School of Architecture | Georgia Tech | Fall/2026

ARCH 4315: Practice of Architecture I (3 credits)

ARCH 6315: Practice of Architecture I (3 credits) / NAAB required course for M.Arch 2 & 3

Undergraduate and Graduate Offering

ARCH 4315/6315: Practice of Architecture I Syllabus

Instructor Information

Instructor: Brian Bell, AIA, Professor of the Practice of Architecture

Email: brian.bell@gatech.edu

Office Location: 110 Arch East

Office Hours: email w/ requests

TA Name: TBD

TA Email: TBD

General Course Information

Course Descriptions

4315 - Principles and framework of professional practice including ethics, legal climate, business practices and contracts, project process and management, office organization, and methods of building production.
6315 - Architectural practice from historical, sociological, and ethical perspectives with focus on professional leadership, practice management, and entrepreneurship.

Course Learning Outcomes

Those students who successfully complete the course will gain a working knowledge of:

- The Evolution of Architectural Practice in the US - The historic ecologies within the profession that form the guiding structures and understandings for contemporary practice.
- Career Paths – Understanding where you are now relative to, education, experience (NCARB's Architecture Experience Program) and the Architectural Registration Exam (licensure), issues around starting one's own practice and the applicability of an architectural education to other fields.
- Business Practices – including:
  - Key Stakeholder Roles – client, contractor, architect, user groups, local communities in the architectural design process, and the architect's role reconciling competing needs.
  - Legal Aspects of Business Formation, Strategic Planning, and Risk Management
  - Critical skills development, such as Leadership, Communication, Negotiation and Financial Literacy

- Society's Expectations and Requirements on the Architect and the Design Process – Evolving from the social contract of licensure, how architects integrate laws, zoning codes, building and life-safety codes, and environmental/resource stewardship into practice. We will also look at the importance of critical discourse to maintaining relevant, purposeful practices – and the ongoing ethical considerations of one's work.
- Project Management - how projects proceed in practice, including the standard services of the architect and the phases of architectural services, as well as assembling consultant teams; identifying work plans, project schedules and time requirements; and related project delivery methods, including construction administration.

Note: For all M. Arch courses, see also "Professional Standards Addressed."

Required Course Materials

See Bibliography at the end of this syllabus for a partial list of primary sources, and allocation of specific readings to be augmented throughout the semester. All readings will be posted on CANVAS.

Grading Policy

You are expected to attend class, read assigned materials, be prepared to discuss the assigned materials, and be prepared to participate actively in discussions, workshops and field trips, as appropriate.

Multiple Choice Exams

A trial test will be administered prior to the Midterm Exam, so that students have a feel for the testing process, and Midterm grades will be distributed following the Midterm Exam. Overall, 80% of your grade will be determined by multiple-choice test questions, scored as follows:

Exam Grading Scale

90-100%	A
80-90%	B
70-80%	C
60-70%	D
Below 60%	F

Assignment

20% of your grade will be assessed through an assignment. For the assignment:

A grade of F is reserved for missing, extremely poor or disinterested responses.

A grade of D is below average and reflects a lower than average, poor or disinterested responses and/or lack of intellectually honest engagement with the concepts of the project.

A grade of C is for average work that fulfills the primary project requirements in an acceptable way.

A grade of B indicates work with identifiably thoughtful and graphically clear/intelligent/beautiful qualities that expands the project requirements and makes insightful connections.

A grade of A is reserved for exceptional levels of thoughtful and graphically clear/intelligent/beautiful qualities that expands the project requirements and makes insightful connections.

Tardiness and/or absences may also result in grade reductions at the individual level.

Grades will be allocated as follows:

Mid-Term Exam	Multiple-choice Exam (Canvas)	35%
Assignment	Presentation & Completion of Assignment	20%
Final Exam	Multiple-choice Exam (Canvas)	45%

No incompletes will be awarded without appropriate reason or without a prior meeting, either in person or on Teams, between the student and the instructor. All assignments and tests must be completed to receive a passing grade in the class. Incompletes will be granted only under extraordinary circumstances.

