School of Architecture | Georgia Tech | Fall 2026

ARCH 3825: Fundamentals of Design I

Required Course for B.S.Architecture

Undergraduate offering

ARCH 3825 Syllabus

Credit Hours:	5 credits
Location:	T.B.D. (Lectures in Reinsch-Pierce Family Auditorium)
Schedule:	Monday, Wednesday 12:30pm – 4:30pm, Friday 12:30pm – 2:30pm

Instructor: Bryce Truitt

Email: brycetruitt@gatech.edu

Office Location: Architecture West Building, Room 357

Office Hours: by Appointment

TA Name: T.B.D.

TA Email: T.B.D.

General Course Information

Course Description

Introduction to creative problem-solving and the design realization cycle through project-based design exercises which emphasize the language of architecture and role of representation. Students learn to develop powers of observation and design awareness through techniques of critical systems thinking and communication through readings and precedents, as well as increase their sensitivity toward the quality of the built environment and its relationship to the natural world.

Course Learning Outcomes

The course is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

- Launch a cumulative, four-semester studio curricular framework linked to parallel coursework in architectural history and representation.
- Develop student understanding of architecture as interrelated systems—natural and cultural—interacting with those of a given site and context.
- Develop student knowledge and skill-sets toward architectural design as interconnected percepts + concepts structured to communicate.
- Engage 3 projects of growing complexity emphasizing relationships of space, form, materiality; two projects under distinct paradigms of architecture, and one which mediates between the two.

The course is designed to help students to begin to construct foundational 'knowledge and skills' of the discipline of architecture [*factual, conceptual,* and *procedural* types] through a specific set of interconnected 'cognitive processes' [*remember, understand, apply, analyze,* and *create*]. By the conclusion of this course students should be able to demonstrate both understanding and ability in the fundamentals of architectural design in the following ways:

- to *understand* + *apply* relational-thinking/-reasoning toward visual literacy and specifically, the perceptual organization of design compositions.
- to *understand* + *apply* the language of architecture; its primitive elements, givens (program + site/context), physical and ephemeral substances, conceptual and organizational devices, and constructive possibilities.
- to *understand* + *apply* procedures to *analyze* and *evaluate* diverse site/context and programmatic "givens" to define design problems.
- to *understand* + *apply* procedures needed to produce iterative + alternative design strategies for their solution, and then, to evaluate their results.
- to *create* solutions that interrelate/integrate elements, site/context, programmatic, and material dimensions to form coherent, inventive wholes.
- to *understand* and *apply* a range of media & techniques to support the design process and communicate its conceptual and expressive intent.

Required Course Materials

There is not a required textbook for this course. However, each assignment will involve a series of readings, references, and resources which will be made available through the course Canvas page as PDF files or through the GT Library.

Grading Policy

Assessments will be provided after the end of each final probe review by the assigned instructor and the instructor team through Canvas. Student performance will be evaluated equally between *process* and *product* based on the specific requirements of a given assignment brief, and the grading rubric. Assessments are coordinated and agreed upon between the studio coordinator(s), and instructional team, across all studio sections.

Assignments

Student performance will be evaluated by the instructional team in the three project (probe) assessments and one additional conclusion category as follows:

Point Distribution:

probe 0:	'origins'	4 weeks	30% overall course grade
probe 0.5:	'interlude' dialogs	3 weeks	20% overall course grade
probe 1:	architecture as 'techne'	5 weeks	40% overall course grade
conclusion:	'postlude' portfolio, archive, reflection.	2 weeks	10% overall course grade

Description of Graded Components

Projects (Probes) Three larger assignments and first portfolio guidance are communicated in detailed briefs, supported by lecture presentations, workshops, and/or readings. Individual production and performance are assessed throughout the entire semester as freehand + hardline drawings, manual (scanned) and/or digital, models (physical + digital), written texts, oral presentation, and photography. These assignments are part of the deliverables for intermediate reviews, and specific presentation requirements are issued in advance of the final semester review. Cumulatively, the assignments convey the procedural framework of

the studio and the methods by which project components are organized and developed. Students must read each assignment carefully and determine how to best address the multiple aspects of each and expected to ask questions immediately in class rather than via email, which causes delay. The process moves at a brisk pace, and all work delineated in assignment briefs must be delivered in a timely manner to remain current with the larger process. Time is precious and limited. Without exception, disciplined and effective time management, along with sustained focus, are essential for successful outcomes in this studio.

