

CENG 4399 – Independent Study

Term: Fall 2026

Course Times (Meeting):

- Weekly progress meetings, TBD

Instructor: Dr. Kyudong Kim

Email: kkim@uttyler.edu or Canvas Message

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:00pm – 2:30pm, Wednesday 3:00pm – 4:30pm, or by appointment

Office: RBN 1008

Course Dates: Aug. 24, 2025 – Dec. 12, 2025

Course Overview

Independent study in a specific area of civil engineering not covered by organized undergraduate courses. This course provides a one-on-one, faculty-supervised research experience. The student will propose multiple research topics and, with instructor guidance, select one topic for in-depth study. Research may be experimental or modeling-based, and the student will conduct a comprehensive literature review, develop a methodology, and carry out the research project independently. Bi-weekly meetings (approximately once every two weeks) are held for progress updates, during which the student gives presentations on their work and receives feedback. Strict academic writing guidelines must be followed throughout the course to ensure the final report meets scholarly publication standards.

By the end of the semester, the student is expected to produce a complete research paper manuscript ready for submission to a peer-reviewed conference or journal. The student must actually submit this paper for external review as part of the course requirements (Note: Actual acceptance for publication is not required for course credit, but the paper must be of submit-worthy quality and sent for review). The course culminates in a final oral presentation of the research findings and an oral examination (defense) on the chosen topic. This independent study is graded on a Pass/Fail basis, emphasizing the satisfactory completion of all milestones over numeric scores.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- **Identify and formulate research problems** in a civil engineering context, and articulate clear research questions or hypotheses.
- **Conduct a thorough literature review** to survey existing knowledge, identify gaps, and justify the selected research topic.

- **Design and execute an independent research plan**, whether experimental, computational, or analytical, using appropriate engineering methods and tools.
- **Analyze and interpret data or modeling results** to draw evidence-based conclusions about the research question.
- **Apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills** to overcome challenges during the research process, adapting methods as necessary.
- **Communicate research progress and findings effectively** through regular presentations and technical writing, demonstrating professional oral and written communication skills.
- **Produce a publication-quality research paper**, adhering to rigorous writing standards, proper formatting, and citation of sources, suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed venue.
- **Defend the research work orally**, demonstrating depth of understanding of the project and related engineering principles in an oral exam setting.

Prerequisite

Undergraduate standing and Department Chair approval (required for enrollment in CMGT 4399). *It is also expected that a faculty member has agreed to supervise the independent study prior to registration.*

Course Materials

Textbook: *None required.* There is no official textbook for this independent study course. The student is responsible for performing a self-directed literature review on the chosen research topic, including reading journal articles, conference papers, and other relevant publications. The instructor may recommend key references or provide reading materials as needed, but the initiative lies with the student to gather and study pertinent literature.

Other Resources: The student should utilize the university's library databases and online resources to find high-quality sources. Documentation and style guidelines (such as a journal or conference paper template, or the ASCE/IEEE publication style, as applicable) will be provided by the instructor. All writing must conform to the provided guidelines for format, style, and citation.

Milestones and Deliverables (Tentative – Subject to Change)

To earn credit for this course, the student must **satisfactorily complete all the following milestones and deliverables**. Deadlines are tentative and may be adjusted with instructor approval, but any changes must be coordinated in advance:

1. **Research Topic Proposals:** Identify five (5) potential research topics and prepare a brief presentation for each, outlining the problem statement and why it is significant. *Due by approximately Week 3.* (Initial meeting and presentations scheduled early in the semester.)

2. **Topic Selection:** In consultation with the instructor, select one of the proposed topics as the focus of the independent study. This decision will be made after the proposal presentations (no later than Week 4). The student will then finalize the research scope and objectives for the chosen topic.
3. **Literature Review & Research Plan:** Conduct a comprehensive literature review on the chosen topic and develop a detailed research plan (experiment design or modeling approach, data needed, etc.). *Weeks 4–6:* The student should document key findings from literature and a methodology outline. A progress presentation covering the literature review and proposed methodology will be given in the Week 5 meeting.
4. **Bi-Weekly Progress Presentations:** Participate in scheduled bi-weekly meetings with the instructor to report progress. **Presentations** are required at each meeting (approx. Weeks 5, 7, 9, 11, 13) to demonstrate results, discuss any challenges, and outline next steps. The student should come prepared with slides or other materials as appropriate. (These recurring updates ensure steady progress and allow for feedback.)
5. **Draft Paper Preparation:** Begin writing the research paper in parallel with conducting the research. By **Week 13**, the student must submit a complete **draft manuscript** to the instructor for review. The draft should include an abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, results, discussion, conclusion, and references, following the prescribed format and writing guidelines.
6. **Manuscript Revision:** Incorporate feedback from the instructor to refine the paper. The **final revised manuscript** must be finished by **Week 14**, representing a publication-quality paper that is 100% ready for submission to a peer-reviewed conference or journal. High standards of technical writing, grammar, and formatting are expected.
7. **Paper Submission:** The student is **required to submit the finalized paper to a peer-reviewed venue** (conference or journal) before the end of the semester. Proof of submission (such as confirmation email) must be provided to the instructor by **Week 15**. (*Note: Actual acceptance for publication is not required for course credit, but the paper must be of submit-worthy quality and sent for review.*)
8. **Final Presentation & Oral Defense:** Deliver a **formal presentation of the research findings** and complete an **oral examination** conducted by the instructor (and possibly other faculty) at the end of the semester. This final presentation/defense is scheduled for **Final Exam Week** and serves as the culminating assessment of the independent study. The student should be prepared to answer in-depth questions about the research methodology, results, and relevant theory.

