

Course Number	ARC6913-MRPA (10474)
Course Title	Research Project Proposal Development (Research Method-2)
Term	Spring 2026
Instructor	Albertus S. Wang, Inst. Associate Professor/Senior Lecturer eMail: aslwang@ufl.edu Faculty Office: CityLab-Orlando Office (by appointment) Office Hours: by appointment
Instructor	Djundi Tjindra, Ph.D. eMail: djundi@ufl.edu Office Hours: by appointment
Credits	2 Credit Hours
Class Time	Wednesday, 6:00pm to 8:00pm EST/EDT
Room Number	Zoom Links; Refer to Canvas.

PREREQUISITES

ARC6911 Research Design in Sustainability (Research Method-1)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Research Design in Sustainability (ARC6911) and Research Project Proposal Development or Thesis/MRP Prep (ARC6913) are two sequential courses designed to equip students in the Master of Science in Architectural Studies, focusing on 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 Project Proposal Development or Thesis/MRP Prep (ARC6913) is the second of the two courses on research design required in the program. This course continues the topics in research design that have not been covered in Research Design in Sustainability (ARC6911) but also helps students arrive at their research proposals and formulate their committees. The course provides a structured environment that encourages students to establish a line of research into topics that support their interests in sustainability, which can be successfully completed in the allotted time. It emphasizes the conceptualization of a research design, the selection of a study design, and information-gathering strategies typically used in practice, including case studies, experimental and quasi-experimental design, survey methods, open-ended interviewing, and observation. It also deals with how to develop and use a conceptual framework that will assure that the information gathered is pertinent and useful to answer the questions that may be of interest to policymakers or addressed in a master's thesis. Thus, the course focuses on defining planning problems and suitable research questions, the development of simple conceptual models, understanding the types of study designs and data collection methodologies available to understand problems, and the overall strategies for the design and conduct of research.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to finalize their research topics, research questions, and objectives; understand the research process and the variety of study designs and data collection methodologies; conceptualize relationships within the research question; and choose a study design and data collection methodology appropriate to the question being asked. The subject matter will be addressed through lectures, targeted readings, and discussion sessions. In addition, technical issues of producing a thesis or MRP are covered. By the end of the course, students will have prepared the first six chapters of a thesis or MRP:

- (Working) Abstract (with keywords)
- (Working) Introduction (with clear Research Question(s) and Research Objectives)

- Two main research methods: Literature Review and Case Study Analysis
- (Working) Methodology
- (Working) Bibliography.

While this course will help develop the skills to design a research proposal, it is not a substitute for the decision-making that is required in defining a thesis or research project, which needs to be worked on with their committees starting this semester until the following course, ARC6979 Thesis and Master Research Project.

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. The Hart book is highly recommended, as it explains how to conduct a literature review and is particularly useful for organizing and expressing ideas, as well as mapping and analyzing existing research. The Booth book was used as a primary text in the past; however, many of its strongest sections have since been incorporated into the Turabian book, which remains one of the best sources on constructing and supporting an argument. The Creswell texts serve as an alternative to the Kumar text and present research concepts in a different way, making them helpful for students who may be experiencing difficulty with the Kumar text. In addition, a list of references to books and other research-related resources is available 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 DELIVERY

