your transcript.

An incomplete grade may be assigned at the instructor's discretion as an interim grade only in cases of extreme extenuating circumstances. Incomplete grades must be resolved before starting the final MRP (Master's Research Project) or thesis, as unresolved incompletes will prevent graduation. Failure to complete the requirements before the start of the next semester will result in at least a one-semester delay in program progress.

GENERAL GUIDELINES
When communicating online, you should always:
- Treat instructors and classmates with respect, even in email or in any other online communication.
- Use clear and concise language.
- All college level communication should have correct spelling and grammar.
- Use standard fonts such as Arial, Calibri, Helvetica, or Times New Roman.
- Avoid using all lower cases (as it can be interpreted as lazy) and all upper cases or caps lock feature (AS IT CAN BE INTERPRETTED AS YELLING). We are here try to make you "professional" in all aspects, including preparing documents and communicating.

- Limit and possibly avoid the use of emoticons like :) or 🙂.
- Be cautious when using humor or sarcasm as tone is sometimes lost in an email or discussion post and your message might be taken seriously or offensive.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and other's).
- Do not send confidential medical or patient information via e-mail.

Email Communications

When you send an email to your instructor, teaching assistant, or classmates, you should:
- Use a descriptive subject line.
- Be concise and clear.
- Use standard file formats for attachments (e.g. PDF, DOCX, XLSX), or confirm that the recipient can open the format you intend to send.
- Sign your message with your name and return e-mail address.
- Think before you send the e-mail to more than one person. Does everyone really need to see your message?
- Be sure you REALLY want everyone to receive your response when you click, "Reply All."
- Be sure that the message author intended for the information to be passed along before you click the "forward" button.

Discussion Board Guidelines

When posting on the Discussion Board, you should:
- Pay attention to manner.
- Be open-minded.
- If you ask a question and many people respond summarize all posts for the benefit of the class.
- When engaged in class discussion:
  – Make discussion that are on topic and within the scope of the course material.
  – Don't repeat someone else's comment without adding something of your own to it.
  – Take your comments seriously.
  – Avoid short, generic replies such as, "I agree." You should include why you agree or add to the previous point.
  – If you refer to something that was said in an earlier post, quote a few key lines so reader do not have go back and figure out which post you are referring to.
  – Avoid plagiarism. Use your own words to analyze and synthesize ideas. Always give proper credit when referencing or quoting sources.
  – If you reply to a classmate's question, make sure your answer is correct, don't guess.
- Always be respectful of others' opinions even when they differ from your own.
  – When you disagree with someone, you should express your differing opinions in a respectful, non-critical way.
  – Do not make personal or insulting remarks.
  – Do not write anything sarcastic or angry; it often backfires.
  – Do not type in ALL CAPS, if you do IT WILL LOOK LIKE YOU ARE YELLING.

Zoom Online Meetings

When attending a Zoom class or meeting, you should:
- Do not share your Zoom classroom link or password with others.
- Enter the room a little early to have time to set up your audio and/or video.
- Even though you may be alone at home your professor and classmates can see you! While attending class in your pajamas is tempting, remember that wearing clothing is not optional. Dress appropriately.

- Mute your microphone when not in use, especially if you are in a location that can be noisy. Don't leave your microphone open if you don't have to.
- Your professor and classmates can also see what is behind you, so be aware of your surroundings. Make sure the background is not distracting or something you would not want your classmates to see.
- When in doubt use a virtual background.
  - If you choose to use one, you should test the background out first to make sure your device can support it.
  - Your background can express your personality but be sure to avoid using backgrounds that may contain offensive images, inappropriate language, nudity, and/or overt political messaging.

Privacy

Remember to safeguard private or sensitive information.
- Be careful with personal information (both yours and other people's).
- Our class sessions may be audio-visually recorded for enrolled students to refer back to and for those unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image agree to have their video or image recorded for purposes of this class only. Students who are un-muted and participate orally agree to have their voices recorded.
- Recording for purposes other than those permitted by UF policy above is prohibited. Unauthorized publication of recorded materials is prohibited.

Use of Reference Material

All references should follow the format used by the American Psychological Association (APA). Citations should appear in the text as follows: (Meyer & Miller, 2014) when using an idea from the text; or (Meyer and Miller, 2014, p. 2-33) when using a specific quote on the indicated page (in this case, page 2-33). A good source of information on the APA format can be found from the Purdue Online Writing Lab: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/. Students from other departments may use a commonly accepted format for citations from their own field; please discuss this option with the instructor before you complete the outline of the paper.

Assistance for Writing Papers

The online resources to assist you in writing are extensive. The Dial Center for Written and Oral Communication (http://cwoc.ufl.edu/) and the Writing Program (http://writing.ufl.edu) at the University of Florida can assist you in several different aspects of writing. You can use the writing lab to get one-on-one help on every area of composition from basic grammar and mechanics to topics like essay organization, style, and argument.

Many universities offer online handbooks on academic writing. Three particularly useful resources are those provided by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/), the University of Wisconsin (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/), and Purdue University (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/).

The following handouts are especially helpful when editing papers:
http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CommonErrors.html and
http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/ClearConciseSentences.html.

The online handbooks listed above address many aspects of academic writing. Students at the graduate level are expected to write critical arguments rather than simply describe relationships. Questions regarding expectations at the graduate level should be directed to the instructors.

UF POLICIES[3]

University Policy on Academic Misconduct

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. 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 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code (https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/4-040) 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 your faculty instructors.

Plagiarism includes the direct copying of text/images from other sources as well as minor alterations of work created by others (mirroring, application of visual effects/filters/distortions, etc.). Plagiarism is a serious offense and can lead to failure of the course and/or premature dismissal from the Graduate School. We expect that the work you prepare is wholly your own, created this semester for this course. You are expected to provide appropriate citations and/or credit for images, text references, and design influences, where appropriate. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult your instructors.

POLICY on RETAINING WORK

Please note that the University of Florida, College of Design, Construction, and Planning policy states that student's work may be retained indefinitely for academic purposes. You should be prepared for the instructor to ask that it be exhibited or photographed during or after the term. Having your work retained for photography or exhibition is evidence of its quality and value to the School. Not to worry, you will be able either to retrieve your original work or retrieve it temporarily to make copies or photograph it for your own personal purposes.

ACADEMIC POLICIES and CAMPUS RESOURCES
For more information on academic policies and campus resources, visit: https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies

CHANGES AND REVISIONS TO SYLLABUS

This syllabus is subject to adjustment. Any changes will be communicated during regular class meetings.

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[3] more on the UF Academic policies and resources: https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies

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