CP 8990BD Applied Research Paper
William J. Drummond
Fall 2026 – Spring 2027

Course Syllabus

Learning objective and course description

The learning objective for this course is for you to integrate your research, analysis, writing, and presentation skills to produce an Applied Research Paper (ARP) of professional quality in your area of interest.

As your ARP advisor my top priority is helping you produce a timely, high-quality, professional paper that will draw together your planning education and help you secure your first planning job. I will do all that I can to help you graduate on time, and in return, I'll expect you to make good, consistent progress on your paper over the next two semesters.

First, please reread the sections of the Student Manual on the ARP and the Academic Writing Guidelines. Make a careful note of the various deadlines, including the entire first draft due in March.

Applied research paper topics

Before we meet for the first time in the fall identify **three** possible ARP topics, write a one-paragraph (three-to-five sentence) description of each of the three topics and upload them to Canvas as a single MS-Word document. Do this even if you are certain of your topic or if you (do not yet) have any idea of a topic. Once you uploaded to Canvas your possible topics (due on September 1), sign up for a 30-minute office hours meeting time. See below near the end of the syllabus on reserving time during office hours and meeting via Zoom.

To identify possible ARP topics you might ask yourself these questions:

1. What is my dream job? What ARP would I like to take to a job interview for that dream job?
2. What is my dream location, and what current planning issues are important for that location?

3. In my first year of classes, what did I especially enjoy and want to pursue further?
4. What aspect of planning interests me, but has not and will not be covered in my coursework?
5. Have I had creative, inventive, intriguing, impossible, or downright crazy ideas that I'd still like to explore further?
6. Visit the College of Design section of the main library (or go online) and browse through the past issues of the Journal of the American Planning Association and Planning magazine. What kinds of articles do you find yourself stopping to read or browse?

Over the first two weeks of the semester we'll discuss possible topics and I'll ask you to produce three products by September 15:

1. A one-sentence description of your ARP topic. What are you writing about? How would you describe your paper in a 20-second sound-bite?

2. A ½ to one-page description of your ARP. Explain why the topic is important to you and to planning. What do you hope to explain, learn, and/or accomplish?

3. A ½- to one-page outline of the finished paper. For each major section (literature review, data description, data analysis, conclusions, etc.) give the approximate number of pages that will be in that section. Describe any other major products (maps, software code) that will be part of the finished paper. If you'll need certain datasets to complete the paper, describe each of them and indicate the likely source for the data.

Writing the applied research paper

To graduate in the spring semester you will have to make significant progress on the paper during the fall semester and early spring semester.

Fall semester: You should be spending about three hours per week on your paper. Here are three other intermediate deadlines to ensure that your progress is steady:

1. October 1: Identify and read relevant literature; compile Endnote library of references. (Endnote is a sophisticated bibliographic manager. You can download directly from the Web of Science and Library of Congress

to capture bibliographic information for both articles and books. You may obtain Endnote from software.oit.gatech.edu or use it on the College of Architecture computers.)

2. November 15: Complete a well-written literature review, usually 10-15 pages in length. A good literature review organizes the material in terms of themes, an overall narrative, and/or a debate or debates. See the Journal of Planning Literature for multiple examples of literature reviews. Search Web of Science and Google Scholar for academic articles, the GT library for books, and the Nexus database for newspaper articles.
3. Last day of classes: upload to Canvas your final fall semester products as a single MS-Word file. Include your (1) revised single sentence, (2) one-page description, (3) outline of final product with approximate number of pages for each section, and (4) your completed literature review.

Spring Semester: During the spring semester you will need to work on your paper diligently from week to week, about 9-10 hours per week. Here are the deadlines and related information as specified in the MCRP student manual:

- March 15: First draft of ARP submitted electronically to MCRP Director and the Applied Research Paper Advisor. (If a student does not meet this deadline, s/he should be aware that graduation may be postponed.)
- April 1: Advisor returns draft to student with comments.
- April 15: Second draft of paper goes to advisor.
- By last Thursday of Semester (for precise dates, see the Spring OSCAR under "Last Day of Classes for non-graduating students): Advisor approves final paper. One bound copy is submitted to the advisor. An electronic PDF version is submitted to the advisor and the School Academic Advisor.
- One printed hard copy of the final approved paper must be submitted to the ARP advisor and an electronic PDF version of the ARP must be submitted both to the advisor and the School Academic Advisor.

Course materials

There are no required textbooks for this course. Additional materials or links to those materials will be posted on Canvas.

Grading

See the Georgia Tech Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement in the Georgia Tech catalog for Institute-wide expectations for both students and faculty.

The Georgia Tech Honor Code is in effect throughout this course**.** You should review this code and make sure you understand your responsibilities. If you have any questions, please contact the instructor.

The ARP is a letter-grade course. Your grades for the course will be based upon the timely completion of the specified products and the quality of those products in terms of both content and presentation.

Fall grading: All products must be uploaded to Canvas as MS-Word files on or before the specified due dates. The product due dates and grade weights for the fall semester are:

• Paragraphs for three topics	September 1	10%
• One-sentence topic summary	September 15	25%
○ One-page topic description		
○ ½ to one page outline of final paper		
• Endnote bibliography	October 1	15%
• Literature review	November 15	25%
• All fall semester products	Last day of classes	25%

Spring grading: The student's spring grade is based on these factors:

• Timely provision of first draft	15%
• Timely provision of the second draft	15%
• Quality of the paper's content considered in light of the proposal	50%
• Quality of the paper's presentation (grammar, spelling, figures, etc.)	20%

Grading scale: this course uses the traditional Georgia Tech grading scale.

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

Use of Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs)

This course treats AI-based assistance, such as Copilot or ChatGPT, the same way it treats collaboration with other people: you are welcome to talk about your ideas and work with other people, both inside and outside the class, as well as with AI-based assistants. However, all work you submit must be your own. You should never include in your assignment anything that was not written directly by you without proper citation including quotation marks and in-line citation for direct quotes.

Including anything you did not write in an assignment without proper citation will be considered as an academic misconduct case. If you are unsure where the line is between collaborating with AI and copying AI, here are two suggestions:

(1) Never hit "Copy" within your conversation with an AI assistant. You can copy your own work into your own conversation, but do not copy anything from the conversation back into your assignment. Instead, use your interaction with the AI assistant as a learning experience, then let your assignment reflect your improved understanding.

(2) Do not have your assignment and the AI agent open at the same time. Use your conversation with the AI as a learning experience, then close the interaction down, open your assignment, and let your assignment reflect your revised knowledge. This heuristic includes avoiding using AI directly integrated into your composition environment: just as you should not let a classmate write content or code directly into your submission, so also you should avoid using tools that directly add content to your submission. (Thanks to David Joyner in the Georgia Tech College of Computing for developing and sharing the original text that is the basis for the above sections of this policy.)

In work for this course**, you may use** Copilot or other LLMs for

- Research, search, and search summaries,
- Tutoring, concept explanations, and concept exploration,
- Brainstorming and generation of ideas, and
- Generation of outlines or lists of topics.

In work for this course, **you may not use** Copilot or other LLMs for

- Generation of charts, figures, or analyses,
- Generation of text.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at 404.894.2563 or their website, as soon as possible, to discuss your needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Then, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your learning needs.