Notebook, Sketchbook, Iteration: Throughout the semester, students record in a single notebook detailed notes for all required readings starting from one end and daily developmental research + design sketching for all assignments at the other end. Both texts and sketches must be carefully crafted and legible, not unlike Leonardo da Vinci's famous notebooks that can be seen at https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/leonardo-da-vincis-notebooks.

Readings: Selection of readings are coordinated with the assignment briefs, lectures and in-class discussions, and are posted as pdf's on Canvas ahead of schedule. Comprehensive required and recommended reading lists will be provided in each assignment brief, accompanied by an expected completion date.

Grading Rubric

process: time management + initiative	20% of assignment grade
process: rigor + engagement	20% of assignment grade
process: notebook + iteration (reading notes)/sketchbook (documenting process)	10% of assignment grade
product: critical thinking, invention, and threading throughout entire process	20% of assignment grade
product: representational craft / documentation	20% of assignment grade
product: oral + written communication	10% of assignment grade

Grading Scale

The grade scale for all individual assignments of the course, as well as for the final overall course assessment will be provided as follows:

A – Excellent (90.00% - 100.00%)

B – Good (80.00% - 89.99%)

C – Satisfactory (70.00% - 79.99%) *Arch. majors must earn 'C' or higher to move into the next required studio.*

D – Unsatisfactory (60.00% - 69.99%)

F – Failing (00.00% - 59.99%)

Course Schedule

An annotated course schedule can be found on Canvas. This schedule is subject to periodic revisions; updated schedules will always be posted on Canvas. Attending SoA lectures during studio time on Mondays or Wednesdays from 12:30–1:30 p.m. is required for M. Arch students and highly recommended for B.S. Arch. Students. Studio Instructors will notify students ahead of time if they will be expected to attend a specific lecture beyond the course curriculum.

Course Policies

Attendance and/or Participation

Active Participation in all studio meetings, pin-up, and review times is mandatory and essential to successful completion of the class. Absences will be excused only for medical or family emergencies or for Institute-approved events and religious holidays documented in writing. In the event of a medical emergency or an illness that is severe enough to require medical attention, students are responsible for contacting the Office of the Dean of Students as soon as possible to report the medical issue or emergency, providing dated documentation from a medical professional and requesting assistance in notifying their instructors. The medical documentation will be handled confidentially within the Office of the Dean of Students and will inform a decision as to whether communication with instructional faculty is appropriate. According to the institution's policy, you must notify your instructor in writing during the first two weeks of the semester about any anticipated absences for religious holidays). Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each studio period at 12:30pm by either an instructor or graduate teaching assistant.

NOTE: Absences due to special and/or unforeseen circumstances, whether excused or unexcused, must be discussed with the instructor as early as practically possible. Three (3) unexcused absences will result in a full letter grade deduction for the overall semester grade assessment. Five (5) unexcused absences will result in failure of this course. The beginning of each studio session is dedicated to questions, discussion, and most importantly, orientation towards current process, and there will not be reiteration of this material to students arriving late to ensure equitable instruction to all students. Subsequently, attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class, and late arrivals will be counted as unexcused absences. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each studio period, at 12:30pm, by either an instructor or graduate teaching assistant. Three (3) unexcused late arrivals (5 to 15 minutes late) will count as one (1) unexcused absence. Unexcused tardiness beyond 15 minutes from the start of studio will count as an unexcused absence.

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.

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 from Georgia State University includes template syllabus statements for each Core IMPACTS area 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, obtain an accommodations letter, and discuss your special needs. Please also schedule an appointment with your instructor to discuss your learning needs.

Course Expectations and Guidelines

Criticism and peer review are central to the teaching and learning process of the studio, whether in one-on-one scenarios or as informal group discussions. Each student is responsible for the production of their own work whether in individual or team projects. With teamwork, each member of the team is equally responsible for the research and output; a teammate's work may not be delegated to another team-mate to produce. Students should be fully prepared for scheduled desk crits and pin-ups; instructors will make every effort to see as many prepared students as possible during studio sessions. During the semester, each student should rigorously explore the project's conceptual foundations through reading, writing, drawing, and model-making. Design studio production requires both personal initiative and efficient time management fostering intellectual and creative growth. 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 also reserves the right to refuse for credit any project executed outside the precincts of the College or otherwise produced with proper coordination with the faculty.

