University of Southern California School of Architecture

Architecture 544
Urban Landscape: Theory, Process and Place
Fall 2014

Class Meets in Harris 102
Instructor: Esther Margulies ASLA
3 units, MW 8:30 – 9:50
Office hours: Monday 10:00 am or By Appt.

Contact Information:
Office: 213 364 7397
Email: emarguli@usc.edu

Intentions:
Urban Landscapes now more than ever have the opportunity to engage civilization on multiple levels as works of art, practical resources and as the medium of natural systems. The semiotics of landscape design are powerful and meaningful when the designer operates with a robust vocabulary, knowledge of the profession’s traditions and the capacity to create layers of meaning. How we develop and represent landscape is based on graphic communication traditions. Advancing technology and our ability to describe design concepts in three dimensions changes how we design. This course will investigate the potential of landscape architectural design to function as a narrative, review multiple design process models and landscape design’s relationship with infrastructure and resiliency. Students will analyze familiar places and contemporary works with regard to significance of place, representation, narrative and performance.

Method:
Course activities include lectures, discussions, and short writing assessments to explore and refine ways to articulate design approach, theoretical references and meaning. Readings and lectures support questions and issues each week. A final research paper on an approved topic or a place study (10 - 15 pages) will provide the platform for students to produce a comprehensive analysis, narrative or alternative theory. One midterm quiz and submittal of weekly summaries of reading assignments will provide a focus and promote learning about fundamental course subjects. Students will be required to submit questions on each class’s readings prior to the class meeting.
Required Questions and Issues – Each Class

Students must submit responses to these questions by 6pm Sunday for Monday Classes and 6pm Tuesday for Wednesday Classes.

Read all of the assigned articles and essays. Choose one selection for each meeting.

Answer the three questions below:

1. Did you agree or disagree with the article or reading? Why?
2. Did the article remind you of a similar subject or issue not related to Landscape Architecture? What specifically did it remind you about or make you think about?
3. What additional questions do you have about this topic or issue?
Class Topics, Required Readings and Questions for Conversation

August 25, 2014 Landscape Design Theory – What does it contribute to the profession and practice?
Theory provides us with ways to generalize and codify knowledge about our profession and our work. We use theory to generate theoretical models, to provide a structure for analysis and dialogue and perhaps most importantly to develop a language including vocabulary, syntax and grammar to verbally describe our work. Over the past half century landscape architects have developed theories on our understanding of place, the language of landscape architecture, the design process and the meaning of our visual works.

In this class meeting we will review the primary topics to be discussed and explored for the semester, including how to utilize skills and knowledge in Studio and DDR projects.

Readings

August 27, 2014 Describing the Landscape – Building a vocabulary and understanding syntax
This meeting will discuss terminology and syntax of the landscape. We will review multiple published landscape descriptions to compile a working vocabulary, explore multi sensory perception of landscapes and develop a draft place description using these tools.

Readings
Spirn, Anne Whiston, The Language of Landscape (USA, Thompson-Shore, Inc) pg. 15 – 46 See Blackboard for this reading
Schama, Simon Landscape and Memory (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1995) Introduction pg.s 3 - 19

September 1 Labor Day No Class
September 3, 2014 Comparisons of Context, Meaning and intent in other Media
This meeting will utilize models of fine art and music theory to continue developing a deeper understanding of how to construct and develop landscape theory.

Readings:
Clarke, Lorna, Henri Matisse’s The Red Studio and the Development of Modernism, Cross Sections The Bruce Hall Academic Journal, Volume 1, Canberra, 2005 pages 10 - 16

September 8, 2014 Landscape Meaning - The Picturesque
This meeting will delve into the Picturesque Elizabeth Meyer, Dean of the University of Virginia School of Architecture has described the Picturesque landscape as a ‘versatile tool for exploring how theory can make or clarify connections between the world and design, between culture and form.’ Meyer examines the context and intended meanings of this movement in its original time and as a model to understand and practice contemporary design.

Readings


September 10, 2014 Landscape Meaning Contemporary references and context
Societies have developed land planning and design traditions based on agricultural, political and infrastructural uses of the land. We will review some of the forms that have been created by these larger systems and their continued use and meaning in land planning and design.

Readings


September 15, 2014 Form Meaning and Memory in Landscape
In this meeting we will engage in the polemic of landscape form and meaning. We will analyze what is memorable and meaningful, and how landscape images and connotations are used in popular media as well as site design.
Readings


September 17, 2014 Semiotics of Landscape
Based on Catherine Howett’s essay Systems, Signs and Sensibilities (1987) our interdisciplinary profession will create forms that express the scientific, social and political systems in which we practice. Ecological practice, symbolism and cultural values are represented in the works of Ian McHarg, Richard Haag and Lawrence Halprin. In this session we will discuss contemporary projects and places to identify their connection to underlying platforms.

