

## MASTERS CAPSTONE PAPER 1 & 2

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**Instructor:** A member of the Urban Studies Institute, including affiliate faculty

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### OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the Masters Capstone Paper is for students to undertake original research in a particular substantive area of Urban Studies. Students will demonstrate their capacity for critical thinking and apply the data collection and analytical skills developed through the MIS program to evaluate existing, and generate new knowledge regarding a key challenge facing cities.

The Capstone Paper enables students to construct a piece of research, synthesizing current conceptual debates and empirical evidence from current literatures into a coherent exploration of a specific topic. Given the breadth and interdisciplinary nature of Urban Studies, a range of topics and methodological approaches are considered appropriate and students will have to scope to acquire new skills and advance their intellectual interests. Through the process of conducting the Capstone Paper, students will garner the ability to work independently, and in an adaptive manner, to complete a complex research program from start to finish.

Students opting for the Research Track will complete Masters Capstone Paper 1 and Masters Capstone Paper 2 (each for 3 credit hours). Students are expected to select a Capstone Instructor who is a member of the Urban Studies Institute, including affiliate faculty.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES AND GOALS

At the completion of the Capstone Paper project, students will demonstrate the ability to:

1. Formulate a precise research question;
2. Identify appropriate theory and existing literature on the particular problem;
3. Develop a rigorous research design suitable to address their particular research question, and decide on a feasible methodology;
4. Identify and carry out data collection methods appropriate for their particular project;
5. Conduct an appropriate data analysis using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches;
6. Interpret the results and findings in clear and concise terms;
7. Situate the findings in the broader related literature;
8. Draw conclusions based on their findings, including identifying the relevance of their study for key stakeholders (academic and non-academic);
9. Communicate their work effectively in writing and, where appropriate, through oral presentation and visualization techniques;
10. In cases of exception scholarship, students develop their research for publication in peer-reviewed academic journals.

### PREREQUISITE

Students are expected to have finished all courses in the MIS-Urban Studies core and be in good standing.

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## EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Proposal	(due Week 2)	..... 5%
Work Plan and Bibliography	(due Week 4)	..... 10%
Full Draft Paper	(due Week 12)	..... 20%
Final Paper	(due Week 16)	..... 65%

The sets of tasks below will be required at the specified times. Grades may be reduced for late deliverables.

#### Proposal (5%)

The proposal must describe your proposed research question(s) and how you hope to go about answering these questions. You should articulate an overarching research question and a limited number of related and researchable sub-questions. The proposal should describe the methodologies and data that you will be employing in the paper.

#### Work Plan and Bibliography (10%)

A detailed work plan that provides background on the research topic, clearly and specifically articulates the research questions, and identifies how you will go about addressing these questions, including describing the detailed research design and methods, any existing data that will be obtained, and any data to be collected.

A bibliography on your topic should demonstrate your (indicative) reading around the Capstone Paper project, including relevant formal scholarly literature and any applied "gray" literature, important media coverage, etc.

#### Full Draft Paper (20%)

This should be a *complete* and *coherent* draft paper, and not a description or collection of preliminary results. While length may vary greatly depending on the type and nature of the paper, the general expectation on length is in the range of 4,000 to 7,000 words plus tables, figures, and references.

#### Final Paper (65%)

Respond to review, comments, and edits of draft paper by instructor. Edit and proof the paper, including all appropriate formatting of text, tables, figures, and references, per instructor. Submit final paper.

### GRADES

Grades will be awarded based on the following assessment criteria:

<b>A+</b>	<b>97+*</b>	<b>Exceptional:</b> Remarkable knowledge of concepts and/or techniques and exceptional skill or great originality in the use of these in satisfying the requirements of an assignment.
<b>A</b>	<b>90–96</b>	<b>Excellent:</b> Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques with a high degree of skill and/or some elements of originality in satisfying the requirements of an assignment.
<b>B+</b>	<b>87–89</b>	<b>Very Good:</b> Thorough knowledge of concepts and/or techniques with a fairly high degree of skill in the use of them in satisfying the requirements of an assignment.
<b>B</b>	<b>80–86</b>	<b>Good:</b> Solid level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with substantial skill in using them to satisfy the requirements of an assignment.
<b>C+</b>	<b>77–79</b>	<b>Competent:</b> Reasonable level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with sufficient skill in using them to satisfy the requirements of an assignment.
<b>C</b>	<b>70–76</b>	<b>Adequate:</b> Acceptable level of knowledge of concepts and/or techniques together with some skill in using them to satisfy the requirements of an assignment.
<b>D</b>	<b>60–69</b>	<b>Passing:</b> Slightly better than minimal knowledge of required concepts and/or techniques together with limited ability to use them in satisfying the requirements of an assignment.
<b>F</b>	<b>0–59</b>	<b>Failing:</b> Minimum knowledge to lack of understanding of concepts and/or techniques needed to satisfy the requirements of an assignment.

\*N.B. A+ grades are given rarely and only for exceptional pieces of work.

## SCHEDULE AND DEADLINES

While there is flexibility to the structure and schedule of the Capstone Paper (at the discretion of the instructor), the general schedule and deadlines are as follows.

<b>Week 1-2</b>	Develop and Submit Proposal
<b>Weeks 3-4</b>	Compile and Submit Work Plan and Bibliography
<b>Week 5-12</b>	Conduct Primary Research, Prepare and Submit Full Draft Paper
<b>Week 13-16</b>	Respond to Feedback, Finalize and Submit Final Paper

### **Academic Honesty**

GSU guidelines on academic honesty/dishonesty will be enforced. The guidelines are posted at <http://education.gsu.edu/files/2016/05/plagiarism.pdf> and <http://codeofconduct.gsu.edu/files/2013/2014-2015-Section-II-Academic-Conduct-Student-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>. Penalties can range from receiving no credit for an assignment/exam up to expulsion from the university.

### **Students with Disabilities**

If you need accommodation for a disability you may do so by registering with the Georgia State University Office of Disability Services either by coming in-person or online. You will be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan, and then you are responsible for emailing the copy of that plan to me and faculty of all the classes in which you need accommodations. Students should provide a copy of the Plan to the instructor within the first two weeks of classes. To register for accommodations please follow this link [disability.gsu.edu/services/how-to-register](http://disability.gsu.edu/services/how-to-register). Phone: (404) 413-1560, Email: [dismail@gsu.edu](mailto:dismail@gsu.edu), Website: [disability.gsu.edu](http://disability.gsu.edu).

*Remote Academic Coaching.* The Office of Disability Services also offers free remote academic coaching. To learn more go to [disability.gsu.edu/services](http://disability.gsu.edu/services) or watch a [Coaching Video](#)

### **Veterans & Serving Military**

Students who are veterans, serving in the military, their dependents, and the survivors of serving military are encouraged to avail themselves of a range of college services and activities through the Military Outreach Center (MOC). For assistance or guidance while attending GSU on campus or online, contact the Atlanta Campus Military Student Advocate, David Garcia, at 404-413-2331. Be sure and let me know ASAP if or when there is any possibility of you being activated and deployed. For more information contact the GSU Military Outreach Center. Phone: (404) 413-2333, Email: [dgarcia9@gsu.edu](mailto:dgarcia9@gsu.edu) Website: [veterans.gsu.edu](http://veterans.gsu.edu).

### **Student Evaluation**

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

### **Late Submission Policy**

Late work will be accepted at a penalty of 50% of the assignment grade, unless agreed an alternative arrangement is made with your Capstone Instructor.