No	Date	Description
I	01/14	1. Introduction to ARC6913 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-UF, SIS in your Graduate Information Management System (GIMS) • Case Study and Case Analysis • Assignment 1* – Analyzing Case Studies in Your Selected Research Topic
		Reading Assignment 2 → Study Design and Case Study Research <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapter 8. 2. Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design, fourth edition (Creswell & Poth): Chapter 4: Case Study Research.
II	01/21	2. Case Study Research: Methods, Examples, and Procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Class Presentation from Reading Assignment 2 • Case Study Examples: Quantitative vs Qualitative. • Case Study Research as a Methodology • Procedures for Conducting Case Study Research • Assignment 2* – Presentation of Case Studies in Your Selected Research Topic.
		Reading Assignment 3 → Considering Ethical Issues in Data Collection Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapter 14.
III	01/28	3. Ethical Issues in Data Collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Class Presentation from Reading Assignment 3 • UF IRB (The University of Florida Institutional Review Boards) • Assignment 3* – Obtaining IRB Certification
IV	02/04	Graded individual presentation of Case Studies in Your Selected Research Topic (Assignment 2)
		Reading Assignment 4 → Selecting and Collecting Data Using Attitudinal Scales Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 9: Selecting a Method of Data Collection. 2. Chapter 10: Collecting Data Using Attitudinal Scales.
V	02/11	4. Methods of Data Collection, Likert and Thurstone Scales & Survey Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Class Presentation from Reading Assignment 4 • Assignment 4* – Develop a survey questionnaire
		Reading Assignment 5 → Abstracts, Introductions and Conclusions Booth, W. C., Colomb, G. G., & Williams, J. M. (2008). The Craft of Research (3rd ed.): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chapter 14: Revising Your Organization and Argument: Quick Tip: Abstracts. 2. Chapter 16: Introductions and Conclusions.
VI	02/18	5. Abstract, Introductions and Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly Class Presentation from Reading Assignment 5 • How to write an Abstract (incl. working Abstract), Introductions and Conclusions. • Assignment 5* – Write an Abstract
MRP/Thesis Prep: Formulating Committee and sending your research proposal to your committee.		
		Reading Assignment 6 → Writing a Research Proposal Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapter 13: Writing a Research Proposal.
VII	02/25	6 & 7. Research Proposal and Thesis/MRP Proposal Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to write a Research Proposal • Key Components of a Research Proposal

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to create 3-5 mins research proposal presentation Assignment 6* – Write your Thesis/MRP Proposal
VIII	03/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation Techniques and Formulating a Three-Minute-Video Structure of the Final Report Timeline & Budget Planning Assignment 7* – Record your 3 to 5 mins Thesis/MRP Proposal
		Readings: TBA
IX	03/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual presentation of the 3 to 5 mins Thesis/MRP Proposal Formulating your committee Setting up two meetings with your committee members Create a schedule, zoom links, MIRO wall for you and your committee Assignment 7a* – Rubric evaluation and comments of the MRP or Thesis Proposal Presentation
		→ Sending your research proposal and video to your committee. Based on Assignment 6 and 7, your research proposal must contain: a working ABSTRACT (with keywords), a working INTRODUCTION (with research question and objectives), methodology, literature review, case study analysis, bibliography.
	03/18	SPRING BREAK
		Reading Assignment 8 → Constructing Hypotheses Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapter 6.
X	03/25	8. Constructing Hypotheses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definition, functions, types, characteristics and testing of a hypothesis Errors in testing a hypothesis Hypotheses in Qualitative research Assignment 8* – Peer Evaluation of Assignment 4 – Mixed-Program Development Survey Design
		Reading Assignment 9 → Writing a Research Report Research Methodology (Ranjit Kumar, 2014), Chapter 17.
XI	04/01	9. Writing a Research Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conventions in academic writing Quantitative vs. Qualitative writing styles and developing a draft outline Variables and referencing systems Integration and flow
XII	04/08	10. AI Tools for Academic Research and Researchers
		Readings: TBA
XIII	04/15	11. Critical AI & Ethics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ethical researcher in the age of AI. Ethical frameworks for AI in academic research Critical issues in AI-assisted Academic research Plagiarism and academic integrity in the AI era Responsible use of AI in different research phases Best practices and guidelines

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assignment 9* – Group discussion: AI & sustainability case studies
XIV	04/22	Individual presentation of Assignment 9

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 & Netiquette¹

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.

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>

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.

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 footnote².

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, students are advised not to wait until the last minute to submit their work. Assignments should not be submitted via email to the instructor.

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.

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

- 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.

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	
	B	86-83	3.0	Very good work
	B-	82-80	2.67	Good work
	C+	79-77	2.33	Good work with some problems
	C	76-73	2.0	Slightly above average work
FAILING GRADES	C-	72-70	1.67	Average work
	D+	69-67	1.33	Average work with some problems
	D	66-63	1.0	Poor work with some effort
	D-	62-60	0.67	Poor work
	E	59-0	0.0	Poor work with some problems
				Inadequate work

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.

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.

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