

## **CP8990 Syllabus**

Applied Research Paper, 2 credits

Fall 2026

### **Instructor Information**

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### **General Course Information**

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#### **Description**

The applied research paper (CP 8990) is an individual research project on a subject related to your concentration within the MCRP curriculum. It may be helpful to think of this paper as an applied research paper or a professional paper. This paper can take many forms. You can analyze a question of interest to you and the profession of planning, assess an existing program or policy, or apply planning knowledge towards the solution of a particular problem, amongst other options. The paper can also employ various methods of inquiry: case studies, analysis of GIS or census data, surveys, observations, and designs have all been employed in the past.

The applied research paper, then, is an opportunity for you to explore an issue of interest to you in greater detail than is possible within the context of a class. It also challenges you to work through a planning issue from start to finish: selecting your topic, examining the existing body of knowledge related to your topic, forming your research question, designing and executing your study, and synthesizing what you learn into a well-written and argued paper. Thus, it will help you pull together the disparate aspects of your education into the examination and attempted resolution of a particular problem or issue. Finally, once completed, it will serve as the best example of your work for when you seek employment.

Choosing the right topic is an important part of this process. You should look at some of the applied research papers that are on the MCRP website for a sense of the kinds of questions students have addressed in the past, and the research methods used to answer the questions. It may be helpful to think of general questions of interest to you, and then to deduce more specific questions that you will try to answer. It is important that the topic eventually chosen be specific and concrete enough to be answered in some reasonable way. And, of course, you should discuss the ideas with me before proceeding too far.

## **Course Learning Outcomes**

1. Formulate a clear, specific, and feasible applied research question grounded in an understanding of the existing body of planning knowledge.
2. Review and synthesize relevant academic literature, professional reports, and policy documents to contextualize the research question.
3. Analyze and interpret qualitative and/or quantitative evidence in a manner that is rigorous, transparent, and relevant to planning problems.
4. Communicate research findings effectively in professional written form, suitable for use as a writing sample for employment or further academic work.

## **Required Course Materials**

1. The Introduction Formula: <http://blogs.ubc.ca/khead/research/research-advice/formula>
2. Booth, Colomb, & Williams (2014). *The Craft of Research*. University of Chicago Press.

## **Grading Policy:**

The applied research paper is graded on a letter grade basis. The tasks below are required at the times specified. Grades will be based on the quality of the product and the timeliness of its delivery.

The Fall semester grade will be based on the following deliverables and weights:

- Brief proposal on 2-3 topics 10%
- Detailed workplan and bibliography 30%
- Prospectus 50%
- Participation and peer feedback 10%

*If Spring-Fall schedule, 5% peer review comes out of the draft prospectus grade.*

The Spring semester grade will be based on the following deliverables and weights:

- Results section 25%
- Full draft paper 25%
- Peer review 10%
- Final paper 35%
- Participation and peer feedback 5%

## **Description of Graded Components**

1. Brief proposal: Begin by writing a very brief essay describing your proposed research question(s) and how you hope to go about answering some or all of these questions.

Your questions should number no more than a few, and all of these should be related to each other. Generally, the approach should be deductive – start out with a general question and add a few more specific, concrete questions to make your research statement more focused. Do not overreach. You do not need to attempt to answer the hardest question, or even the most important question. You are looking for a question that interests you, and that is feasible to address in a limited amount of time. How do you come up with an interesting question? You read, and read, and read some more. Conduct some targeted Google Scholar searches on the topic you are interested in. Look at what has been published recently.

2. Detailed work plan and bibliography: A detailed work plan should provide some background on the research topic, more clearly articulate the research question(s), and identify how you will go about addressing these questions (including describing the basic research design and methods, any existing data that will be obtained, and any data to be collected). A bibliography on your topic should have at least 20 references (this means you will have skimmed more than 20). This should include any relevant formal scholarly literature, but also any applied “gray” literature, important media coverage, etc.
3. Prospectus: A first draft prospectus for your project which must include the following annotated outline for the full paper, understanding that this may change considerably later. The annotated outline should incorporate: a. A placeholder for the introduction (will write at the end). b. A draft literature review/background section. If you do not know how to write a literature review, look at some in the *Journal of Planning Literature*. c. A fully developed outline and discussion of the remaining work plan and the research design. d. A description of all data sources to be used. If you are using “off the shelf” (e.g., census data), then you should describe the fields/variables you will need and the geographies. If new data are to be collected via a survey, a draft survey instrument should be included. If interviews are planned, a draft list of interview questions should be included. e. A description of all methods that will be used to analyze the data. f. Placeholders for results, discussion, and conclusion sections as needed. g. A References section with all works cited. h. Appendices as needed.
4. Participation and peer feedback: You are required to attend ARP meetings, engage in discussions involving your peers’ work, and give detailed and constructive feedback on work milestones of the specific peer you have been assigned to review.
5. Results section: 1) Basic description of empirical results (summary statistics; analytical/inferential statistics; maps; interview results; etc.) 2) Revised, full outline of complete paper that incorporates suggestions and the preliminary results.

6. Full draft paper: This should be a complete and coherent draft paper or final deliverable, and not a description or collection of preliminary results. While length may vary greatly depending on the type and nature of the paper, I generally expect something in the range of 8,000 to 15,000 words plus tables, figures, and references. The draft should include all references.
7. Peer review: Students will complete peer review for another option paper. This feedback will be submitted as a Word document showing comments and suggestions through track changes. Student reviewers will also write a 2-3 paragraph review summary.
8. Final paper: The final product should be revised, edited, and proofread. It should reflect all agreed-upon revisions.
9. Participation and peer feedback: You are required to attend ARP meetings, engage in discussions involving your peers' work, and give detailed and constructive feedback on work milestones of the specific peer you have been assigned to review.

## Course Policies

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### Attendance and/or Participation

Students are required to attend ARP meetings, engage in discussions involving their peers' work, and give detailed and constructive feedback on work milestones of the specific peer they have been assigned to review.

### Academic Integrity

Georgia Tech aims to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Review [Georgia Tech's Honor Code](#) and the student [Code of Conduct](#).

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarism on a quiz, exam, or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, who will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### Core IMPACTS

[Core IMPACTS](#) is the University System of Georgia's General Education curriculum. If you are teaching a course that counts towards Core IMPACTS, you should include a syllabus statement about the Core area and associated [career competencies](#). [This resource](#) developed by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Online Education at Georgia State University includes template syllabus statements for each of the Core IMPACTS areas that you may adapt for your course.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, [contact the Office of Disability Services](#) (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### **Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement**

At Georgia Tech, we believe that it is important to strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. [The Student-Faculty Expectations](#) articulate some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. In the end, simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek. Therefore, I encourage you to remain committed to the ideals of Georgia Tech while in this class.