Course Schedule

Please see the annotated class schedule on Canvas. This schedule is subject to periodic revisions; updated schedules will always be posted on Canvas.

Course Schedule

25 August 2026 - Tuesday

Class 1 Introduction and Course Overview

Lecture: Requirements and Procedures
Introduction to the course, its purpose, goals and learning outcomes. Introduction to architecture as a profession; the professional framework including education, participants, transactions, and the web of relationships - from the individual to collaborative groups to society at large. Introduction to potential career paths.

27 August 2026 - Thursday

Class 2 Practice as a Profession and a Marketplace

Lecture: A view of architectural practice - its identification as a profession in relation to society and its marketplace orientation within the dynamics of global capitalism.

Readings: Andrew Pressman, Practice 101, "What it Means to be a Professional", etc., pp. 2-11

Cuff, Dana. ASHPP, "Architecture as a Profession", pp. 2-6

01 September 2026 - Tuesday

Class 3 Historic Ecologies of the Architecture Profession

Lecture: A view of the architectural profession in the US, tracing its historic ecologies and the transforming roles and definitions of Owner, Architect and Contractor into present ideologies and practice. What it means to be an 'Architect.'

Readings: Walsh, Niall, How 'Architect' Became a Protected Title, Archinect, 2024

Johnston, George, Can Professionalism be Taught in School, 2012

Class 4 Types of Practice (Firms), Roles & Contract Relationships (O,A,C)

03 September 2026 - Thursday

Lecture: Understanding firm structures and relationships among stakeholders – client, contractor, architect, user groups, community – the architect's role to reconcile conflicting stakeholder requirements.

Readings: Segal, Paul, "Parties in the Construction Industry", pp. 19-34
Croessman, Philip, ASHPP, Chapter 2.2, "Firm Legal Structure", pp. 102-110
Walsh, Niall, Let's Talk about Architectural Licensure, Archinect 2024

08 September 2026 - Tuesday

Class 5 Forms of the Owner-Architect (OA) Agreement, Fee Structures & Project Delivery Methods (Owner-Architect-Contractor OAC Relationships)

Lecture: A survey of the wide range of contemporary project delivery systems, identifying the various roles of the Architect, Owner, and Contractor (including CM-at-risk)

Readings: Joseph Fleischer, ASHPP 11.1 Agreements with Owners
Perkins & Piven, ASHPP 4.4, Setting Fees

10 September 2026 – Thursday

Class 6 Forms of the Owner-Contractor (OC) Agreement & Architect-Contractor Relationships

Lecture: A survey of the wide range of contemporary project delivery systems, identifying the various roles of the Architect, Owner, and Contractor (including CM-at-risk)

Readings: Gregory Hancks, ASHPP 11.4 Construction Contracts
SmartMarket_Project Delivery Systems

15 September 2026 - Tuesday

Class 7 Intro to Licensure: Jurisdictions, National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) and the National Architectural Accreditation Board (NAAB)

Lecture: Overview of pre-requisites for and NCARB's AXP Program and the ARE (Architect Registration Exam)

Reading: Andrew Pressman, *Designing Your Career*
Louis Kahn, *Silence and Light*

17 September 2026 - Thursday

Class 8 Licensure: Gaining Work Experience (AXP) and the Architect Registration Exam (ARE)

Lecture: Overview of pre-requisites for and NCARB's AXP Program and the ARE (Architect Registration Exam)

Reading: Andrew Pressman, Designing Your Career
Thomas Fisher, The Architecture of Ethics, 26 Licensure, 33 Practice_2019

22 September 2026 - Tuesday

Class 9 Professional Ethics Orientation

Lecture: An overview of the ethical context of contemporary practice, tracking the AIA's 6 Canons of Ethics.

