

**University of Southern California
School of Architecture**

ARCH 203: Visualizing and Experiencing the Built Environment (4.0 units)
Mondays 2 PM-5:50 PM

Faculty: Professor Amy Murphy

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Office Hours: Mondays 12:30-1:30 PM or by appointment



Aldo van Eyck, "Tree is Leaf - House is City and City is A House..."

CATALOGUE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Methods for direct observation and recording of the directly experienced built environment through drawing, diagramming, photographing, and writing. Course includes exercises and field experience.

INTENT

In addition to employing standard academic research methods (research, writing, verbal presentations), this course will also introduce students to a range of visualization methods, which they might use to communicate critical ideas they discover about urban form as well as urban life. These visualization methods are intended not to illustrate places per (i.e. draw accurate pictures) but instead are designed to help students 'discover' layers to the city that might not be readily apparent at first glance.

Each week, a key condition or concept that architects commonly agree informs the quality and character of urban life will be introduced. Then students will engage with a particular technique to record and communicate that condition visually, as well as through reflective writing. Sometimes the final visualization will be 'indexical' (or illustrative) of what is before the student 'in the field'. Yet, more times than not, the visualizations produced each week will be more "representational" (or interpretive) in nature, capturing an abstract idea found 'in the field.' At its core, this class uses direct engagement with the architecture of Los Angeles itself as a means for students to learn about how architecture and urban design directly contribute to creating a vibrant and evolving city.

ASSIGNMENTS

“Seeing is forgetting the name of the thing one sees.” Robert Irwin

There are five major kinds of assignments due throughout the semester, each with their own specific character and deliverables.

1. There will be a set of homework drawing exercises—each exploring a certain theme presented in class. The purpose of these exercises is to move students past common assumptions about the city and to re-see the consequences of form and space on experience, as if seeing these things for the first time.
2. There will be a two-part precedent project where a student is assigned both a city and a significant building within that city. This exercise will require research, writing and diagramming both the city and building in response to a set of prompts, and will be followed by a in-class presentation. The purpose of this exercise is to seek out the Möbius-like relationship between each entity as it might be experienced.
3. Students are required to maintain a studio sketchbook. It is meant to be a thorough and well-organized record of and instrument for critical inquiry and design process. The sketchbook is to include (freehand and/or digitally produced) generative diagrams and design sketches, weekly process drawings, notes/diagrams/sketches from class work, graphic analysis of relevant precedents, class/lecture/reading notes, as well as any other material relevant to visual exploration in this course. Date and label all entries clearly and in a consistent manner. DO NOT LOSE IT or else work will need to be reconstructed to grade and credit (and it will be allowed to be used for mid-term and final).
4. Each student will be required to create a digital portfolio at the end of the semester, due on the day and time of our scheduled final exam (no exceptions- failure to submit is equivalent to failing a final exam). The content should be thoughtfully presented in a letter size (8.5"x11") format. All assignments must be represented in the portfolio, so students are advised to regularly document all work.
5. Mid-term and Final essay exams allowing students to demonstrate their comprehension of the weekly reading material and to make connections to our in-class field work and exercises.

Full completion of all assigned work is critical to success in this course. Assignments that do not reflect adequate progress or completion will not be discussed during desk critiques, pin-ups and reviews.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the USC Bookstore):

Banham R (2009, original 1971) *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies*.

Ching F (2010) *Design Drawing*.

Gehl J (2010) *Cities for People*.

*Plus several other required articles available on Blackboard as listed in the schedule.

REQUIRED MATERIALS TO PURCHASE FOR FIRST CLASS:

Field Sketchbook - 7" x 5" (Size is Important), Wire Bound Preferred
Felt Tip Black Pen (Any brand)
Sakura Pigma Micron Pen Set OR EQUIVALENT- Black, Various Sizes, Set of 6
Strathmore 400 Series Smooth Surface Drawing Pad - 14" x 17", 24 Sheets
A Pack of Cheap Black Construction Paper (like kids use in elementary school)
Pencils (Any Type)
Eraser (White)
Ruler (Min. 12" long, metal with rubber or cork on bottom)
X-Acto Blade with a small pack of #11 blades
Scissors (Any type)
Glue Sticks

Limited other graphic materials will be needed during the semester. All should be available through the Bookstore.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

Final grade evaluations will be based on the following breakdown:

Visual Exercises	40%
Mid-Semester Essay Exam (Readings 9/4–10/9)	10%
Precedent Project (A City & A Building)	20%
Sketchbook w/ Process and Reading Notes	10%
Final Semester Essay Exam (Readings 10/16–11/27)	10%
Portfolio	5%
Class Contribution/Participation	5%

Students are required to attend all classes and field trips. Work will be evaluated periodically so that you have an indication of your progress. Unsatisfactory performance warnings will be issued to students whose work does not meet minimum requirements. A minimum grade of 'C' is required to continue on to ARCH 303, ARCH 403 sequence. Consult University polices for IN (incomplete) grades and deadlines for withdrawal ('W' grade).

The Grading Scale Used:

4.0 = 97.0 - 100 = A+ (= to an A and commendation as the university does not give A+)
4.0 = 93.0 - 96.9 = A
3.7 = 90.0 - 92.9 = A-
3.3 = 87.0 - 89.9 = B+
3.0 = 83.0 - 86.9 = B
2.7 = 80.0 - 82.9 = B-
2.3 = 77.0 - 79.9 = C+
2.0 = 73.0 - 76.9 = C
1.7 = 70.0 - 72.9 = C-
1.3 = 67.0 - 69.9 = D+
1.0 = 63.0 - 66.9 = D
0.7 = 60.0 - 62.9 = D-
0 = <60.0 = F

If weekly discussions are not lively and informed, then further assignments will be added.

Attendance:

The class is only as good as the thoughts discussed by the people there to discuss them. We are a small group. We should care about the experience of the other students each week as much as our own interests. Thus it is important that students come to every class on time and participate.

This class follows the School of Architecture Attendance Guideline, posted on Blackboard and at:

http://arch.usc.edu/sites/default/files/info/faculty/soa_attendance_guideline.pdf

There are three classes in which visitors are scheduled to come or student presentations (see ** on Schedule). Being absent without medical documentation on those days will reduce the final grade for the course by a 1/3 of a letter grade (B+ to B), and being late on those days without medical documentation will reduce your participation percentage to an F.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

University guidelines on plagiarism pertain to original design work. Students are expected to do all of their own design and presentation work. Substantial assistance in the form of model construction and drawing preparation, or deliberate appropriation of the design work of others will be considered non-original work and will be treated as plagiarism.

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/>.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

Students requesting academic or physical accommodations based on disability are required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. Letters of verification for approved accommodations from DSP must be delivered to your instructor at the beginning of the semester. DSP is located in STU 310 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Phone DSP at (213) 740-0776

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

The School of Architecture has adopted the 2010 Initiative for Sustainability. Solutions to design problems must engage the environment in a way that dramatically reduces or eliminates the need for fossil fuel.