Readings:

September 22, 2014 Procedural Design Theory A

Two classes will be spent surveying procedural theories in contemporary practice including McHarg Sasaki, Lynch, Halprin, Lyle Krog and Corner. Students will implement multiple approaches to test their application on project types and their personal preference.

Readings:


September 24, 2014 Procedural Design Theory  B

This meeting will ask questions of the design process. Is program alone sufficient to generate form and character? Do landscape architects take enough risk? Should we move confidently through the design process or take risks? What are the potential benefits?


September 29, 2014 Representation Part 1
James Corner’s essay on Representation (1992) explores how drawings are vehicles to develop physical design, to understand spatial qualities, materiality and to predict experience. Architects and landscape architects have historically used various types of drawings to communicate design concepts and as documentation. This class will review and discuss the various methods and meanings of various types of drawings.

Readings

October 1, 2014 Representation II
Landscape and Open Space are temporal places that change and evolve over time. Complex site design requires the collaboration of many disciplines and craftspeople. 20th Century designers have developed participatory notational systems to reflect multiple inputs. Recent graphics technologies and communication have expanded our abilities to express the three dimensional and experiential qualities of landscape spaces and elements in the design process.

Readings:
October 6, 2014  Open and Closed Narratives Fantasy and Ecology

Themed environments and master planned communities are examples of closed narratives. Subtler narratives reinforce particular viewpoints in parks and public spaces.

Using Disneyland, a master planned community or the Grove or Plaza Mexico as an example describe the purpose of the closed narrative and the key features or spatial qualities.

Readings
Anne Whiston Spirn, The Language of Landscape (USA, Thompson-Shore, Inc) pg.236 -239 See Blackboard for this reading
Genaway, Sam, Walt and the Promise of Progress City (Ayefour Publishing, USA) 2011

October 8, 2014 Open Narratives

This class will explore ecological and succession landscapes as examples of open narratives. Open narrative landscapes allow multiple readings of the landscape as text. Landscapes and places have implicit meanings in their form, materials, natural systems and potential for change.

Readings

October 13, 2014 Mid Term Quiz


Theories regarding the role of ecology in the design of the landscape range from fundamental to optional. This class will review the context for the ecological movement, the argument for ecology as driver of form and the sometimes invisible foundation for site organization and systems.

Readings


October 20, 2014 Ecological Landscapes – Perception and Management

For the non professional an ecological landscape may appear to be accidental, unmaintained and of lesser value than traditional landscapes. This class will examine tools and techniques to bridge between ornamental and ecological landscapes to improve their public reception.

Readings

October 22, 2014 Landscape Regionalism

Regional landscapes convey shared culture and meaning. They may consist of regional land patterns, vegetation and materials. They are a dialect or sub set of the overall landscape and place vocabulary that firmly ground a landscape within a place or become part of the decouped landscape across the globe.

Readings

October 27, 2014 Super Modernity – Globalism and the Creation of Non Places, The modern role of the Flaneur and the impact of Hypermobility

Growing Globalism has reduced the virtual distance between many points on the globe. It has allowed us to see larger relationships and systems from a satellite perspective. While we can learn more about distant cultures and places we can also more easily
apply a Super Modern globally neutral aesthetic and sensibility to locations all over the

globe. This class will explore the impact globalism and technology on place. A counter
effort requires the landscape architect to act as a physical ethnologist to uncover and
identify the components of authenticity. The literary figure of the Flaneur provides a
model of urban observation. With the impact of hypermobility we have more options
and potential tools to change the way we observe and interact in the urban
environment.

Readings

Osbaldiston, Nicholas, Seeking Authenticity in Place, Culture and the Self The Great
Urban Escape, Palgrave McMillan, 2012

Shortell and Brown, Ed. Walking in the European City, Quotidian Mobility and Urban
Ethnology, Ashgate, Burlington Vt. 2014

October 29, 2014 Infrastructure – Landmarks or Godzilla?
Infrastructure has provided an armature for landscape and open space since regional
roads and waterways were first constructed. Ancient and modern engineering have
separated landscape and infrastructure systems creating islands, no mans lands and
disrupted natural systems. Landscapes and ecosystems are infrastructure systems.
They can work in concert with engineered solutions. Canals and railroads were essential
to Chicago’s development and success. Transportation infrastructure became part of
the landscape.

Readings

55 - 81

November 3, 2014 Planning and Design
In this class we will discuss two questions:
Do we really control the outcome of planning or is it part of a larger political system that
determines the ultimate building of place through legislation, funding and political
power?