Readings: American Institute of Architects, 6 Canons of Ethics, 2024
Andrew Pressman, Why Bother with Ethics, pp 36-42
Fisher, Thomas, Ethics for Architects: 50 Dilemmas of Professional Practice
Henry Cobb, Ethics and Architecture

24 September 2026 - Thursday

Class 10 Practicing Environmental Ethics

Practice frameworks for advancing sustainability (LEED, WELL, Southface, etc.), AIA Commitment 2030, Carbon Neutrality and legislation/regulation (Energy Code)

Readings: AIA Framework for Design Excellence_2023
Kiel Mo, Unless (excerpts)_2020

29 September 2026 - Tuesday

Class 11 Firm Legal Structures

Lecture: An introduction to aspects of starting a new firm
Midterm Exam - PREP

Reading: Croessman, Philip, ASHPP, Chapter 2.2, "Firm Legal Structure," p. 102-110

01 October 2026 - Thursday

Class 12 Firm Financial Management

Lecture: More in-depth issues of starting a new firm, including formation of a business plan, creating a financial pro-forma, and the interrelation between income and expenses.

Reading: Perkins, Bradford. ASHPP, Chapter 2.1, "Starting and Organizing a Practice," pp. 93-101

06 October 2026 – Tuesday

FALL BREAK

08 October 2026 - Thursday

Class 13 MIDTERM EXAM

Exam: 40-minute test (multiple-choice format)

13 October 2026 - Tuesday

Class 14 Firm Risk Management

Protecting your ability to practice – Types of Insurance and Stories from Experience. A discussion of approaches to managing the risks inherent in design and building.

15 October 2026 - Thursday

Class 15 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT – DESIGN PHASES Part I

Lecture: Pre-Design, Schematic Design, and Design Development Phases including Building Codes and Project Cost Management

Reading: Collins, ASHPP 10.2, Building Codes and Standards, pp. 525-540

20 October 2026 - Tuesday

Class 16 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT – DESIGN PHASES Part II

Lecture: A look at the design process from a more inclusive perspective, with emphasis on issues not prioritized in the academic studio, such as building codes and preliminary cost estimating during design phases.

22 October 2026 – Thursday

Class 17 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT - Construction Documents Phase (PURPOSE & INTENT)

Lecture: A look at the development of Construction Documents as an incomplete, imperfect representation of a building, including the concept and description of design intent and the tools used to convey expectations to the construction team.

Reading: Crocco, Kenneth, ASHPP 7.2, Construction Documentation, pp. 356-366

27 October 2026 - Tuesday

Class 18 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT - Construction Document Phase (SPECIFICATIONS)

Lecture: Design and construction document conventions, including an overview of specifications.

Reading: Crocco, Kenneth, ASHPP 7.2, Construction Documentation, pp. 366-385

29 October 2026 - Thursday

Class 19 Construction Administration Phase (OFFICE PROCEDURES)

Lecture: An examination of the bidding and construction phases, with particular attention to the architect's office related roles and services relative to bidding and contract administration, schedules and payments, and project closeout.

Reading: Charvat, William, ASHPP, Chapters 7.3-7.4, "Bidding and Construction", pp. 386-412
Atkins, ASHPP 7.4, "Construction Contract Administration" p.399-410

30 October 2026 - Thursday

Class 20 Construction Administration Phase (FIELD PROCEEDURES)

Lecture: An examination of the construction phase, with particular attention to the architect's field related roles and services relative to contract administration.

Reading: Atkins, ASHPP 7.4, "Construction Contract Administration" p.410-413

03 November 2026- Tuesday

Class 21 Construction Administration - Site Visit (Groups 1 & 2)

Field Trip to a Construction Site: Prioritizes activities undertaken by an architect when visiting a construction site, observing field conditions and problem-solving with Contractor.

