USC School of Architecture  
ARCH 306m - Shelter  
Spring 2015  
4 Units

Diversity: This course satisfies the university's diversity requirement

Course Information:

Class Sessions: Monday and Wednesday, 10:00-11:20 a.m., Harris Hall 115  
Faculty: Lauren Matchison, RA, NCARB, Assistant Professor of Practice  
          lmatchis@usc.edu  
Office Hours: Watt 339, by appointment

To further facilitate learning, this course utilizes Blackboard. Log in using your USC username and password at: https://blackboard.usc.edu/

Introduction and Purpose

“We shape our buildings: thereafter they shape us.” Sir Winston Churchill

This course asks a seemingly simple question – What is shelter? The answer however, is quite complex. Understanding shelter involves untangling many important and influential contextual factors, which we will study throughout the semester.

It is typically thought that people design domestic shelter based on physical opportunities and constraints (i.e. climate, materials, construction, etc). However, reliance on physical factors alone to create shelter is a gross oversimplification. Humans are social beings, operating within complex belief systems, family structures, social classes, gender relationships, etc. This course posits that it is these powerful social and cultural factors, rather than the physical factors, which truly drive the creation of shelter and provide a framework for value and order.

Professional architects do not create the majority of domestic shelter throughout the world – everyday people do – and they do it well. This course exposes the conflict between the priorities of traditional architect-guided works (which take considerable resources and time to develop) with those shelters and settlements designed by everyday people (with scarce resources or time and little to no training). Understanding the nature of this clash of priorities allows for a more nuanced education in architecture. By critically examining and analyzing user-generated shelter and settlements (emergency housing, refugee camps, tent cities, slums, etc.) we will uncover basic ideas of humanity and shelter and will become more sensitive and engaged citizens as a result. Further, students will learn how humans endure throughout time and space; and find ways not only to survive, but also to thrive.

Topics of Study

I. Placemaking and Shelter  
   II. Sustainable Shelter and Social Responsibility  
   III. Shelter in Emergent and Impoverished Conditions
Goals and Objectives

1. To critically evaluate shelter as the manifestation of social and cultural influences. Students will recognize the specificity of context and place and their impact on domestic shelter.

2. To engage history as a lens through which to reveal fundamental insight into the basic nature of shelter and its intimate relationship with culture. Students will apply the lessons of history to expand and evolve social awareness and examine man’s endless struggle to create sustainable shelter in various conditions across the world.

3. To gain a clearer understanding of user-generated shelter and informal settlements around the world in order to better realize the underlying psychological issues humans infuse into domestic shelter.

Required Texts

Course Reader: All students are required to purchase the course reader - it will be necessary to have your own reader for the midterm and final exam (sharing will not be permitted). Course readers can be purchased online at: www.universityreaders.com (click the Student “Buy Here” button on the top right side of the page).

Recommended Texts


Course Requirements

Reading Assignments, Discussions & Presentation
Students must be prepared to discuss and critique the readings aloud in class. In addition to class discussion, each student must write a minimum 500-700 word critical response each week. Weekly, student(s) will be asked to present a critical and interpretive response to the reading and lead the class in a subsequent discussion.

Case Study Research, Report & Presentation
Students must research and present their findings to the class. The basis of the study must be selected from either of the following recommended texts: Beyond Shelter: Architecture and Human Dignity or Design Like You Give a Damn: Architectural Responses to Humanitarian Crises. Further, you must corroborate the information within the book with at least (3) other sources. Your research and presentation should include factual research (background of the project and the designer/organization; identification of the problem to be solved; methods used to solve the problem; discussion of how the solution was implemented; results of the solution, etc) and a critical assessment of the process and results. More details to follow.
Midterm Exam
Written exam covering all topics, lectures, and readings given before Spring Break

Final Exam
Written exam covering all topics, lectures, and readings given after Spring Break

Grading Structure

Reading Assignments, Discussions & Presentation (35%)
Case Study Presentation (15%)
Midterm Exam (25%)
Final Exam (25%)

Course Policies

Late Work Policy
Late assignments: late reading assignments will be accepted one class period late (for excused absences only) and will be marked down one letter grade
Missed reading discussion or reading presentation: no credit will be given, no exceptions
Missed exam: no credit will be given, no exceptions
Missed field report presentation: no credit will be given, no exceptions

School of Architecture Attendance Policy
A student may miss the equivalent of one week of class sessions (in this case, two excused absences are permitted) without directly affecting the student’s grade and ability to complete the course. An excused absence is a confirmed personal illness, family emergency, or religious holiday. For each absence over the allowed number, your grade can be lowered by 1/3-letter grade. If additional absences are required for a personal illness, family emergency, pre-approved academic reason/religious observance, you must discuss the situation with your faculty member immediately.

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 bathroom/water 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.

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 your faculty member 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

PLAGIARISM IS GROUNDS FOR FAILING THIS COURSE
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/.

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.

Sample Bibliography