Can outsiders design with authenticity and integrity?

Readings:
November 5, 2014  The Landscape Polemic
Landscapes are not purely singular objects, systems or places. What are the layered meanings and how do we predict their interpretation? We are in the process of re-evaluating our public and private spaces from a sustainability standpoint. How should we address unsustainable landscapes in the 21st Century? What is their value?

Spirn, Anne Whiston, The Language of Landscape (USA, Thompson-Shore, Inc) pg. 240 – 265  See Blackboard for this reading

November 10, 2014 Pop Up Cities and Events

Readings - to be announced

November 12, 2014 Changing Cities – The role and Opportunity of Public Open Space

Field Trip in South Park and the Arts Districts of Los Angeles. Site visits will analyze the contribution of individual projects and district wide programs.

Reading

City of Los Angeles Urban Design Studio, City of Los Angeles Downtown Urban Design Guidelines

November 17, 2014 Resilient Cities – Is resiliency likely to add meaning and authenticity?
What will oyster beds, sea walls and constructed wetlands contribute to the long term identity and meaning of cities in the future?

Readings

Davidson, Justin, “10 Design Ideas to Prepare Us for the Next Sandy”  New York Magazine, April 2013


November 19, 2014 High and Low –
Cities are transforming obsolete infrastructure into public open space. Elevated parks and former rail yards are becoming significant cultural and recreations spaces. What is the role of their industrial history and how do designers such as James Corner and Ken Smith interpret it for today’s participants?
Readings - to be announced

November 24, 2014 Studio project narrative –

Students will prepare a theoretical summary of their studio projects describing the nature of the project narrative, representational methods and goals.

Required Text
Other required articles will be available on Blackboard

Bibliography

Birksted, Jan, Landscapes of Memory, Spoon, New York, New York, 2000
Clarke, Lorna, “Henri Matisse’s The Red Studio and the Development of Modernism”, Cross Sections The Bruce Hall Academic Journal, Volume 1, Canberra, 2005
Davidson, Justin, “10 Design Ideas to Prepare Us for the Next Sandy” New York Magazine, April 2013
Genaway, Sam, Walt and the Promise of Progress City, Ayefour Publishing, USA, 2011
McHarg, Ian, Design with Nature; The Natural History Press, 1969
Mostafavi, Mohsen; Ecological Urbanism; Lars Muller, 2010
Osbaldiston, Nicholas, Seeking Authenticity in Place, Culture and the Self The Great Urban Escape, Palgrave McMillan, 2012
Sanderson, Eric, Manahatta: A Natural History of New York City; Abrams, 2009
Schama, Simon, Landscape and Memory (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1995)
Shortell and Brown, Ed. Walking in the European City, Quotidian Mobility and Urban Ethnology, Ashgate, Burlington Vt. 2014

Spirn, Anne Whiston, The Language of Landscape, Thompson-Shore, Inc, USA, pg. 240 – 265 See Blackboard for this reading


Grading

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REGARDING 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.

REHABILITATION ACT (LAB 504) AND THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The University of Southern California is committed to full compliance with the Rehabilitation Act (Lab 504) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As part of the implementation of this law, the University will continue to provide reasonable accommodation of academically qualified students with disabilities so those student can participate fully in the University’s educational programs and activities. Although USC is not required by law to change the “fundamental nature of essential curricular components of its programs in order to accommodate the needs of disabled students,” the University will provide reasonable academic accommodations. The specific responsibility of the University administration and all faculty serving in a teaching capacity is to ensure the University’s compliance with this policy. The general definition of a student with a disability is any person who has “a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person’s major life activities,” and any
person who has “a history of, or is regarded as having, such an impairment.” Reasonable academic and physical accommodations include but are not limited to: extended time on examinations; substitution of similar or related work for a non-fundamental program requirement; time extensions on papers and projects; special testing procedures; advance notice regarding book list for visually impaired and some learning disabled students; use of academic aides in the classroom such as note takers and sign language interpreters; early advisement and assistance with registration; accessibility for students who use wheelchairs and those with mobility impairments; and need for special classroom furniture or special equipment in the classroom.

Obtaining Accommodations

Physical Accommodations
Students with physical disabilities should contact Disability Services and Programs (DSP) prior to or during the first week of class attendance or as early in the semester as possible. The office will work with classroom scheduling, the course instructors and their departments, and the students to arrange for reasonable accommodations.