05 November 2026 - Thursday

Class 21 Construction Administration - Site Visit (Groups 3 & 4)

Field Trip to a Construction Site: Prioritizes activities undertaken by an architect when visiting a construction site, observing field conditions and problem-solving with Contractor.

10 November 2026 - Tuesday

Class 22 MAINTAINING DISCOURSE, PRACTICING WITH PURPOSE

Lecture: The importance of maintaining a purposeful practice that contributes to architecture as a discipline while contributing meaningfully to society in a diversity of ways.

Reading: Olgiati, Conversations with Students
Cobb, Ethics and Architecture, and The Dialectical Pairs
Moneo, The Freedom of the Architect

12 November 2026 - Thursday

Class 23 ASSIGNMENTS – DISCUSSION

Date/Time TBD by Georgia Tech

Class 24 FINAL EXAM

Exam: 60-minute test (multiple-choice & written format)

Supplemental Information

Professional Standards Addressed

NAAB Conditions for Accreditation
For Professional Degree Programs in Architecture (2020)

The accredited degree program must demonstrate that each graduate possesses the knowledge and skills defined by the criteria below. The knowledge and skills defined here represent those required to prepare graduates for the path to internship, examination, and licensure, and to engage in related fields. The program must provide student work as evidence that its graduates have satisfied each criterion.

The criteria encompass two levels of accomplishment:

- *Understanding*—The capacity to classify, compare, summarize, explain, and/or interpret information.
- *Ability*—Proficiency in using specific information to accomplish a task, correctly selecting the appropriate information, and accurately applying it to the solution of a specific problem, while also distinguishing the effects of its implementation.

Program Criteria (PC) and Student Criteria (SC): The NAAB establishes PC and SC to help accredited degree programs prepare students for the profession while encouraging education practices suited to the individual degree program.

For the purpose of accreditation, while this course will cover more criteria than the ones listed below, the following will be actively covered:

1. **PC.1 Career Paths – Operational | ASSESSED**
   The student understands the paths to becoming licensed as an architect in the United States and the range of available career opportunities that utilize the discipline's skills and knowledge.
   *This content is **Assessed**, meaning it is a critical component of the course, students are evaluated, and the program assesses the student performance for accreditation and/or annually.*

2. **PC.6 Leadership and Collaboration – Student Learning | ASSESSED**
   The student understands approaches to leadership in multidisciplinary teams, diverse stakeholder constituents, and dynamic physical and social contexts, and has learned how to apply effective collaboration skills to solve complex problems.
   *This content is **Assessed**, meaning it is a critical component of the course, students are evaluated, and the program assesses the student performance for accreditation and/or annually.*

3. **PC.7 Learning and Teaching Culture | PRACTICED**
   The student understands diverse cultural and social contexts and can translate this understanding into built environments that equitably support and include people of different backgrounds, resources, and abilities.
   *This content is **Practiced**, meaning students practice, understand, and are assessed on it.*

4. **PC.8 Social Equity and Inclusion – Operational | PRACTICED**
   The student understands diverse cultural and social contexts and can translate this understanding into built environments that equitably support and include people of different backgrounds, resources, and abilities.
   *This content is **Practiced**, meaning students practice, understand, and are assessed on it.*

5. **SC.1 Health, Safety, and Welfare in the Built Environment | ASSESSED**
   The student understands the impact of the built environment on human health, safety, and welfare at multiple scales, from buildings to cities.
   *This content is **Assessed**, meaning it is a critical component of the course, students are evaluated, and the program assesses the student performance for accreditation and/or annually.*

6. **SC.2 Professional Practice – Student Learning | ASSESSED**
   The student understands professional ethics, regulatory requirements, fundamental business processes relevant to architecture practice in the United States, and forces influencing change in these subjects.
   *This content is **Assessed**, meaning it is a critical component of the course, students are evaluated, and the program assesses the student performance for accreditation and/or annually.*

