

ARCH541a (Fall 2014): FRAGMENTARY LANDSCAPES: residual space to urban place



Alison B. Hirsch, MLA, PhD
Assistant Professor, School of Architecture, University of Pennsylvania
Co-founder+Partner, foreground design agency: www.foreground-da.com

OBJECTIVES

This first-semester design studio emphasizes how to read and interpret landscape and to use those specific readings as a rich catalyst of possibilities for imaginative design intervention. Students will learn how to understand and ultimately transform the city's fragmentary spaces created by cumulative forces of urban development. Students will not be asked to design a "park," a "plaza," a "greenway," etc. Instead, they will break down these limiting programmatic typologies and design an *infrastructure* that can hold and support hybrid possibilities for recreation, ecology, water management, public health, new economies, and multicultural occupation. Design will be deployed as inquiry, as an opening up of new possibilities emergent from reading the site's existing spatial and material conditions, as well as the dynamic forces, processes and practices that have shaped and continue to activate it.

SITE

The "site" – whose bounds are deliberately ambiguous – is the linear stretch of the Ballona Creek between the Jefferson Blvd access point (easternmost access) and the next point of access at Duquesne Avenue. While the site itself is predominantly the channelized creek and its concrete embankments, the adjacencies of the overhead Metro Expo Line, the popular trails of the Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook State Park and recreational fields of Syd Kronenthal Park, as well as the degraded Jefferson Blvd, provide a wealth of

creative opportunities for transforming this residual space into an urban place – and perhaps even a catalyst or seed project for an expanding infrastructural system. In addition to its many opportunistic adjacencies – public transit, public works, recreation, ecological diversity, wide-ranging economies, etc – the site and its environs exhibit significant topographic variety, thus challenging students (1) to work in section rather than immediately prioritize the distanced view of the plan; and (2) to really understand the molding of three-dimensional space. Clearly the creek (and its absence) is of significance to the site and poses particular questions about water in an arid climate during a momentous drought.



METHOD+STRUCTURE

The studio will be divided into two parts: FIELDWORK and FRAMEWORK. The first part – FIELDWORK – will predominantly focus on methods of reading and interpreting the spatial, material and temporal dynamics of the site. Fieldwork will be conducted by iterative exercises in two and three-dimensional media: sequential sketching, thick sectioning, surveying and measuring, model-making (rib/plaster/contour models, etc) and plotting (visualizing dynamic processes that shape site). FRAMEWORK will be devoted to developing proposals for the site’s physical and programmatic transformation. These proposals will be entirely emergent from the FIELDWORK methods deployed in the first half of the semester.

SCHEDULE

FIELDWORK

Week 1: Site Introduction

AUG 25: Introduce Studio

AUG 27: Visit Site via Expo Line

EXERCISE: sequential sketching

AUG 29: Visit site (bike?) and explore adjacencies (Baldwin Hills Scenic Overlook+Visitor Center; Syd Kronenthal Park; Jefferson Blvd, perhaps bike creek to ocean)

EXERCISE: sketching; photography, material catalogues

ASSIGNMENT: Site Sections

Week 2-4: Site Structure (Pinup Sep 22*)

Site Sections (building site through sequential section)

Body Measure/Site Survey (plan+elevation relationships through body survey techniques)

Week 4-5: Qualitative Character (Pinup Sep 29*)

Material Catalogue (rubblings, iterative drawing, etc)
Photoworks (reterritorialization collages)

Week 5-7: Modeling (Mid-Review Oct 6; Pinup Oct 13*)

Sectional infrastructure models (lasercut)
Contour models (lasercut)
Plaster models (additive + subtractive techniques)

Week 8-9: Site Dynamics (Pinup Oct 27*)

Movement Notation (notational studies of site use)
Plotting (visualizing site as part of larger urban, ecological, etc, systems)

FRAMEWORK: Week 10-16 (Final Review: date TBD)

This portion of the semester will be focused on developing proposals for the transformation of the site. At this stage, students will be generating drawings and models that are specific to their individual projects. Classes will be conducted as deskcrits with occasional pinups to evaluate progress.

*Subject to change.

POLICIES**Attendance Policy**

The School of Architecture's general attendance policy is to allow a student to miss the equivalent of one week of class sessions (three classes if the course meets three times/week, etc.) without directly affecting the student's grade and ability to complete the course. If additional absences are required for a personal illness/family emergency, pre-approved academic reason/religious observance, the situation should be discussed and evaluated with the faculty member and appropriate Chair on a case-by-case basis. For each absence over that allowed number, the student's letter grade will be lowered 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., A to A-).

Any student not in class within the first 10 minutes is considered tardy, and any student absent (in any form including sleep, technological distraction, or by leaving mid class for a long break) for more than 1/3 of the class time can be considered fully absent. If arriving late, a student must be respectful of a class in session and do everything possible to minimize the disruption caused by a late arrival. It is always the student's responsibility to seek means (if possible) to make up work missed due to absences, not the instructor's, although such recourse is not always an option due to the nature of the material covered.

Being absent on the day a project, quiz, paper or exam is due can lead to an "F" for that project, quiz, paper or exam or portfolio (unless the faculty concedes the reason is due to an excusable absence for personal illness/family emergency/religious observance). A mid term or final review is to be treated the same as a final exam as outlined and expected by the University.

See full attendance statement at: <http://arch.usc.edu/People/SchoolGovernanceDocuments>

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 A.M.–5:00 P.M., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

Statement on Academic Integrity

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one's own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another's work as one's own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles. *SCampus*, the Student Guidebook, contains the Student Conduct Code in Section 11.00, while the recommended sanctions are located in Appendix A: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/publications/SCAMPUS/gov/>. Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for further review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. The Review process can be found at: <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/>. The USC summary of how to avoid plagiarism: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm and specific advice for grad students: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/grad_ai.htm may also be useful.

Accreditation

The Master of Landscape Architecture degree program includes three curricula. Curriculum +3 for students with no prior design education and Curriculum +2 for students admitted with advanced standing have full accreditation by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board. Curriculum +1.5 for students with advanced placement is a post-professional study and is not subject to accreditation. Information about landscape architecture education and accreditation in the United States may be found on-line at <http://www.asla.org/Education.aspx>.

Religious Holidays

The University of Southern California recognizes the diversity of our community and the potential for conflicts involving academic activities and personal religious observation. The University provides a guide to such observances for reference and suggests that any concerns about lack of attendance or inability to participate fully in the course activity be fully aired at the start of the term. As a general principle, students should be excused from class for these events if properly documented and if provisions can be made to accommodate the absence and make up the lost work. Constraints on participation that conflict with adequate participation in the course and cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the faculty and the student need to be identified prior to the add/drop date for registration. After the add/drop date the University and the School of Architecture shall be the sole arbiter of what constitutes appropriate attendance and participation in a given course.