Studio Environment, Culture, and Success

The culture of learning and teaching is extremely important in the Georgia Tech's undergraduate architecture program. We are dedicated to fostering and ensuring "a positive and respectful environment that encourages optimism, respect, sharing, engagement, and innovation among its faculty, students, administration, and staff." A successful design culture and the level of success in this course, is wholly reliant on a continual and sustained, self-driven process of production, revision, observation, and assessment (in no specific order). This occurs between a student and their instructor, a student and the work of their peers, a student and the broader spectrum of work in the architectural discipline and practice, and a student and their individual work. It requires sustained focus and effort from each student, both inside and outside of studio, which typically requires about twice the amount of contact time for a studio [2 x 5 credit hours = ~ 10 hours of work a week outside of class in the case of this studio to produce 'satisfactory to good' work].

In turn, the baseline expectation is that all students utilize the physical studio as their primary workspace and place of production to build community and foster the requisite level of craft, communication, critical thinking, research, and rigorous engagement, for their individual success. The reciprocal process is ongoing, and iterative, between thinking, production, criticism, and reflection. Therefore, students are expected to carefully observe and heed all information from lectures, group critique, and individual critique from instructors, and utilize it towards timely and thoughtful project development during and between all studio sessions. Delivery of previously assigned material, reading discussion, questions, and presentation of new assignments, will occur at the beginning of each studio. Therefore, students must have all materials for pin-ups or discussion prepared prior to the beginning of class, ready to go at precisely 12:30pm. Project briefs, required readings, and lecture presentations are populated with critical concepts, precedent works, and language that is sometimes new and unfamiliar. Students are responsible for unpacking and remembering this material to their best ability and formulating questions/discussion for the beginning of class. Students are responsible for lecture notes, unpacking and subsequently remembering this material to their best ability and formulating related questions/discussion for the beginning of class.

Collaboration, Group Work, and Use of Generative AI

The use of Generative AI tools (such as Copilot, ChatGPT, Perplexity, etc.) is not allowed in this course. All assignments must represent your unassisted original thought and individual effort. Any use of Generative AI will be treated as a violation of Georgia Tech's Honor Code.

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

Interim progress and final design studio projects and presentations are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Late submissions and/or absences from interim and final reviews are only allowed under extraordinary circumstances or if in conflict with official Institute events, otherwise, missed reviews are unexcused and result in 10% grade reductions for each studio session beyond the deadline. Please notify the instructor in advance of a potential conflict or at the earliest opportunity should such circumstances arise.

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 the 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.

Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom

Mobile devices may only be used to facilitate the design course curriculum, as a tool for precedent and project research, photographic documentation, or basic computational usage as a calculator. However, the use of mobile devices for social engagement, social media, personal phone calls, or text messaging, is prohibited during studio hours. The course instructor reserves the discretion to dismiss a student for engaging in personal use of a mobile device during scheduled studio time, counting as an unexcused absence for the day.

Extra Credit Opportunities

Extra credit opportunities will not be provided in this course.

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.

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

Archiving

At the end of the semester, all students are required to submit physical and/or digital examples of their work to their instructors or administration for archiving no later than one week after the end of term. By enrolling, each student grants a license to reproduce and display their work online, in forthcoming print publications, and in public exhibitions.

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.

Studio Housekeeping (for design studio only)

Daily Workspace Maintenance

Keep Your Space Organized:

Maintain an organized workspace that respects those around you. Avoid clutter that could distract others or create safety hazards.

Drawings and Models:

Store drawings in designated areas and keep models and materials off the floor. Items left on the floor will be considered trash and discarded by cleaning staff.

Food Policy:

No food is permitted in studio during class hours. Dispose of all food-related trash immediately in designated bins.

Desk Assignment:

Use only your assigned desk unless you have prior permission to use another workspace.

Materials and Production

Surface Protection:

Never use spray paint, spray adhesive, paint, stain, plaster, concrete, resin, or similar materials on unprotected surfaces. Conduct this work at the CoD shop or other designated facilities.

Cutting Materials:

Always protect desk surfaces when cutting materials. Direct contact can cause permanent damage.

Daily Cleanup:

Clean your workspace at the end of each day: organize your desk, dispose of trash, and return equipment to proper storage.

Shared Equipment:

Clean up after using machinery in the CoD shop, DFL, laser cutter rooms, or other shared spaces. Neglected facilities will be closed until properly cleaned.

End-of-Semester Requirements

All personal belongings and materials must be removed by the announced deadline. Studios and lockers are completely cleared during winter break, summer break, and before the End-of-Year Show. Items remaining past the deadline will be discarded. Failure to comply may result in an Incomplete grade or grade reduction.

Review Space Protocol

- Remove your work immediately after presentations — others may discard items left behind
- Dispose of trash in designated bins
- Protect wall surfaces from damage or marks
- Return chairs to their original positions