7. **SC.3 Regulatory Context – Student Learning | ASSESSED**
   The student understands the fundamental principals of life safety, land use, and current laws and regulations that apply to the buildings and sites in the United States, and the evaluative process architects use to comply with those laws and regulations as part of a project.
   *This content is **Assessed**, meaning it is a critical component of the course, students are evaluated, and the program assesses the student performance for accreditation and/or annually.*

Course Policies

SoA Attendance Policy

Active participation at all class meetings is mandatory. Absences will be excused only for medical or family emergencies, Institute-approved events, and religious holidays documented in writing. (Notify your instructor in writing during the first two weeks of the semester about any anticipated religious holiday absences.) Late arrivals (more than 15 minutes) will be counted as absences..

NOTE: Absences due to special and/or unforeseen circumstances must be discussed with the instructor as early as practically possible.

Missing three classes without an approved excuse will result in a letter grade reduction. Missing more than three classes, excused or unexcused, may result in a meeting with your instructor and the Architecture Program Office to determine a course of action, and can result in an incomplete (I) or failing grade (F).

Students are highly encouraged to submit absence verification for documented illness, hospitalization, accidents, family emergencies, or lengthy illnesses to the Dean of Students: https://studentlife.gatech.edu/request-assistance

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 will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity.

For expectations of student and instructor conduct, consult Code of Conduct (rules/19) and Student-Faculty Expectations (rules/22).

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 Agreement articulates some basic expectations that you can have of me and that I have of you. Simple respect for knowledge, hard work, and cordial interactions will help build the environment we seek.

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, obtain an accommodations letter, and discuss your special needs. Please also schedule an appointment with your instructor to discuss your learning needs.

Other Policies, Expectations, and Resources

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

Limited Generative AI Use Permitted

Use of Generative AI (insert appropriate AI tool(s) here) is permitted but only within instructor-approved boundaries. Its use must be transparent and documented in a required AI Usage Statement with each submission, including: tool used and date of access, the input (prompt) provided, a copy of the output, and a description of how you used or edited the AI-generated content. *Failure to disclose its use may be considered a violation of Georgia Tech's academic integrity policies.*

Draft GT AI policy: https://provost.gatech.edu/sites/default/files/2025-10/AI%20Policy_draft_10.14.2025%202.pdf

Extensions, Late Assignments, & Re-Scheduled/Missed Exams

The course has been designed to build sequentially on knowledge from one class to the next. Readings and assignments are intended to be completed on time in order to keep pace, and to reflect the interrelationships between readings and lecture content. Late assignments (unless for reasons related to an excused absence) will be assessed a full grade reduction from what they might otherwise have received.

Inclement Weather and Digital Learning Days

With developments and improvements to digital instruction over the past few years, the Institute has developed policies to leverage digital learning as much as reasonably possible. The policy sets forth requirements, procedures, and responsibilities related to the scheduling of digital instruction and/or make-up classes due to the modification of campus operations, closing of campus, or the necessary closing of instructional spaces for any reason (including but not limited to emergencies, such as inclement weather, power outages, or other infrastructure failures). Students should await communications from their instructors regarding delivery of their classes during that period based upon the Digital Learning Days for Modified Campus Operations Policy. Students should follow guidance and/or directions provided by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-Being regarding student activities, events, programs and services.

Academic Integrity and Conduct

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. All Georgia Tech students should familiarize themselves with and abide by the Georgia Tech Honor Code: http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/. Faculty shall report instances of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of Students.