Grading Structure

Grade Mode: This course is graded on a **Pass/Fail basis** (Credit/No Credit). No numeric or letter grade will be assigned. Instead, to earn a **“Pass” (Credit)** in CENG 4399, the student must *satisfactorily complete all required milestones and deliverables* listed above. Satisfactory completion means that the work meets the quality expectations set by the instructor and that all deadlines and course requirements are met. Key requirements include producing a final paper of publishable quality, delivering a successful final presentation, and demonstrating adequate understanding in the oral exam.

Failure to fulfill any of the major course requirements or to show acceptable performance and progress will result in a **“Fail” (No Credit)** for the course. In other words, every listed component (proposal, meetings, paper, presentation, and defense) must be completed at a passing level for the student to receive credit. There are no weighted percentages or points—all requirements are mandatory and assessed holistically. A student who meets all expectations will receive a grade of **CR (Credit)** on their transcript, while a student who does not will receive **NC (No Credit)**.

Please note: Because this is an independent study, **incompletes** are generally not given except under extreme circumstances. Missing the final paper submission or presentation will ordinarily result in a failing mark. If you have any concerns about meeting a requirement, communicate with the instructor as early as possible.

Late Work / Assignment Policy

All deadlines and meeting dates in this course are agreed upon as part of the independent study plan, and it is a basic principle of professionalism that these commitments are honored. **“Professionals are not late.”** In an independent research setting, falling behind schedule can significantly impact the success of the project.

- If you anticipate that you will be unable to meet a deadline (for example, delivering a draft or presentation on time), **you must notify the instructor as far in advance as possible** to request an extension or make alternate arrangements. Simply notifying the instructor at the last minute (or after a deadline has passed) is not considered acceptable.
- A *“coordinated late”* submission may be arranged **only** in rare circumstances and with prior approval. The instructor will determine how and when a delayed deliverable should be submitted. Unapproved late work or failure to meet a milestone without prior coordination may result in course failure (No Credit).
- Regular communication is crucial. The student is expected to respond to emails and attend all scheduled meetings. **Absences** from scheduled meetings or lack of communication will be treated seriously. If an emergency or unavoidable conflict arises that causes you to miss a meeting, inform the instructor as soon as possible to reschedule. Repeated unexcused absences or extensive lack of progress may be grounds for an unsatisfactory grade.

By adhering to agreed timelines and maintaining open communication, the student will gain the most from this independent study and demonstrate the professionalism expected at the undergraduate level.

Student Resources:

Resources available to UT Tyler Students

- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](#) (available to all students)
- [MySSP App](#) (24/7 access to Student Support Program counseling through phone or chat and online wellness resources available in a variety of languages)
- [Student Assistance and Advocacy Center](#)
- [Military and Veterans Success Center](#) (supports for our military-affiliated students)
- [UT Tyler Patriot Food Pantry](#)
- [UT Tyler Financial Aid and Scholarships](#)
- [UT Tyler Student Business Services](#) (pay or set up payment plans, etc.)
- [UT Tyler Registrar's Office](#)
- [Office of International Programs](#)
- [Title IX Reporting](#)
- [Patriots Engage](#) (available to all students. Get engaged at UT Tyler.)

University Policies and Information

Withdrawing from Class

Students may [withdraw](#) (drop) from this course using the [Withdrawal Portal](#). Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully [read the implications for withdrawing from a course and the instructions](#) on using the [Withdrawal portal](#)..

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. **CAUTION #1:** Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the [Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule](#). **CAUTION #2:** All international students must check with the [Office of International Programs](#) before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. **CAUTION #3:** All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. **CAUTION #4:** All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with the [Military and Veterans Success Center](#).

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date.

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade *only when **all** of the following conditions are met:* (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide

the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form. The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the [Registrar's Form Library](#).

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Disability/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA), the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical, and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler/> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <https://www.uttyler.edu/disability-services>, the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB 460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079."

Military Affiliated Students

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. The [Military and Veterans Success Center \(MVSC\)](#) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- Traditional face-to-face classes: Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- Hybrid Classes: Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.

- Online course: Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Academic Honesty and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge that "Honor and integrity will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Therefore, we enforce the [Student Conduct and Discipline policy](#) in the Student Manual Of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in [University Policy 5.2.3](#). The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Absence for Official University Events or Activities

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for University Events or Activities](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absence for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for Religious Holy Days as noted in the Catalog](#).

Absence for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison. NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison in order to receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form](#).

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.