THE ARCH MINOR PROGRAM RESEARCH PAPER REQUIREMENT

The requirement:

Minors write at least **one research paper** of 10–15 pages. A research paper can be:

- a paper written to fulfill a course assignment,
- the extension of a shorter course paper (either during the course or after its completion) to meet the page and/or research requirement, or
- a new paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor.

The paper should include an analysis of existing scholarship and other relevant source materials. The paper should also draw on that scholarship and evidence to shape and support a thesis or argument of the student's own devising. Formal analyses of works of art and analytic papers on materials assembled by the instructor do not qualify. On completing a research paper, students must send a copy of the paper, together with their updated program worksheet, to the Architectural Studies Faculty Advisor.

Additional advice on research papers, for minors and their instructors:

The goals of this requirement are to ensure that students learn:

- how to research the built environment and its context in scholarly sources and thereby acquire the skills to teach themselves about their interests;
- how to think about their research as an extension of an ongoing conversation about the topic in print and digital media among experts;
- how to shape a research paper around a thesis or argument of their own, set it into the context of previous research on their topic, and support it with evidence drawn from secondary sources, primary sources, and their own formal analysis of examples from the built environment.

Secondary sources for the built environment: they are created by people who did not personally shape, use, or witness the built environment under study. These are works of historical analysis and interpretation, based on primary sources and ideally written by people with scholarly expertise. Examples: books, book chapters, and articles by scholars; encyclopedia entries by experts.

Primary sources for the built environment: they provide first-hand evidence of a built environment from the time it was designed or first-hand accounts of its original or subsequent, historical condition or uses. They may be found reproduced in published sources, on websites, or in unpublished form in archives, such as those kept by libraries. Examples: original drawings, photographs, reports or letters by designers and their clients; newspaper or magazine stories from significant historical moments in the history of the place under study; maps; historical reports or surveys for public agencies, including census reports; regulations like building codes or zoning laws; literature or paintings representing the place under study.

The steps

Meet with your instructor to decide on the topic; check in with your instructor occasionally as you research it and develop a thesis for your paper. Your instructor can help you identify a topic with accessible research materials and manageable scope. Expect to remain a little flexible as you work on your topic: as you research it, you may learn things that lead you to shift your focus. Check in with your instructor to discuss any changes of plan.

If you wish to write your research paper for a course in which you're enrolled or planning to enroll, you may ask your instructor whether you could substitute the research paper for another course requirement or adapt a written assignment into a research paper.

Draw up a bibliography of scholarly secondary sources, including articles, single-authored books, and books of essays or chapters by multiple authors. In the library catalog, conduct an initial search on your own. The library catalog points you to databases of articles you can search; it also allows you to search for books using your choice of search terms. Then, email Nancy Spiegel, the friendly and skillful Art and Architecture bibliographer at Regenstein, to arrange an individual meeting to review your findings and get advice on how to improve your search.

Assemble all the secondary sources you think are likely to be the most informative publications on your topic, charging books out from the library and ordering PDFs of articles, if needed. Look through them to get an overview of their contents before you start reading any of them. Look for the ones that looks most informative and expert; start your reading with those.

As you read the basic secondary sources, ask yourself what questions the authors are asking and what main claims they make. Are these the same questions you want to ask? Do they answer them convincingly? Can you think of a question they don't consider or a kind of evidence they don't discuss in their argument? For instance, you might read a sociologist's article about a public housing project and notice that it doesn't examine the way the buildings are arranged on their site or consider how the layout might contribute to the way residents use the buildings. That could become the focus of your research paper, the point you add to the scholarly conversation about this kind of built environment.

Formulate a hypothesis about your topic that you want to explore and support with evidence in your paper. Do you need to look for any additional sources, secondary or primary, to develop that idea? That's usually necessary in moving from a topic to a thesis for a research paper.

Guidelines for the paper itself:

It needs to have a thesis or argument of your own devising. The thesis must be stated in the introduction to the paper.

At the beginning of the paper, explain how your thesis responds to the scholarship you have read on your topic. Summarize, very briefly, how the most important sources you have found have approached your topic and how your approach builds on or departs from what they provide. For example, you could address an aspect you haven't seen discussed in the scholarship, or develop an aspect that other scholars mention but don't really explore, or expand on an idea in a scholarly source by presenting a type of evidence the author didn't consider, or relate a particular building that hasn't been much studied before to the writing other scholars have done on related buildings.

The body of the paper should present evidence that supports your thesis. Each paragraph should develop a single main point that helps develop your overall thesis. For example, if you were writing about contemporary mosques in Europe or North America, you might devote a paragraph to the kinds of locations they are built in, another to the main parts the buildings themselves include, another to variations among them that reflect the cultural background of the community each one serves, another to how integrated with or separate from their surroundings they tend to be. Your evidence may be drawn from factual or interpretive points made by other scholars or from primary sources you've examined; it may also include your own formal analysis of the built environments you examine.

Use footnotes to reference your sources, including the page numbers. Use quotation marks around quotations and footnote them, or to paraphrase a point drawn from another writer in your own words and footnote the source. Plagiarism is a serious offense among scholars, and you need to be careful to avoid falling into it inadvertently.

Include a conclusion, which contains no major new points but instead ties together the points in the body of the paper and clinches your thesis.

Illustrations: label each with a figure number (e.g., figure 3) and a caption identifying its subject and giving its source. Reference your illustrations in your text. The standard format is to include the figure number in parentheses at the end of the first sentence that discusses it, like this (fig. 6).