For expectations of student and instructor conduct more generally, consult section 19 of the catalog listed above, entitled "Code of Conduct,"

http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/19/, and section 22, entitled "Student-Faculty Expectations," at http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

All persons in the classroom are expected to behave with courtesy towards others and in a way that does not interfere with the regular conduct of the class. **Cell phones are to be turned off when students enter the classroom and shall remain off for the duration of class; laptops are to be used only for taking notes**; and students should not engage in private conversations while the instructor or other students are speaking. *Anyone who does not adhere to these basic courtesies will be asked to leave, counting as an unexcused absence.*

CIOS — Course Evaluations

At the end of the term, students are asked to complete the online course evaluation for all courses at Georgia Tech (https://gatech.smartevals.com). CIOS scores and comments have different degrees of visibility based on roles:

Reporting access by role	CIOS Scaled Results	CIOS Comments	TA's Scaled Results	TA's Comments
Instructor	Their Own	Their Own	All within their own course	All within their own course
TA Supervisor	N/A	N/A	All within their own course	All within their own course
Teaching Assistant	None	None	Their Own	Their Own
School Administration	All within their own unit	None	All within their own unit	All within their own unit
Students	All – Summary only	None	None	None

More information: CIOS Student FAQ

Campus Resources for Students

Undergraduate Student Academic Success Resources

A list of resources for undergraduate students' academic success and advising can be found at Success at Tech. Academic Support (a unit in the Office of Undergraduate Education & Student Success) provides free tutoring: success.gatech.edu/tutoring.

Graduate Student Academic and Professional Success Resources

A list of resources for graduate students is available on the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Education website.

Student Well-Being

At Georgia Tech, we are concerned about your overall physical, social, and mental well-being. A comprehensive list of wellness-related resources has been compiled by the Office of the Vice President for Student Engagement and Well-being.

Library & Archives

Contact your Architecture Library subject specialist, Catherine Manci (catherine.manci@library.gatech.edu), for research help and information on available resources.

Contact your Architecture Archives liaison, Jody Thompson (jody.thompson@library.gatech.edu), for assistance with archival research and collections.

Georgia Tech Library: https://library.gatech.edu/ Georgia Tech Archives: http://library.gatech.edu/archives

Approved Communication Platforms

Georgia Tech Approved Communication Platforms

Georgia Tech Values Statement

At Georgia Tech, we see different backgrounds and perspectives as essential to learning, discovery, and creation. We strive to remove barriers to student success and to build a welcoming community where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to our mission. As outlined in our strategic plan, we want to create an environment of holistic learning where all individuals can grow and learn to lead healthy, purposeful, impactful lives.

SoA & College of Design Policies

Ownership

For the purposes of continuous improvement efforts, such as accreditations and periodic program reviews, the School will select samples of student work submitted to satisfy course requirements. This includes digital files, papers, drawings, models, etc. Collected samples may be returned to students upon request.

College of Design Facility Rules and Guidelines

Please consult the Georgia Tech Student Handbook regarding the use of facilities and all Institute policies. Aerosol sprays of any kind are strictly banned from the studio and surrounding areas. A spray painting booth is available in the College of Design shop on the ground floor of the East Architecture Building.

Course Expectations & Guidelines

Per the GT Catalog, all work produced in the College of Design as part of a degree program becomes the property of the College; it may be retained or returned at the discretion of the faculty. The faculty of the School of Architecture reserves the right to refuse credit for any project executed outside the precincts of the College or produced without proper coordination with the faculty.

Emergencies

In case of emergency (e.g., fire, accident, or criminal act), please call the Georgia Tech Police at 404-894-2500. Perry Minyard, IT Support Administrator for the College of Design, is also a firefighter and EMT certified in performing CPR.

Bibliography

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Breitschmid, Markus (2008), The Significance of the Idea, Verlag Niggli, Zurich

Segal, Paul (2006), Professional Practice, A Guide to Turning Designs into Buildings, W.W. Norton & Company, New York

Walsh, Niall Patrick (2024), Archinect In-Depth: Licensure Series, Archinect (online magazine), https://archinect.com/features/tag/2519568/archinect-in-depth-licensure

ProPEL (Professional Practice Education Library), Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA),

https://propel.yuja.com/P/VideoManagement/MediaLibrary/InstitutionChannel/Library