Academic Accommodations
Students seeking academic accommodations due to a physical or learning disability should make the request to the course instructor prior to or during the first week of class attendance, as well as registering with DSP as early in the semester as possible. Course instructors should require that a student present verification of documentation when academic accommodations are being requested. For assistance in how to provide reasonable accommodations for a particular disability, course instructors are encouraged to consult with Disability Services and Programs (DSP). Students requesting academic accommodations who do not have DSP documentation should be referred to that office.
Disability Services & Programs contact: (213) 740-0776

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 drop/add date for registration. After the drop/add date the University and the School of Architecture shall be the sole arbiter of what constitutes appropriate attendance and participation in a given course.

USC GRADUATE STUDENT ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
From http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/grad_ai.htm

The University expects that, by virtue of advanced academic standing and of substantial previous experience in an academic environment, graduate students enter USC with an awareness of the general standards for appropriate academic behavior and of what constitutes academic honesty. The University also views academic dishonesty within the graduate student community with the utmost seriousness, and when discovered, meets such dishonesty with serious consequences. Graduate students are urged to familiarize themselves with the specific standards articulated by the University in the current SCampus (Student Conduct Code §11.00 and Appendix A).

The following, although not exhaustive, are issues of academic integrity particularly relevant to academic work in which graduate students engage.

Plagiarism

As defined in the University Student Conduct Code, plagiarism includes

- "the submission of material authored by another person but represented as the student's work, whether that material is paraphrased or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form;"
• "the submission of material subjected to editorial revision by another person that results in substantive changes in content or major alteration of writing style;" and

• "improper acknowledgment of sources in essays or papers." (§11.11)

Books, published papers, written documents, and electronic information (including words, data, drawings, and photographs) are the intellectual property of the persons who created them and are the legal property of the parties named in the copyright notice. Students who, in their written academic work, incorporate the ideas of others, whether as direct quotation or as paraphrase, are obligated to credit the source through appropriate citation. Likewise, information used in academic projects or in oral presentations must be credited to the source.

Normally, direct quotation must be cited by use of quotation marks (or block indentation of a larger portion of text) immediately followed by a footnote. Paraphrase or use of a concept originating from another is cited using a footnote directly following the source material. In neither case is inclusion of the source in a bibliography or work-cited list alone adequate.

Graduate students will discover that a specific style of citation is standard for their particular academic or professional discipline. Students therefore are encouraged to become familiar with and use that particular style from the outset of their graduate program at the University. A student's academic advisor or the graduate advisor for their academic department should be able to identify the appropriate style and corresponding manual.

It is expected that written assignments represent a student's own work as submitted. Toward that end, any editorial or research assistance a student may receive should be approved by the assigning faculty member prior to gaining such assistance.

Unauthorized Collaboration

In particular courses and disciplines, collaborative projects and assignments may be required in preparation for professional practice. Graduate students should be aware that, unless explicitly directed or granted permission to work collaboratively on assignments, the expectation will be that a student has accomplished academic work entirely independent of assistance from fellow students or other persons.

Prohibition against unauthorized collaboration extends to all academic assignments, including course projects, take-home examinations and other out-of-class work, as well as any take-home portion of a preliminary review, comprehensive or qualifying examination or other evaluation tool related to a student's program in general.
Violation of Examinations

Any use of external unauthorized assistance during an examination is considered academically dishonest. This includes (but is not limited to) any use of written or electronic information such as books, notes, or calculators unless expressly authorized by the faculty member responsible for administering the examination. Likewise, communication with another student or any other person during an examination will be considered a violation of the integrity of that examination.

Fabrication

The invention or alteration of data, information or citation in any academic exercise constitutes a violation of academic integrity. This includes fabrication of material submitted for lab assignments, class projects or other assignments, whether wholly or partially falsified. Fabricated information constitutes work representing neither the student's own effort nor the truth concerning a particular line of investigation or study.

Protection of Personal Work

In the conduct of academic work at the University, in addition to an obligation for accomplishing their work with integrity, students bear a responsibility to protect their own work from others. In the completion of written assignments and projects this means taking reasonable precautions against having their work used by others, as well as not providing written assignments or solutions to projects, homework or examinations to others whom may use them in an unauthorized manner.

Students should be aware of the vulnerability of data and written documents when using University computing systems and should safeguard their work accordingly. Refraining from leaving computer files on unprotected fixed drives in user areas and from sharing with others passwords to assigned computer accounts are examples of behavior to be avoided. Similarly, the potential for inappropriate use by others should be considered before posting research or scholarly work to a personal Web page. Students are urged to familiarize themselves with standards of ethical conduct published by University Computing Services.

In the completion of examinations, comprehensive or qualifying examinations, placement examinations or other such evaluations, students bear the responsibility to ensure that other examinees do not gain use of their answers or information, whether by copying, communication or other means.